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This volume is
dedicated to our
office staff who
have faithfully served
the Lord with us
in this ministry
through the years.

Lee Ann Malone
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Melaney Dudley
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Kelli Croley
Sandy Orr
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The New American Standard Bible Update — 1995

Easier to read:

- ▣ Passages with Old English "thee's" and "thou's" etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with "And" have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for "And" in the original. In some other cases, "and" is translated by a different word such as "then" or "but" as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:

- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB's tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation's Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

—The Lockman Foundation

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

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

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

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

First Principle

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

Second Principle

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

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

- A. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁴). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

- B. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- C. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- D. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁴ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
- E. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- F. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

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

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

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

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

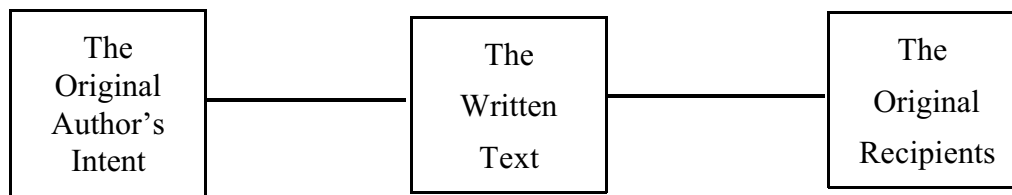
I. Presuppositions

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

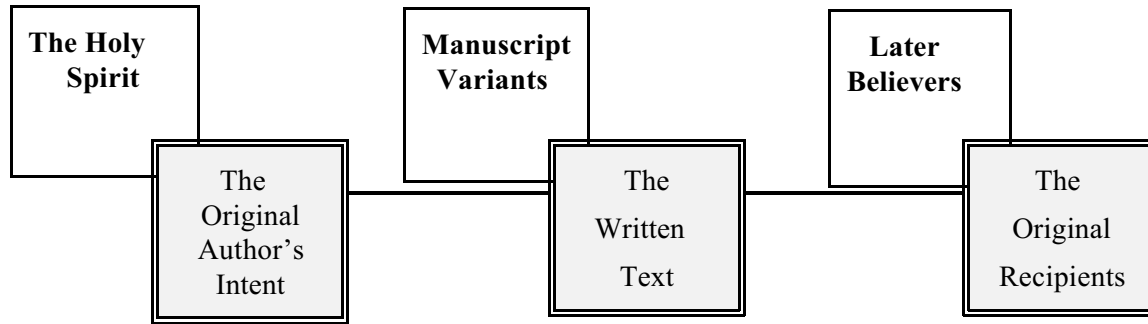
The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

II. Inappropriate Methods

- (1) Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- (2) Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- (3) Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- (4) Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- (5) Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me”) interpretation. At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



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



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

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

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) The first reading cycle
 - (a) Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, preferably from a different translation theory
 - (i) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (ii) dynamic equivalent (TEV, NJB)

- (iii) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
- (b) Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
- (c) Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme of the entire book.
- (d) Identify the predominant literary genre
 - (i) Old Testament
 - 1) Hebrew narrative
 - 2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - 3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - 4) Law codes
 - (ii) New Testament
 - 1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - 2) Parables (Gospels)
 - 3) Letters/epistles
 - 4) Apocalyptic literature
- (2) The second reading cycle
 - (a) Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 - (b) Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 - (c) Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- (3) The third reading cycle
 - (a) Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 - (b) List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - (i) the author
 - (ii) the date
 - (iii) the recipients
 - (iv) the specific reason for writing
 - (v) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - (vi) references to historical people and events
 - (c) Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 - (d) Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- (4) The fourth reading cycle
 - (a) Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - (i) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (ii) dynamic equivalent (TEV, NJB)
 - (iii) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - (b) Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - (i) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - (ii) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - (iii) contrasting concepts
 - (c) List the following items
 - (i) significant terms
 - (ii) unusual terms
 - (iii) important grammatical structures
 - (iv) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences

- (d) Look for relevant parallel passages
 - (i) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - a) “systematic theology” books
 - b) reference Bibles
 - c) concordances
 - (ii) Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - (iii) Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- (e) Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - (i) study Bibles
 - (ii) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - (iii) Bible introductions
 - (iv) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

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

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

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

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

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

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

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

- (1) Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- (2) Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- (3) Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff; 119:1ff).

(4) Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.

(5) Remain humble and teachable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI. This Commentary’s Method

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

(1) A brief historical outline introduces each book. Check this information after you have completed “reading cycle #three.”

(2) Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.

(3) At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:

(a) The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)

(b) The New King James Version (NKJV)

(c) The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

(d) Today’s English Version (TEV)

(e) The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are

able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topical sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach, or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph-level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- (4) The notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - (a) literary context
 - (b) historical, cultural insights
 - (b) grammatical information
 - (d) word studies
 - (e) relevant parallel passages
- (5) At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions
 - (a) The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 - (b) The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - (c) The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - (d) The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- (6) For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text
 - (a) manuscript variations
 - (b) alternate word meanings
 - (c) grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - (d) ambiguous textsAlthough the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- (7) At the close of each chapter, relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

OPENING STATEMENTS ON THE STUDY OF GENESIS 1-11

- A. How is Genesis 1-11 related to modern western science?
1. totally antagonistic
 2. total agreement
 3. points of similarity
- Science is a research method. It is a modern phenomenon but is always changing in light of new knowledge. God as creator and God as savior are held together by the “two books,” nature (natural revelation) and Scripture (special revelation). God wrote both! They do not disagree!
- B. How does Genesis 1-11 relate to modern history?
1. Eastern and western literary genres are different. Not true or false, not right or wrong, but different. Genesis 1-11 is pre-history. It is crucial theologically, but somewhat veiled. Veiled in literary genre, veiled in historical drama, veiled as is the end of history (i.e. Revelation).
 2. Christianity, as Judaism, is a historically based religion. It stands or falls on its historical events. However, some events (i.e. Gen. 1-11) are beyond our comprehension, so they are communicated in ways we can relate to (i.e. accommodation). This is not in any way to deny their trustworthiness, but to emphasize their theological purpose.
 3. Genesis is set within a “historical” frame of reference. We can document obvious links beginning with chapter 12 (i.e. nuzi and Mari Tablets). However, chapters 1-11 are beyond our historical confirmation and genre identification.
- C. How does Genesis 1-11 relate to literature?
1. There are parallels of chapters 1-2, 3, and 6-9 from Mesopotamian sources. Often terminology, details, and story line are similar. However, the Bible’s monotheism and the dignity of humanity are unique.
 2. There are at least two dangers in approaching the Bible as literature.
 - a. As literature it is mythological, totally non-historical.
 - b. As literature it is literal, no figurative language, no eastern genres, no dramatic, parabolic events.
 - c. God has delivered a self-revelation using human language, analogies, and negations. It is true and trustworthy, but not exhaustive.
- D. How do we interpret Genesis 1-11?
1. How it all began and how it will all end are veiled (Genesis 1-11 and Revelation, i.e. we see through a glass darkly).
 2. We have all the truths needed to respond to God and to understand the Bible. But, we do not have exhaustive, literal, complete facts. We have theologically selective and interpreted events.
 3. We must view Genesis 1-11 through
 - a. literary genre
 - b. theological emphasis
 - c. historical events
 - d. modern western science/culture/biases
 4. We all stand before the Bible (i.e. God’s revelation) and are judged by it. It is beyond our reason, but we must understand it to respond to it. Believers interpret it differently (some

poorly), but all are responsible for the truths they understand. It reveals God; it reveals human rebellion; it reveals redemption. Our eternities are related to these truths, not the how and why of creation and the events of Gen. 1-11. They are primarily the who and why, which are so crucial.

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

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

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

II. CANONIZATION

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

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

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

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The Bible itself does not name the author (as is true of many OT books). Genesis has no "I" sections like Ezra, Nehemiah, or "we" sections like Acts.
- B. Jewish tradition:
 - 1. Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it:
 - a. Ben Sirah's *Ecclesiasticus*, 24:23, written about 185 B.C.
 - b. The Baba Bathra 14b, a part of the Talmud
 - c. Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, living about 20 B.C. to A.D. 42
 - d. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, living about A.D. 37-70
 - 2. This was a revelation to Moses
 - a. Moses is said to have written for the people:
 - (1) Exodus 17:14

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

C. Christian tradition

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

D. Modern Scholarship

- 1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers, which was a characteristic of Egyptian scribes):
 - a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11

- b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
 - c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
 - d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
 - e. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques, however, differed from country to country:
 - (1) In Mesopotamia, they were careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote: “the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign” from about 1400 B. C.
 - (2) In Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran (i.e. Dead Sea Scrolls) followed this approach.
2. Scholars of the 19th century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graff-Wellhausen). This theory was based on:
- a. the different names for God
 - b. apparent doublets in the text
 - c. the literary form of the accounts
 - d. the theology of the accounts
3. Supposed sources and dates:
- a. J source (use of YHWH from southern Israel) - 950 B.C.
 - b. E source (use of Elohim from northern Israel) - 850 B.C.
 - c. JE combined - 750 B.C.
 - d. D source ("The Book of the Law," II Kgs. 22:8, discovered during Josiah's reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah's time to support his reform.) - 621 B.C.
 - e. P source (priestly rewrite of OT, especially ritual and procedure) - 400 B.C.
 - f. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was
 - (1) The High Priest (or another of his family) at the time of the writing
 - (2) Jeremiah the Prophet
 - (3) Ezra the Scribe - IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
 - g. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale's Commentaries*, "Leviticus" pp. 15-25).
 - h. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
 - (1) Doublets, like Gen. 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given, followed by a specific account. This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
 - (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
 - (a) YHWH - the Covenant name for deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 103).
 - (b) Elohim - deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 104).
 - (c) Other ancient Near Eastern texts use several names to describe their high god (cf. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason L. Archer, p. 68).
 - (3) It is common in non-biblical near eastern literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (cf. R. K. Harrison, pp. 522-526).

- E. The evidence from ancient near eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style (patriarchal) oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis (cf. P. J. Wiseman's *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*). Beginning in Gen. 37, a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites' days in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moses' formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral (patriarchal) traditions. His writings have been updated by later scribes. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT have been illustrated by modern archaeology.
- F. There is an emerging theory that there were scribes (in different parts of Israel) working on different parts of the Pentateuch at the same time under the direction of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 10:25). This theory was first proposed by E. Robertson's *The Old Testament Problem*.

V. DATE

- A. Genesis covers the period from the creation of the cosmos to Abraham's family. It is possible to date Abraham's life from secular literature of the period. The approximate date would be 2000 B. C., the second millennium B. C. The basis for this is
1. father acted as priest to family (like Job)
 2. life was nomadic following herds and flocks
 3. migration of Semitic peoples during this period
- B. The early events of Genesis 1-11 are true historical events (possibly historical drama) but undatable by current available knowledge.
1. I personally have come to accept the earth's age as several billion years (cf. Hugh Ross' *The Genesis Question and Creation and Time*).
 2. However, I also believe in the special creation of Adam and Eve at a much later period (possibly 10,000-8,000 B.C.). It seems to me that Gen. 1-11 is presented in a "historical" framework, but the historical aspect is fuzzy at the beginning (i.e. Gen. 1-3) and end (i.e. Revelation). Adam and Eve's children start the civilizations of Mesopotamia (i.e. chapter 4). If this framework is to be maintained then Adam is a modern (homo sapien) and not a primitive homo erectus. If this is true then there must be an evolutionary development in hominids as well as a special creation by God at a much later point in time. I am not completely comfortable with this, but it is the best I can do with my current understanding of the Bible and science.
- C. It must be remembered when studying Genesis that the historical events are recorded by Moses who led the people of God out of Egypt in either (1) 1445 B. C., based on I Kings 6:1; or (2) 1290 B. C., based on evidence from modern archaeology. Therefore, either by oral tradition, unknown written sources, or direct divine revelation, Moses records "how it all began" focusing on "who" and "why," not "how" and "when"!

VI. SOURCES FOR CORROBORATING THE HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. Other Biblical books
1. Creation - Psalms 8; 19; 33; 50; 104; 148

2. Abraham's time - Job

B. Archaeological sources

1. Earliest known literary parallel of the cultural setting of Genesis 1-11 is the Ebla cuneiform tablets from northern Syria dating about 2500 B.C., written in Akkadian.

2. Creation

a. The closest Mesopotamian account dealing with creation, *Enuma Elish*, dating from (1) NIV Study Bible, about 1900-1700 B.C. or (2) John H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, p. 21, about 1000 B.C. It was found in Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh and other copies were found at several other places. There are seven cuneiform tablets written in Akkadian that describe creation by Marduk.

(1) The gods, *Apsu* (fresh water—male) and *Tiamat* (salt water—female) had unruly, noisy children. These two gods tried to silence the younger gods.

(2) One of *Ea* and *Damkina's* children, *Marduk* (the chief god of the emerging city of Babylon), defeats *Tiamat*. He formed the earth and sky from her body.

(3) *Ea* formed humanity from another defeated god, *Kingu*, who was the male consort of *Tiamat* after the death of *Apsu*. Humanity came from *Kingu's* blood.

(4) *Marduk* was made chief of the Babylonian pantheon.

b. "The creation seal" is a cuneiform tablet which is a picture of a naked man and woman beside a fruit tree with a snake wrapped around the tree's trunk and positioned over the woman's shoulder as if talking to her.

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

3. Creation and Flood - "*The Atrahasis Epic*" records the rebellion of the lesser gods because of overwork and the creation of seven human couples (from clay, blood, and saliva) to perform the duties of these lesser gods. Humans were destroyed because of: (1) over population and (2) noise. Human beings were reduced in number by a plague, two famines and finally a flood, planned by *Enlil*. *Atrahasis* builds a boat and brings animals on board in order to save them from the waters. These major events are seen in the same order in Genesis 1-8. This cuneiform composition dates from about the same time as *Enuma Elish* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*, about 1900-1700 B. C. All are in Akkadian.

4. Noah's flood

a. A Sumerian tablet from Nippur, called *Eridu Genesis*, dating from about 1600 B.C., tells about *Ziusudra* and a coming flood.

(1) *Enka*, the water god, warns *Ziusudra* of a coming flood.

(2) *Ziusudra*, a king-priest, believes this revelation and builds a huge square boat and stocks it with all kinds of seeds.

(3) The flood lasted seven days.

(4) *Ziusudra* opened a window on the boat and released several birds to see if dry land had appeared.

(5) He also offered a sacrifice of an ox and sheep when he left the boat.

b. A composite Babylonian flood account from four Sumerian tablets, known as the *Gilgamesh Epic* originally dating from about 2500-2400 B.C., although the written composite form in cuneiform Akkadian, is much later (ca. 1900-1700 B.C.). It tells about a flood survivor, *Utnapishtim*, who tells *Gilgamesh*, the king of *Uruk*, how he survived the great flood and was granted eternal life.

- (1) *Ea*, the water god, warns of a coming flood and tells *Utnapishtim* (Babylonian form of *Ziusudra*) to build a boat.
 - (2) *Utnapishtim* and his family, along with selected healing plants, survived the flood.
 - (3) The flood lasted seven days.
 - (4) The boat came to rest in northern Persia, on Mt. Nisir.
 - (5) He sent out 3 different birds to see if dry land had yet appeared.
5. The Mesopotamian literature which describes an ancient flood are all drawing from the same source. The names often vary, but the plot is the same. An example is that *Zivusudra*, *Atrahasis* and *Utnapishtim* all represent the same human king.
 6. The historical parallels to the early events of Genesis can be explained in light of mankind's pre-dispersion (Genesis 1-11) knowledge and experience of God. These true historical core memories have been elaborated and mythologicalized into the current flood accounts common throughout the world. The same can also be said not only of creation (Gen. 1,2) and the Flood (Gen. 6-9) but also of human and angelic unions (Genesis 6).
 7. Patriarch's Day (Middle Bronze)
 - a. Mari tablets - cuneiform legal (Ammonite culture) and personal texts in Akkadian from about 1700 B.C.
 - b. Nuzi tablets - cuneiform archives of certain families (Horite or Hurrian culture) written in Akkadian from about 100 miles SE of Nineveh about 1500-1300 B.C. They record family and business procedures. For further specific examples, see John H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, pp. 52-58.
 - c. Alalak tablets - cuneiform texts from Northern Syria from about 2000 B.C.
 - d. Some of the names found in Genesis are recorded as place names in the Mari Tablets: Serug, Peleg, Terah, and Nahor. Other biblical names were also common: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Laban, and Joseph. This shows that biblical names fit this time and place.
 8. "Comparative historiographic studies have shown that, along with the Hittites, the ancient Hebrews were the most accurate, objective and responsible recorders of near eastern history." R. K Harrison, *Biblical Criticism*, p 5.
 9. Archaeology has proven to be so helpful in establishing the historicity of the Bible. However, a word of caution is necessary. Archaeology is not an absolutely trustworthy guide because of
 - a. poor techniques in early excavations
 - b. various, very subjective interpretations of the artifacts that have been discovered
 - c. no agreed-upon chronology of the ancient Near East (although one is being developed from tree rings and pottery).
- C. Egyptian creation accounts can be found in John H. Walton's, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) pp. 23-24, 32-34.
1. In Egyptian literature, creation began with an unstructured, chaotic, primeval water. Creation was seen as a developing structure (hill) out of watery chaos.
 2. In Egyptian literature from Memphis, creation occurred by the spoken word of Ptah.
 3. Each of the major cities of Egypt had separate traditions emphasizing their patron deities.
- D. The addresses of evangelical groups on cosmology:
1. Institute for Creation Research (Young Earth—catastrophe theory)
P. O. Box 2667

El Cajon, CA 92021-0667
 2. Reasons to Believe (Old Earth—uniformitarian geology theory)
P. O. Box 5978
Pasadena, CA 91117

VII. LITERARY UNITS (CONTEXT)

- A. Outline based on Moses' use of the phrase "the generations of" (*toledoth*):
1. origins of heaven and earth, 1:1-2:3
 2. origins of humanity, 2:4-4:26
 3. generations of Adam, 5:1-6:8
 4. generations of Noah, 6:9-9:17
 5. generations of the sons of Noah, 10:1-11:9
 6. generations of Shem, 11:10-26
 7. generations of Terah (Abraham), 11:27-25:11
 8. generations of Ishmael, 25:12-18
 9. generations of Isaac, 25:19-35:29
 10. generations of Esau, 36:1-8
 11. generations of the sons of Esau, 36:9-43
 12. generations of Jacob, 37:1-50:26 (#1-11 have a Mesopotamian literary background but #12 has an Egyptian literary flavor.)
- B. Theological outline:
1. creation for man and of man, 1-2
 2. mankind and creation fall
 3. results of the Fall (4-11)
 - a. evil affects Cain and his family
 - b. evil affects Seth and his family
 - c. evil affects everyone
 - d. great flood
 - e. evil still present in Noah's family
 - f. mankind still in rebellion; the tower of Babel
 - g. God's dispersion
 4. a man for all men (3:15), 12-50
 - a. Abraham (12:1-3), 11:27-23:20
 - b. Isaac, 24:1-26:35
 - c. Jacob, 27:1-36:4
 - (1) Judah (the line of the Messiah)
 - (2) Joseph (double land inheritance), 37:1-50:26

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. How did it all begin?
1. It began with God (Genesis 1-2). The Bible's world-view is not polytheism but monotheism. It does not focus on the "how" of creation but on the "who." It is short, but so powerful in its presentation. The Bible's theology was totally unique in its day though some of the words, patterns of activities, and topics are found in other Mesopotamian literature.
 2. God wanted fellowship. The creation is only a stage for God to fellowship with man. This is a "touched planet" (cf. C. S. Lewis).
 3. There is no possibility of understanding the rest of the Bible without Genesis 1,2-4 and 11-12.
 4. Humans must respond by faith to what they understand of God's will (Gen. 15:6 and Rom. 4).

- B. Why is the world so evil and unfair? It was "very good" (1:31), but Adam and Eve sinned (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:17-21). The terrible results are obvious:
1. Cain kills Abel (chap. 4)
 2. revenge of Lamech (4:23)
 3. unlawful unions (6:1-4)
 4. wickedness of man (6:5,11-12; 8:21)
 5. the drunkenness of Noah (9)
 6. the Tower of Babel (11)
 7. the polytheism of Ur (11)
- C. How is God going to fix it?
1. Messiah will come for all humans (3:15)
 2. God calls one to call all (Gen. 12:1-3 and Exod. 19:5-6)
 3. God is willing to work with fallen mankind (Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, the Jews and Gentiles) and by His grace provides
 - a. promises
 - b. covenants (unconditional and conditional)
 - c. sacrifice
 - d. worship

READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vi)

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit

4. Subject of fourth literary unit

5. Etc.

GENESIS 1:1-2:3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATION

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

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

1. First paragraph

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

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

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

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

OPENING STATEMENTS

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

3. its structure
4. its monotheism
5. its theological purpose

Interpretation must balance:

1. an exegesis of the verses
2. a systematic understanding of all Scripture
3. genre specificity

It reveals the origin of physical things (“and it was good”) and the corruption of these things. In many ways the Christ event is a new creation and Jesus is the new Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The new age may be a restoration of the garden of Eden and its intimate fellowship with God and the animals (compare Gen. 1-2 with Rev. 21-22).

- E. The great truth of this chapter is not how, but who, moving rapidly toward why!
- F. Genesis reflects true knowledge but not exhaustive knowledge. It is given to us in ancient (Mesopotamian) thought forms, but it is infallible truth. It is related to its day, but it is totally unique. It speaks of the inexpressible, yet it speaks truly. Basically it is a world-view (who), not a world-picture (how).
- G. Without Genesis 1-3 the Bible is incomprehensible. Notice how quickly the story moves from God to Israel. Creation forms an integral but passing piece of the account of God’s choice of Israel for the purpose of world-wide redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3 and John 3:16).
- H. Your answer to the question, “What is the purpose of Inspiration and Revelation?” will affect the way you see Genesis 1. If you see the purpose as the impartation of facts about creation, you will view it one way (i.e. propositional truths). If you see it as conveying general truths about God and man and sin, then possibly you will see it theologically (i.e. paradigmatic). If, however, you view the basic purpose as the establishment of a relationship between God and man, possibly another (i.e. existentially).
- I. One aspect of this chapter is theological. As the plagues of the Exodus showed YHWH’s power over the gods of Egypt, Genesis 1,2 may show YHWH’s power over the gods of Mesopotamia. The main element is God. God alone did it for His own purposes.
- J. I marvel at my own ignorance! I am appalled at my own historical, cultural, and denominational conditioning! What a mighty God we serve! What an awesome God has reached out to us (even in our rebellion)! The Bible is a balance of love and power; grace and justice! The more we know the more we know we don’t know!
- K. Here are the basic approaches of some helpful books:
1. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of modern science:
 - a. Barnard Ramm’s *The Christian’s View of Science and Scripture* (good scientifically and theologically)
 - b. Hugh Ross’ *Creation and Time* and *The Genesis Question* (good scientifically but weak theologically)
 - c. Harry Peo and Jimmy Davis’ *Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialog* (very helpful)
 2. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of ancient Near Eastern parallels
 - a. R. K. Harrison’s *Introduction to the Old Testament and Old Testament Times*

- b. John H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*
 - c. K. A. Kitchen's *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*
 - d. Edwin M. Yamauchi's *The Stones and the Scriptures*
3. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of theology from LaSor, Hubbard and Bush's *Old Testament Survey*
- a. "Literary device also is found in the names used. The correspondence of the name with the person's function or role is striking in several instances. Adam means "mankind" and Eve is "(she who gives) life." Surely, when an author of a story names the principal characters Mankind and Life, something is conveyed about the degree of literalness intended! Similarly Cain means "forger (of metals)"; Enoch is connected with "dedication, consecration" (4:17; 5:18); Jubal with horn and trumpet (4:21); while Cain, condemned to be a *nāḏ*, a "wanderer," goes to live in the land of *Nod*, a name transparently derived from the same Hebrew root, thus the land of wandering! This suggests that the author is writing as an artist, a storyteller, who uses literary device and artifice. One must endeavor to distinguish what he intends to teach from the literary means employed" p. 72.
 - b. the theological implication of Gen. 1-11:
"Implication for Gen. 1-11. Recognizing the literary technique and form and noting the literary background of chs. 1-11 does not constitute a challenge to the reality, the "eventness," of the facts portrayed. One need not regard this account as myth; however, it is not "history" in the modern sense of eyewitness, objective reporting. Rather, it conveys theological truths about events, portrayed in a largely symbolic, pictorial literary genre. This is not to say that Gen. 1-11 conveys historical falsehood. That conclusion would follow only if it purported to contain objective descriptions. The clear evidence already reviewed shows that such was not the intent. On the other hand, the view that the truths taught in these chapters have no objective basis is mistaken. They affirm fundamental truths: creation of all things by God; special divine intervention in the production of the first man and woman; unity of the human race; pristine goodness of the created world, including humanity; entrance of sin through the disobedience of the first pair; depravity and rampant sin after the Fall. All these truths are facts, and their certainty implies the reality of the facts. Put another way, the biblical author uses such literary traditions to describe unique primeval events that have no time-conditioned, human-conditioned, experience-based historical analogy and hence can be described only by symbol. The same problem arises at the end time: the biblical author there, in the book of Revelation, adopts the esoteric imagery and involved literary artifice of apocalyptic" p. 74.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-5

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

1:1 "In the beginning" *Bereshith* is the Hebrew title of the book. We get *Genesis* from the Septuagint translation. This is the beginning of history but not of God's activity (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:5,25; Eph.

1:4; Titus 1:2; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). R. K. Harrison says it should be translated “by way of beginning” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 542 footnote 3).

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

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

This discussion of clauses is theologically significant. The Jewish Publication Society of America has translated Gen. 1:1-29 a temporal clause, “When God began to create the heaven and the earth—the earth being unformed and void. . .” This translation might conclude that God and matter are co-eternal like Greek cosmology (cf. “Creation and Cosmology” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1059). The Sumerian account of creation, *Enuma Elish*, begins with “when in the beginning. . .”

▣ **“created”** *Bara* (cf. 1:1,21,27; 2:3,4) is the Hebrew term used only for God’s creative activity. God willed into being everything but Himself. Psalm 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3 and II Pet. 3:5 reflect creation (cosmology) by God’s spoken word (*fiat*) from nothing (*ex nihilo*). Greek (gnostic) and Mesopotamian philosophies emphasize an eternal dualism between “spirit” and “matter.”

The Bible asserts that creation has a beginning point. Modern science would characterize this as the “big bang.” Naturalism can now not assert an unlimited regression back in time.

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

▣ **“the earth”** Genesis 1 is admittedly geocentric (cf. v. 15). This fits the theological purpose of the chapter, not science. Remember that the Bible is written in the language of description for theological purposes. It is not anti-scientific, but pre-scientific.

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



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

Does this imply one continent (i.e. Pangea)? The earth is changing form (i.e. tectonic plates) continually. The question again is the age of the earth. These words appear together in Jer. 4:23. They are used in the Sumerian and Babylonian accounts of creation but in a mythological sense. This state of creation shows that God used a progressive process to an inhabitable earth (cf. Isa. 45:18).



“darkness” This does not represent evil, but chaos. God names the darkness in v. 5 as He does the light. These two terms, though often used to denote spiritual realities, are representing physical realities here.



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

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



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

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



NASB, TEV	“moving”
NKJV, NIV	“hovering”
NRSV	“swept”
NJB	“sweeping”

This term developed the connotation of “brooding” or “active hovering” (cf. JB). This is a mother bird word (cf. Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 31:5; 40:31; Hos. 3; 11:4). It is not related to Phoenician cosmology

which asserts that the earth came from an egg, but a feminine metaphor for God's active care of His creation at this early stage!

1:3 “God said” This is the theological concept of creation by the spoken word, using the Latin word *fiat* (cf. 9,14,20,24,29; Ps. 33:6; 148:5; Heb. 11:3). Also notice that out of nothing matter came into being using the Latin phrase *ex nihilo* (cf. II Macc. 7:28), by God's command. This power of the spoken word can also be seen in (1) the patriarchal blessings, (2) Isa. 55:11, (3) Jesus as the Word in John 1:1 and (4) Jesus as returning with a two-edged sword in His mouth (cf. II Thess. 2:8; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:6; 2:12,16; 19:15,21). This is an idiomatic way of creation by God's will by thought. What God wants, occurs!

1:4 “God saw that the light was good” (vv. 4,10,12,18,21,25,31) All creation was good (cf. 1:31). Evil was not part of God's original creation, but a perversion of the good.

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

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL TOPIC: YOM

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

1. The Literal Twenty-Four Hour Period Theory

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

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

2. The Day-Age Theory

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

- a. How did plants survive for “ages” without the sun?

b. How did pollination take place in plants if insects and birds were not made until “ages” later?

3. The Alternate Age-Day Theory

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

a. The same problems arise as in the Day-Age Theory.

b. Does the text indicate “day” to be used both as twenty-four hours and as an era?

4. The Progressive Creation-Catastrophe Theory

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

5. The Eden-Only Theory

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

6. The Gap Theory

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

7. The Sacred Week Theory

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-8

⁶Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

1:6 “an expanse” This could mean “to hammer out.” This refers to the earth’s atmosphere depicted metaphorically as an air vault or inverted bowl above the surface of the earth (cf. Isa. 40:22). It could also mean “to stretch out,” as in Isa. 42:5.

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-13

⁹Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. ¹³There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

1:9-10 Does this imply one continent (i.e. pangea)? The earth is changing form (i.e. tectonic plates) continually. The question again is the age of the earth.

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

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

1:11 "after their kind" Creation is structured so that once created, plants, animals and humans can reproduce and adapt in and of themselves. God created life to adapt. At this level, evolution to varying conditions surely occurred through time (micro-evolution).

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1: 14-19

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

1:14 "for signs" The heavenly lights were to mark feast days (cf. 18:14; Lev. 23; Deut. 31:10) and cycles of rest, work, and worship (cf. Ps. 104:19-23).

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:20-23

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." ²¹God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

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

1:20 “living creatures” (vv.23; 2:7) This same word, *nephesh*, is used of humans and animals (cf. 2:19; Lev. 11:46; 24:18). It represents life force (cf. Ezek. 18:4) related to and dependant on this planet.

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

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

▣

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “the great sea monsters”

NKJV, NIV “great sea creatures”

LXX, KJV, “great whales”

JB “great sea-serpents”

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

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

1:22 As the plants were made to reproduce, so too, the animals. God wants His planet filled with life (cf. 1:28; 9:1,7). This was one of the rebellion issues (i.e. unwillingness to separate and fill the planet) of the Tower of Babel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

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

SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

- A. *Objectives Sustained* by Phillip Johnson
- B. *Darwinism on Trial* by Phillip Johnson
- C. *Creation and Time* by Hugh Ross
- D. *The Creator and the Cosmos* by Hugh Ross
- E. *The Genesis Question* by Hugh Ross
- F. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* by Bernard Ramm
- G. *The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith* by Malcolm A. Jeeves

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO GENESIS 1:24-2:3

INTRODUCTION

- A. In the past two centuries, OT scholars have often asserted that Genesis records two creation accounts by different authors, using different names for God. However:
 1. this may be typical eastern literary form of a general account followed by a more specific account
 2. Genesis 1:1-2:3 may refer to the creation of the cosmos and Gen. 2:4-25 to the creation of this planet and especially humanity.
 3. this may reflect the different aspects of God's character (i.e. rabbinical)
 - a. *Elohim* - creator, provider and sustainer of all life
 - b. *YHWH* - savior, redeemer and covenant God of Israel
- B. There seems to be a distinction made between God creating out of nothing and created things bringing forth. Example: God created in v. 21 yet in v. 20 the water produces; in v. 25 God made yet in v. 24 the earth produced. Augustine noticed this distinction and postulated two acts of creation: (1) matter and spiritual beings and (2) their organization and diversification.
- C. This passage clearly teaches that humans are like the higher land animals: (1) both have *nephesh*, 1:24 and 2:7; (2) both were created on the sixth day, 1:31; (3) both were created from the ground, 2:19; (4) both eat plants for food, 1:29-30; (5) both procreate. However, humans are also like God:

(1) special creation, 1:26; 2:7; (2) made in the image and likeness of God, 1:26; (3) have dominion, 1:26,28.

- D. Genesis 1:26 “Let us . . . ” has been greatly discussed. Several theories have emerged:
1. The plural of majesty (but no early example in the Bible or in rabbinic literature)
 2. God speaking of Himself and the heavenly court of angels, I Kgs. 22:19
 3. Points toward plurality in God, and therefore, foreshadowing of the Trinity, 3:22;11:7; Isa. 6:8; 61:14. It is to be noted that (a) Elohim is PLURAL, (b) the form of the word “one” in the Shema, Deut. 6:4-6, is also PLURAL, as in Gen. 2:24, (c) divine persons are mentioned in Ps. 2:2; 110:1,4; Zech. 3:8-9,11.
- E. Theories as to the meaning of image and likeness:
1. Ireneaeus and Tertullian:
 - a. Image—physical aspects of humanity
 - b. Likeness—spiritual aspects of humanity
 2. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and John of Damascus
 - a. Image—nonphysical characteristics of man
 - b. Likeness—aspects of man that can be developed such as holiness or morality, and if not developed then are lost.
 3. The Scholastics (Thomas Aquinas)
 - a. Image—mankind’s rational ability and freedom (natural)
 - b. Likeness—original righteousness and supernatural gifts that were lost at the fall.
 4. The Reformers
 - a. All basically denied any distinction between the terms (Gen. 5:1; 9:6).
 - b. Luther and Calvin both express this concept in different terms, but basically expressed the same truth.
 5. I think that they refer to our (1) personality; (2) consciousness; (3) language skills; (4) volition; and/or (5) morality.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:24-25

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. ²⁵God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

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

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

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

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-31

²⁶Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so. ³¹God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

1:26 “Let Us make” There has been much discussion over the plural “us.” Philo and Eben Ezra say it is “the plural of majesty” but this grammatical form does not occur until much later in Jewish literary history; Rashi says that it refers to the heavenly court (cf. IKgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6), but this cannot imply that angels had a part in creation. Others assume that it is an incipient form of the concept of a Triune God.

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

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

At this point in my theological understanding it is very difficult to relate the Bible’s account of the creation of the original pair with the fossil remains of several types of bi-pedal homo erectus. Some of these ancient grave sites include the burial of items apparently connected to a belief in an after life. I am not

offended by evolution within species. If this is true, then Adam and Eve are primitive humans and the historical time-frame of Gen. 1-11 must be radically expanded.

Possibly God created Adam and Eve at a much later period of time, making them “modern” humans (homo sapiens). If so, then their relationship to Mesopotamian civilization demands a special creation about 10,000-6,000 B.C. (i.e. the beginning of culture). If this was true then both uniformitarian geology (i.e. old earth) and catastrophe theories (i.e. young earth) relating to our current world may be true. I want to emphasize that this is just speculation at this point in time. There is so much moderns do not know about the ancient past. Again the “who” and “why,” not the “how” or “when” are crucial!

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

▣ **“let them rule”** This is literally “trample down.” This is a strong term that speaks of mankind’s dominion over nature (cf. Ps. 8:5-8). This same concept is found in v. 28. The two terms, “rule” in vv. 26 and 28, and “subdue” in v. 28 have the same basic etymology which means “to tread upon” or “trample.”

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

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

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

▣ **“male and female He created them”** Our sexual aspect relates to the needs and environment of this planet. Notice the mutuality! Our divine image allows us to uniquely relate to God.

1:28 “God blesses them . . . Be fruitful and multiply” Part of God’s blessing was to fulfill what they were created for, which was procreation. This blessing was both on the animals (cf. v. 22) and on man (cf. v.28;19:1,7). In the Mesopotamian accounts the noise of overpopulation is the reason for the gods’ destruction of humanity. The Genesis account urges population growth. It is surprising that one of the first acts of rebellion (cf. Gen. 10-11) was mankind’s reluctance to separate and fill the earth.

▣ **“subdue it”** This is a command in the Hebrew text which is parallel to “Be fruitful and multiply.” This makes both human sexuality and human development God’s will.

Both the Hebrew terms “subdue” and “rule” can have a negative (i.e. cruel domination) connotation. The specific context must determine whether the meaning is benign or aggressive.

1:29 The plant kingdom is divided into three different groups. In this verse, mankind is given the grains and the fruits for his food (cf. 2:16; 6:21), while the third group, the grasses, is given to the animals. It was not

until after the flood that humans were allowed to eat flesh (cf. Gen. 9:3). This may be connected with the fact that there was no harvest possible that year. It is theologically inappropriate to draw universal dietary food laws from Gen. 1.

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

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

1:31 “it was very good” This is an extremely important conclusion to creation because in gnostic Greek thought, matter is evil and spirit is good. In this Greek system (as well as some Mesopotamian texts) both matter and spirit are co-eternal which serves as the explanation of the problems on earth. But the Hebrew account is very different. Only God is eternal and matter is created for His purpose. There was no evil in God’s original creation, only “freedom”!

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3

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

2:1 “the heavens” This refers to the atmosphere above the earth and the starry heavens beyond the atmosphere.

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

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

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

This term is used in several different ways, particularly in the NT book of Heb. 3:7-4:11 and its interpretation of Ps. 95:7-11. In Hebrews this term “rest” applies both to the Sabbath rest, the Promised Land, and fellowship with God (heaven). God set the example for mankind.

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

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

The origin of the seven day week is shrouded in antiquity and mystery. However, every ancient culture that we know of seems to have known about it when their written history began.

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

GENESIS 2:4-25

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

BACKGROUND

- A. I personally reject the "J.E.D.P." theory of source criticism (cf. Introduction to Genesis, Modern Scholarship, D.) . For more information on this subject read Josh McDowell's *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict* or H.C. Leupold's *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1.
- B. Genesis 2:4-25 is a specific theological expansion of Genesis 1:1-2:3. This is a common Hebrew literary technique. Theologically chapter two sets the stage for chapter three.

- C. Genesis 1:31 crowns the beginning of our world with God’s intention, “goodness”; 2:1-3 should go with chapter 1 because 1:1-2:3 is a literary unit.
- D. Theologically 2:4-25 is more related to chapter 3 than chapter 1. It sets the literary stage for Eve’s temptation and sin.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-9

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

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

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

▣ **“the LORD God”** This is literally YHWH Elohim which combines the two most common names for God. This is the first time they are used together. Many modern scholars have assumed two authors for Gen. 1 and 2 because of the use of these divine names. However, the rabbis assert that they refer to the characteristics of deity: (1) Elohim as creator, provider and sustainer of all life on this planet and (2) YHWH as savior, redeemer and covenant making deity. The term YHWH is from the CAUSATIVE FORM of the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). It theologically implies the ever living, only living God. The Jews became afraid to pronounce this holy name lest they break the commandment about taking God’s name in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adon* (husband, owner, master, lord) whenever they read the text aloud. This is why in English YHWH is translated LORD.

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

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

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

2:6 “a mist” This is the Akkadian term for (1) flood or (2) flow of subterranean water. This possibly means that watering occurred by flooding. The verb is IMPERFECT which means repeated action in past time. The Arabic parallel is fog which is the origin of mist.

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

2:7 “formed” Literally this means “to mold clay” (cf. Jer. 18:6). This is the third term used to describe God’s creative action in relation to mankind (“make,” 1:26; “created,” 1:27 and “formed,” 2:7,19). The NT reveals that Jesus was God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

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

▣ **“the breath of life”** The Hebrew, *ruach*, and Greek, *pneuma*, words for “breath” can mean “wind” or “spirit.” God took special care with the creation of mankind but we still physically function as do all the animals on the planet (i.e. breathe, eat, excrete, and reproduce).

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

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

2:8 “garden” This term is used in the sense of a park. The Septuagint translates it with a Persian word, “paradise.”

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

However, the names of all the rivers do not fit modern geography. How much of the earth was changed by the Flood is uncertain. The similarities of the Mesopotamian and biblical accounts would logically put the garden in Mesopotamia but this is only speculation.

2:9 “tree of life. . . tree of the knowledge of good and evil” Gen. 3:3 implies that there was only one tree while 3:22 implies two trees. The tree of knowledge of good and evil has no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature. This tree was not magical, but it seemed to offer to mankind a way to be independent from their creator God or at least to gain knowledge and insight equal to or in competition with God. This is the essence of sin. It is also possible that it offered Eve a way to dominate Adam, which violated the created mutuality.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-14

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

2:10 “rivers” These were “branch streams.”

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

▣ **“flows around”** This literally means “winds through.”

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

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

▣ **“onyx”** All ancient terms for jewels are very uncertain. This stone was one of the twelve stone on the breastplate of the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:9).

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

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

2:14 “It flows east of Assyria” This is literally “Hiddekel” which is the name of one of Assyria’s capitals, Asshur, located on the river Tigris.

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:15-17

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

2:15 “to cultivate it and keep it” Work was mankind’s task before the fall and not a result of sin. The term “cultivate” means “to serve” while “keep” is “to protect.” This is part of the responsibility of human dominion. We are to be stewards, not exploiters, of the resources of this planet.

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

2:17 "From any tree in the garden you may eat freely" God's command was not burdensome. God was testing (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:22-25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Judg. 2:22; II Chron. 32:31) His highest creation's loyalty and obedience.

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

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

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

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

▣

NASB "you will surely die"

NKJV "you shall surely die"

NRSV "you shall die"

TEV "you will die the same day"

NJB "you are doomed to die"

This is an INFINITE ABSOLUTE and a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, "dying to die." This is the same as v. 16. This structure carries several possible translations (cf. *Twenty-Six Translations of the Old Testament*). Obviously death refers to spiritual death here (cf. Eph. 2:1), which results in physical death (cf. Gen. 5). In the Bible three stages of death are described: (1) spiritual death (cf. 2:17; 3:18:59:2; Rom. 5:12-21; 7:10-11; Eph. 2:1,5; Col. 2:13a; James 1:15); (2) physical death (cf. Gen. 5); and (3) eternal death, called "the second death" (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8). In a real sense this refers to all three.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-25

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." ¹⁹Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²²The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

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



NASB “a helper suitable for him”

NKJV “a helper comparable to him”

NRSV “a helper as his partner”

TEV “a suitable companion to help him”

NJB “a helper”

This means “one who complements or completes.” This term is often used to describe God’s help (cf. Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:4). Notice the mutuality between male and female as in 1:26-27 and the PLURAL IMPERATIVES of 1:28. Submission does not come until after the Fall (cf. 3:16). This specific account of the creation of woman is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature.

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

2:19 “God formed every beast” Some have taken this to assert that God created the animals after Adam in what they call the second creation account (cf. Gen. 2:4-25). But in reality the VERB form should be translated “had formed” (cf. NIV). Often the interpreter’s pre-suppositions drive the interpretation more than the text.

▣ **“to see what he would call them”** Names were very important to the Hebrews. This shows mankind’s authority and dominion over the animals.

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

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

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

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

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

2:23 “Woman. . .Man” Literally this is *Ishah*. . .*ish*, an obvious sound play (especially “her name *Ishah*”). Adam also names Eve. The etymology is uncertain. Usually *Adam* refers to humanity and *ish* to a specific individual.

2:24 “leave his father and his mother” The importance of the family causes it to be read back into this early account. Moses is reflecting on his own day and the importance of the family unit in an extended family living situation. Marriage takes precedence over in-laws!



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

This is a Hebrew idiom of loyalty, even intimacy (cf. Matt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31).



“one flesh” This shows the complete union and priority relationship of married couples. The PLURAL form of “one” speaks of the joining of the two. This same PLURAL form is used of God in Deut. 6:4-6, the great Jewish prayer on the oneness of God, the Shema.

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

The fact that the man and woman were naked implies a very controlled environment. This may lend itself to the Garden of Eden’s being a protected and special creation, different from the rest of the planet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

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

GENESIS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

- A. Genesis 3 is pivotal in understanding the problem of evil and suffering in our world.
- B. The effect of mankind's willful rebellion against a loving, caring, providing, fellowshiping God has affected not only their religious life but also their own personhood, their family life, and their world.
Notice the high price that God Himself personally paid in order for humanity to exercise freedom. God's joy and original purpose for/with creation was radically affected (but not permanently) by human rebellion. If we assume the goodness and loving provision of God, the rebellion of humanity (and possibly the angels) is seen in its radical disrespect and self-centeredness. God's continuing love and promise of salvation (cf. 3:15) also becomes more radical in its gracious character!
- C. Although this chapter has common motifs with other ancient Near Eastern texts, its presentation is monotheistic and not dualistic.

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF SIN

- A. Biblical material
 - 1. It is my theological assumption that Satan's created purpose was (1) to offer to God-conscious creatures an option which would lead to independence and then accusation, Job 1-2; Zech. 3; or (2) Genesis 3 presupposes a previous angelic rebellion in God's creation or at least a clear slandering of God to humans through angelic agency.
 - 2. Mankind is affected by temptation.
 - 3. The Bible does not specifically discuss the origin or purpose of "evil."
 - a. Some later Jewish writings asserted that sin began from Gen. 3 (in Satan, then in man)
 - b. Other Jewish inter-biblical writings assert that sin began in Gen. 6 (in "the sons of God")
 - c. After Jesus' day false teachers combined Judaism with Greek thought and asserted that evil was inherent in physical matter (cf. Col.; Eph.; I Tim.; II Tim.; and Titus)
 - 4. It is assumed that evil has a purpose or it would not exist. Yet there is an obvious intensification of evil and Satan from the OT to the NT (cf. *The Theology of the OT* by A. B. Davidson, pp. 300-306). In the OT Satan is not an enemy of God (except possibly in this chapter) but always an enemy of humanity. The rabbis say the evil one was jealous of God's love and care for mankind.
 - 5. Adam's sin affects all of creation (i.e. which is the Hebrew concept of corporality cf. Gen. 3:14-24; Rom. 5:12ff; 8:18ff).
- B. Historical-Theological development (taken from *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof).
 - 1. The rabbis deny original sin and opt for the two intents (good versus evil). The OT does not discuss Gen. 3 at length (nor do the rabbis).
 - 2. Irenaeus is the first church father to discuss Adam's sin and its consequences. This view of the fall of mankind through Adam's sin became dominant in the Western Church (i.e. Augustine). It apparently was used to combat gnosticism which posited the problem of evil in matter itself.
 - 3. Origen maintained that each human sinned voluntarily in a previous existence (Platonic).
 - 4. The Greek fathers (Eastern Church) of the third and fourth centuries de-emphasized Adam's part in the problem of evil in our world. This developed into Pelagianism (from an English monk) which denied any link at all.
 - 5. The Latin fathers, following Augustine, stressed the place of Adam in the problem of evil, sin, and suffering in our world.

6. During the Protestant Reformation the major reformers followed Augustine, while Armenius developed a semi-Pelagian reaction to dogmatic Calvinism.
7. The philosophers and theologians asserted several theories of sin:
 - a. Kant—some unknown, unexplainable something in the supersensible sphere
 - b. Leibnitz—due to the inherent limitations of the material cosmos
 - c. Schleiermacher—due to the sensuous nature of man
 - d. Ritschl—due to human ignorance
 - e. Barth—involved with the mystery of predestination
 - f. Whitehead—sin is inherent in this world system. It functions to develop both God and man.
8. The major thrust of the Bible is the redemption of mankind from sin and evil, wrought by a personal, loving God through Christ. Sin's origin is never discussed.

NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE FALL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-7

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

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

▣ **"the serpent"** See Special Topic following

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SERPENT

- A. The term "serpent" is *Nachash*. It has several possible etymologies:
1. *Kal Stem* - "to hiss"
 2. *Piel Stem* - "to whisper" as in sorcery or divination
 3. From 4:22 - "to shine" possibly related to the term "bronze"
 4. From Arabic root - "to creep"
- B. The definite article is present which shows one particular snake or personified entity.
- C. The literalness of the serpent is bolstered by:
1. It is listed as just one of the beasts of the field that God had created.
 2. Its punishment in 3:14 as a literal animal.
 3. It is alluded to specifically in the NT, II Cor. 11:3 and I Tim. 2:13-14.
- D. The serpent was specifically identified with Satan in:
1. The inter-testamental book of "Wisdom," 2:23-24. "For God created man to be immortal; . . . nevertheless, through envy of the Devil came death into the world."
 2. Irenaeus (about A.D. 130-202)
 3. Revelation 12:9; 20:2
 4. This identification is absent from the OT itself because it does not discuss Genesis 3 at any length. It is not even mentioned or interpreted in any other OT book.

E. Why Satan is not specifically named—The emphasis of the text is on mankind’s responsibility, not on supernatural temptation. In Romans 1-3 where man’s sinfulness is presented and 4-8 where its effects are noted, Satan is never mentioned.

▣ **“crafty”** There are two possible puns related to this term: (1) “crafty” or “wise” and (2) “prudent” from the original meaning, “to make naked.” This does not seem to be a negative term applied to the serpent but simply a recognition of his characteristics (cf. Matt. 10:16). This is possibly why the evil one chose to incarnate this particular beast.

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

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

▣ **“And he said”** There has been much speculation about an articulate serpent. We do not know the relationship between humans and animals before the fall although it must have been a friendly one. However, I assume that speech is part of the image of God in mankind and is; therefore, not normal for animals. This same fellowship is going to be restored in an eschatological setting (cf. Isa. 11:6-11). I assume that the snake was indwelt by Satan and therefore it is his voice that is heard. What is theologically surprising is that Eve was not surprised!

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

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

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and

after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

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

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

3:3 “but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden” From Gen. 2:9 we learn that there are two trees in the midst of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Apparently at the proper time the fruit of both of these trees would have been given to mankind, but mankind’s grabbing self-assertion takes this out of the plan of God (how opposite is Jesus’ reaction in Phil. 2:6-11). The tree of life is common to all ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, however, the tree of knowledge of good and evil is unique to the Bible. There is nothing magical about the fruit. It was the way that God was using it, not anything inherent in the physical qualities of the fruit itself, that made it significant.

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

3:4 “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die!’” Satan has first of all attacked God’s veracity; now he attacks the truth of God’s word. And, in v. 5, he will attack God’s benevolence and goodness toward humankind. The Hebrew form of this sentence is in a striking intensified form. Satan denies God’s statement.

3:5 “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened” There was limited truth in what Satan said, but it was a tragic half-truth (cf. Titus 1:15).

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

3:6 “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise” Here we see the threefold development from the temptation to the actual act of sin. The rabbis say that the eyes and ears are windows of the soul and what we let in grows in our heart until the fateful act is committed (cf. Prov. 23:7).

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

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-13

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

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

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

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

3:9 “Where are you?” Obviously this is not God looking for information, but asking a question so that they could realize what they had done (cf. v. 11).

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

3:12 “The man said” Here we have the emphasis on the fact that man is responsible even though he tries to blame Eve, even God Himself. Even in the midst of numerous excuses, blaming either Eve or God, man is responsible for his own actions. Flip Wilson’s theology, “The Devil made me do it!” is no more of an excuse than “Cultural environment made me do it” or “Genetic predisposition made me do it,” etc.

3:13 “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” Eve quickly learned from Adam and she began to make excuses. The term “deceived” seems to mean “cause to forget.”

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO GENESIS 3:14-24

INTRODUCTION

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

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:14-19

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; ¹⁵and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." ¹⁶To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." ¹⁷Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field;

¹⁹by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

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

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

▣ **"cursed are you more than all cattle"** This does not imply that all of the cattle were cursed. The phrase "more" can mean "out of all the cattle." The rabbis say that this refers to the gestation period of the cattle versus that of the snake, which the Talmud says is seven years.

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

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

3:15 "and I will put enmity" Enmity is a word used between persons. This seems to be the transition where God's judgment is addressed to Satan, not a literal serpent (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

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

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

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

The term “bruise” can mean “crush,” “pound,” or “strike” (cf. Rom. 16:20). Notice the SINGULAR PERSONAL PRONOUN. The battle will eventually come down to individuals.



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

The same word is used for both but it is obvious that Satan gets the worst end of the deal. This seems to refer to the crucifixion when understood from the NT perspective.

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

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

▣ **“yet your desire shall be for your husband”** The Hebrew word translated here “desire” really means “to turn.” Eve turned away from YHWH. Her punishment is turning to her husband, who often takes advantage of the situation.

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

3:17 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife” Adam should have been following God but he followed his wife and broke God’s specific command.

▣ **“cursed is the ground because of you”** There is a play on the word “Adam” (*Adam*) and the word “ground” (*adamah*). Both have the same root. We can see the consequences of the fall of mankind and nature in Rom. 8:16ff.

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

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

3:19 “till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken” This is a direct connection between Adam’s fall, spiritual death and physical death. God is trustworthy. He said that they would die and they certainly did!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:20-21

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY GOD CLOTHED THEM WITH ANIMAL SKINS

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:22-24

²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" — ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

3:22 “Behold, the man has become like one of Us” There has been much discussion about these PLURALS in Genesis (cf. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). Verse 22 begins with a SINGULAR and develops into a PLURAL. If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, this obviously does refer to the triune God, not to the much later Hebrew grammatical form called the plural of majesty. It could refer to the angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19). This OT plurality of God can be seen in the use of the word “one” in Deut 6:4 which is a PLURAL form (cf. Gen. 2:24). It can also be seen in the multiple use of the term LORD in Ps. 110:1 and in the personification of deity known as the angel of the LORD; for one example of many, see the burning bush of Exod. 3:2,4.

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

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

3:24 “the cherubim” These are winged angelic creatures which guarded the garden of God to keep mankind out.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHERUBIM

- A. One of several types of angelic beings.
- B. Etymology is uncertain:
 - 1. From Akkadian “intercessor” or “mediator” between God and man
 - 2. From Hebrew this is a possible word play, “chariot” and cherub” (cf. Ezek. 1; 10)
 - 3. Some say it means “brilliant appearance”
- C. Physical form—This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the ancient Near East. Some link them to:
 - 1. Winged bull of Mesopotamia
 - 2. Winged eagle-lions of Egypt called “griffins”
 - 3. Winged creatures on Hiram, King of Tyres’ throne
 - 4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab’s ivory palace in Samaria
- D. Physical Description
 - 1. The form cherubim is linked with the Seraphim of Isaiah 6.
 - 2. Examples of different forms
 - a. Number of faces
 - (1) two—Ezek. 41:18
 - (2) four—Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14,16,21,22
 - (3) one—Rev. 4:7

- b. Number of wings
 - (1) two—I Kgs. 6:24
 - (2) four—Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
 - (3) six (like Seraphim of Isa. 6:2) —Rev. 4:8
- 3. Other features
 - a. Human hands—Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21
 - b. Legs
 - (1) Straight, no knee—Ezek. 1:7
 - (2) Calf feet—Ezek. 1:7
- 4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what cherubim looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII:3:3).

E. Places and purpose found in the Bible

- 1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)
- 2. Tabernacle
 - a. Over the Ark of the Covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; I Sam. 4:4
 - b. Depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35
- 3. Solomon’s Temple
 - a. Two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; I Kgs. 6:23-28; 8:6-7; II Chron. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
 - b. On walls of inner shrine; I Kgs. 6:29,35; II Chron. 3:7
 - c. On panels that were associated with the several lavers; I Kgs. 7:27-39
- 4. Ezekiel’s Temple
 - a. Carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25
- 5. Connected with transportation of deity
 - a. Possibly a metaphor for wind; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
 - b. Connected with God’s throne; Ps.80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
 - c. Connected with God’s portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; I Chron. 28:18
- 6. Herod’s Temple
 - a. Painted on walls (cf. Talmud “Yoma” 54a)
- 7. Revelation throne scene; Rev. 4-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

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

GENESIS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

- A. It has been asserted by many commentators that chapter 4 describes the development of the rebellious seed of Cain while chapter 5 describes the development of the godly seed of Seth.

Although this is helpful in looking at these chapters it completely breaks down in the evilness of all men seen in 6:5-6, 11-12,13.

- B. Many have asserted that chapter 4 is not a detailed western genealogy but an eastern Hebraic genealogy that simply hits the high points. If you add up the dates of Genesis 4 they seem to be overlapping and only cover about a 2,000 year span. Therefore, I believe that they are representative samples, not exhaustive genealogies (like those of Jesus in Matthew and Luke).
- C. Chapter 5 has been described as the death chapter, but verses 21-24 hold out great hope for the redemption of mankind in the translation of Enoch. The same terms are used for Elijah in II Kgs. 2:3,5,9,10.
- D. Genesis 3:8-11:9 reveals the terrible consequences of sin which continues from generation to generation.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-8

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

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

▣ **"Cain"** The name "Cain" (*qayin*) is a sound play on the Hebrew word "gotten" (*qaniti*). It seems to affirm that Cain was a special gift with the help of YHWH.

▣ **"a man child with the help of the LORD"** The translation, "man-child," seems to catch the emphasis. Some assert that Eve had previous daughters and that this was the first male, but this seems unlikely. The closing phrase of v. 4 implies that this was a statement of faith by Eve based on Gen. 3:15. Adam's statement of faith is seen in 3:20; Eve's statement of faith is seen in 4:1.

This is the first use of the name YHWH by itself. The next time it appears alone is in worship by the line of Seth in 4:26.

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

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

4:3 “that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground” Notice that Cain is the first to bring an offering to the Lord. The syntax here implies that this was a regular occurrence and not the first time or a unique time. There is nothing inherently inferior in a grain sacrifice versus an animal sacrifice. The significance is in the faith of the offerer, not the sacrifice itself. Possibly they brought the offering to the gateway of the garden of Eden.

4:4 “Abel on his part also brought out of the firstlings of his flock” The key seems to be in the term “firstlings.” Cain brought some of his agricultural produce, but Abel brought the best of his flock, which showed an attitude of faith and respect. But it must be remembered that the text itself is very ambiguous and brief. We must be careful of reading too much into these early accounts.

▣ **“their fat portions”** Apparently here and in later Judaism, the intestines were what was offered on the altar: (1) they were seen as the seat of the emotions or (2) the fat was a symbol of prosperity and health.

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

4:5 “Cain became very angry” The Hebrew words are very intense here which describe Cain’s emotions. Notice that he is angry at God but he will take his anger out on his brother. The context here is anger amidst worship. Possibly he was upset because he brought his offering first, but Abel’s was accepted and his was not.

▣ **“his countenance fell”** There is a word play between “fell” in vv. 5 and 6 and “will not your countenance be lifted up” in v. 7. The term “lifted up” can mean “accepted” (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV).

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

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

▣ **“and its desire is for you”** This same term “desire” is used in Gen. 3:16. It shows that the purpose of evil is our destruction.

▣ **“but you must master it”** This shows that we are not a puppet in the hand of evil, but we have the ability, with God’s help, to resist evil (cf. Eph. 6:13; James. 4:7; I Pet. 5:9), to repent and be restored!

4:8 “Cain told Abel his brother” There has been much discussion about this phrase. Some assert that Cain told Abel about what God had said in vv. 6 and 7. Others assert, along with the Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and RSV translations, that Cain told Abel a lie in order to lure him into the field so that he could kill him which would refer to premeditated murder.

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-15

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

4:9 “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The great problem with Cain was his unrepentant heart. The term “keeper” can mean “shepherd” which may be a play on the occupation of Abel.

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

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

4:12 “it shall no longer yield its strength to you” Many commentators have asserted that this is why Cain’s line developed urban life as over against rural life (cf. vv. 16-24).

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

4:14 “driven me this day from the face of the ground” This is the physical result of Cain’s sin while the next phrase “from Thy face I shall be hidden” is the spiritual result of Cain’s sin.

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

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

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:16

¹⁶Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:17-22

¹⁷Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son. ¹⁸Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech. ¹⁹Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²²As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4:19 “Lamech took to himself two wives” This is the first account of polygamy and it begins in the fallen line of Cain.

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

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

4:21 “Jubal. . . all those who play the lyre and the pipe” Some assert that his name means “sound.” This is the beginning of certain gifts of musical skills. Music is connected with the evil one in Ezekiel 18:13. As all of God’s gifts, it can be perverted. This tribal group developed not only the stringed instruments but also the wind instruments.

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:23-24

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

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

4:24 "seventy-sevenfold" This shows the severity of Lamech's revenge (cf. 4:15). Some see a connection between this and Jesus' phrase for forgiveness found in Matt. 18:21,22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:25-26

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

4:15-16 This contextually should go with chapter 5. Chapter and verse divisions were not part of the original text of either the Hebrew OT or the Greek NT.

4:25 This is another word play between the Hebrew term "appointed" (*shat*) and Seth (*shet*). This continuing literary play on the names in Gen. 1-11 shows its literary character.

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

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

GENESIS 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-2

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

5:1 “This is the book of the generations of Adam” This phrase is repeated ten times in Genesis. This seems to imply a written document. In ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets a term or phrase was used to link several clay tablets together as a literary whole (i.e. colophon). I believe that Moses used (1) oral traditions, (2) written sources from the Patriarchs, as well as (3) direct revelation.

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

▣ **“In the day when God created man”** It is obvious that we are starting a separate cuneiform stone tablet here because it repeats the Genesis 1-2 account.

5:2 “in the day” Here is the use of the Hebrew word “day” that does not mean a twenty-four hour period of time but an age or period of time. This same usage can be seen in Gen. 2:4; Ps. 90:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:3-5

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

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-8

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

This is referred to earlier in 4:26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:9-11

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12-14

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:15-17

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

5:15 “Mahalalel” This means “praise of God.”

▣ **“Jared”** This means “descent.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-20

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

5:18 “Enoch” This can mean (1) “beginner”; (2) “dedicated”; or (3) “initiator.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21-24

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

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

5:22 “Enoch walked with God” This Hebrew term is the HITHPA’EL stem denoting intimate fellowship almost to the point of “to live with.” We are simply not sure. Hebrews 11:5 describes Enoch’s walk of faith. The only other person this phrase is used for is Noah in 6:9 in a slightly intensified form.

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:25-27

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

5:26 “Lamech” This name possibly means” (1) “strong” (2) “youth”; (3) “warrior”; or (4) “conqueror.” This name is also found in Cain’s line (cf. 4:18ff). This implies (1) the name was common or (2) there is some connection between the two genealogies.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:28-31

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

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

5:29 “Noah. . .rest” This is a popular, not a philological, etymology of the term “rest.” This seems to express Lamech’s faith, that through Noah, a significant reversal of the curse of Gen. 3:17 would take place. We have seen Adam’s statement of faith in a veiled form (cf. 3:20) and also Eve’s statement in a veiled form (cf. 4:1). This is Lamech’s statement of faith in the same typological strain.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:32

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

5:32 “Shem” This term may mean “renown” or “name.”

▣ **“Ham”** This term may mean “to be hot” or “to be dark.”

▣ **“Japheth”** This term may mean “beauty” or “spreading.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

GENESIS 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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

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

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-4

¹Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ²that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³Then THE LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were of old, men of renown.*

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

▣ **"and daughters were born to them"** This does not imply that this was the first birth of daughters (obviously impossible) but a general statement of the expansion of the human race.

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

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

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

- c. Job 38:7
 - d. Daniel 3:25
 - e. Psalm 21:9,10
 - f. Psalm 89:6,7
3. the inter-testamental book of I Enoch, which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls, interprets these as rebellious angels (cf. I Enoch 12:4; 19:1; 21:1-10)
 4. the immediate context of chapter 6 seems to imply that “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation
 5. I Enoch even asserts that Noah’s Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff)
- D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants
1. there are several ancient translations that support this view
 - a. Targum of Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates “sons of God” as “Sons of nobles”
 - b. Symmachus (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated “sons of God” as “the sons of the kings”
 - c. the term “*elohim*” used of Israelite leaders (cf. Ex. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 82:1,6)
 - d. *Nephilim* linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4, *Gibborim* is from *Gibbor* meaning “a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power”
 - e. this interpretation and its evidence is taken from Hard Sayings of the Bible pp. 106-108.
- E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages
1. the phrase refers to Sethites

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

a. writers of the Septuagint	g. Luther
b. Philo	h. Ewald
c. Josephus (<i>Antiquities</i> 1:3:1)	i. Delitzsch
d. Justin Martyr	j. Hengstenberg
e. Clement of Alexandria	k. Olford
f. Tertullian	
- F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2?
1. They are the resultant giants (cf. Num. 13:33) of the union between angels and human women.
 2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
 3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of homo sapiens and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6:3 "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" The term "strive" can be translated "remain" (cf. NRSV "abide"). This either refers to (1) God's patience (cf. I Pet. 3:20) or (2) mankind's reduced life span.

How does 6:3 relate to 6:1-2 and 6:4? It is very difficult to follow the original author's intent through this context.

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

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

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

▣ **“were on the earth in those days”** Those who believe in angels co-habiting with women use this as a proof-text to show that the giants came out of this relationship. However, others use this phrase to assert that giants were already on the earth at this time. The Hebrew syntax supports the latter view.

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

▣ **“men of renown”** This is the translation of most modern English Bibles as well as the Septuagint. However, literally it is “men of name.” This has resulted in three theories:

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:5-8

⁵Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of THE LORD.

6:5 “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great” These verses emphasize the development of evil in the heart of mankind (cf. Gen. 8:21; Ps. 14:3; 51:5) which is a direct paradox to the goodness of creation in Gen. 1:31.

6:6 “the LORD was sorry. . .He was grieved in His heart” These are anthropomorphic phrases. The first is interpreted “the LORD heaved with a sigh.” The second is interpreted “the LORD was grieved into His heart.” This is an intense Hebrew term (cf. 34:7; 45:5; I Sam. 2:33; 20:34; II Sam. 19:2; Ps. 78:40; Isa. 54:6). God is often spoken of in the Bible as being sorry or repenting (cf. Exod. 32:14; I Sam. 15:11; Jer. 18:7,8; 26:13,19; Jonah 3:10). However, other passages assert that God never repents or changes His mind (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29). This is the tension that always occurs when we use human terms to describe God. God is not a man, but the only words we have to describe Him and His feelings are human terms. It must be asserted that God is not fickle. He is steadfast and longsuffering in His redemptive purpose for

humanity, but mankind's response in repentance of sin often determines God's actions in a particular situation (cf. Jonah).

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:9-10

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

6:9 “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time” These two descriptive words are very significant. The first one implies that Noah conformed to the standard of his understanding about the will of God. The second implies that he has a complete heart toward the LORD. The second term is later used for unblemished sacrifices.

▣ **“Noah walked with God”** This is a very similar phrase to 5:21-24 where the phrase is used of Enoch. But here, the form is only slightly intensified.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:11-12

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

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

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:13-22

¹³Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. ¹⁸But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping things of the ground after its kind, two of

every kind shall come to you to keep them alive. ²¹As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them." ²²Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

6:14 “Make for yourself an ark” This is an Egyptian loan word. The only other use of this term is for the basket in which Moses was placed (cf. Exod. 2:3,4).

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

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

6:15 “cubits” There are two cubits in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between a man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches. There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction which was common in Egypt, Palestine, and sometimes Babylon. It was 21 inches long. The physical dimensions of the ark were probably around 450 feet by 75 feet by 45 feet. This is about half the size of the Queen Elizabeth II.

It has been surmised that it was square but it possibly had slanted sides to help control wave pressure against the hull.

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

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

Was the flood of Noah’s day world-wide or only in the ancient Near East? The term “earth” is often translated “land” in a local sense. If humans had not spread out to all parts of the earth which is surely implied in the tower of Babel experience of chapters 10-11, then a local flood would have done the job. The best book I have read on the rational evidence for a local flood is Bernard Ramm’s *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*.

▣ **“the breath of life”** This is the Hebrew term *ruach*. It can be used for wind, life, breath, or spirit. Both humans and beasts are said to have *nephesh* but only humans have the breath of life (cf. 2:7).

6:18 “My covenant with you” This is the first use of this term *berith*. It is explained and amplified in Gen. 9:8-17. It forms a central motif for both the OT and NT understanding of the relationship between God and man. There are mutual responsibilities, obligations, and promises on both sides. This sets the stage for our understanding the dialectical tension between the unconditional covenant on God’s part, yet its conditional aspect on man’s response in each generation. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith*, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37. Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external performance. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not the covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **“you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you”** Noah's blamelessness extended to his family (cf. I Cor. 7:14).

6:19 “you shall bring” This may imply that the animals came to Noah, but Noah positioned them in the ark. He probably began doing this before the last week. How the animals lived together and ate on the ark is a mystery, but it does not rule out the possibility either of a natural setting or a supernatural setting.

6:21 There was food on the ark for Noah and the animals. However, the specifics are not recorded. The account is theological more than just information.

6:22 “Thus Noah did” Noah obeyed God as a sign of the appropriate response which Adam and Eve missed (cf. 7:5,9,16).

GENESIS 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	The Great Flood	The Great Flood (6:5-8:22)	The Flood	Preparations for the Flood (6:13-7:16)
7:1-5	7:1-12	7:1-5	7:1-5	7:1-5
7:6-12		7:6-10	7:6-10	7:6 7:7-10
7:13-16	7:13-16	7:11-16	7:11-16	7:11-12 7:13-16a 7:16b The Flood
7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-5

¹Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous before Me in this time. ²You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; ³also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out

from the face of the land every living thing that I have made." ⁵Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

7:1 “the LORD said to Noah” It is the covenant name for God, YHWH, here but in verse 16 He is called Elohim. The rabbinical understanding of these terms referring to God as savior (YHWH) and as Creator (Elohim) seems to fit the usages of the Pentateuch.

▣ **“for you *alone* I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time”** The term “righteous” here is used in the same sense as referring to Job as “blameless.” This does not imply a sinlessness but one who has conformed to and performed all that they understand or is culturally expressed in relation to God. Notice that Noah’s righteousness affects his family. This is a biblical truth. This does not mean that someone can be right with God based on another person’s merit, but it does imply that spiritual blessings flow from those who know God to those with whom they are acquainted and with whom they are intimately involved (compare Deut. 5:9-10; 7:9 and I Cor. 7:14).

7:2 “clean animals by sevens, a male and his female” Note the distinction between clean and unclean in this context because it is in a pre-sacrificial setting (cf. Lev. 1-7). Nothing is said about the criteria or purpose of the clean animals. It is obvious that Moses developed this distinction later on in Leviticus (cf. chapter 11) in connection with the food laws and the sacrificial system. There has been much discussion about the seven pairs. Does it mean seven individual animals or seven pairs of animals? For the concept of seven individual animals, see the comments of Chrysostom, Augustine, Theodoret, Calvin, and Kyle. For seven pairs, see the Septuagint, the Vulgate translations and the comments of Eben-Ezra.

7:4 “seven more days, I will send rain on the earth” Rashi says that this was the period of mourning for the righteous Methuselah who had just died. The rabbis believed that God did not send the flood until Methuselah passed away.

The seven day week is so ancient that its origin has never been traced. For believers Gen. 1 sets the pattern.

▣ **“forty days and forty nights”** The term “forty” is used quite often in the Bible (see a concordance). At times it is meant to be taken literally but at other times it simply means a long period of indefinite time (longer than a lunar cycle which is twenty-eight days but shorter than a seasonal change). In several other Mesopotamian accounts the time frame is seven days.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6-12

⁶Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. ⁷Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. ⁸Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. ¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. ¹²The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

7:11 “all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened” The dating is very specific in this verse as well as the terms to describe the physical catastrophe that occurred

on the earth. We can see the scale of destruction in vv. 18 and 19 in the Hebrew text. Many of the earth's physical features may have been changed especially in the near east. There are two sources of the water: (1) fountains of the deep and (2) floodgates (i.e. windows, cf. Ps. 78:23ff; Mal. 3:10) of the sky.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:13-16

¹³On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark, ¹⁴they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. ¹⁵So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. ¹⁶Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and THE LORD closed it behind him.

7:14 This includes all the categories of land animals mentioned in Gen. 1 excluding the sea life.

7:16 “and the LORD closed it behind him” YHWH (i.e. the covenant, Savior deity) closed the door Himself. The rabbis say that He did this in order to keep the wicked out of the ark. They even go so far as to assert that God surrounded the ark with lions and bears to keep the people away. To me, this is another act of YHWH's mercy to mankind to continue the Messianic line, even amidst judgment, which would eventually provide redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17-24

¹⁷Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. ¹⁸The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. ²⁰The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. ²¹All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; ²²of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. ²³Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. ²⁴The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

7:19 The language of this verse certainly implies a world-wide flood (cf. 8:21; II Pet. 3:6). As for the theology of the flood, its extent is irrelevant. There is not a consistent flood deposit even in Mesopotamia much less the whole world! Floods were common in Mesopotamia because of the two large river systems that combine at their mouths.

7:22 “the breath of the spirit of life” (cf. note at 1:30).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What is your understanding of the phrase “the sons of God” and why?
2. Why do you think that angels would want to take human women?
3. Who were the Nephilim?
4. How could God repent?
5. What does it mean to walk with God?
6. Why weren't the fish judged along with the land animals?
7. What is a clean and unclean animal in Noah's setting?
8. Was the flood local or universal? Why?

GENESIS 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Noah's Deliverance	The Great Flood (6:5-8:22)	The End of the Flood	The Flood Subsides
8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5
8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12
8:13-19	8:13-14	8:13-19	8:13-14	8:13 8:14 They Disembark
	8:15-19		8:15-19	8:15-19
	God's Covenant with Creation (8:20-9:17)		Noah Offers Sacrifice	
8:20-22	8:20-22	8:20-22	8:20-22	8:20-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

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3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-5

¹But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. ²Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; ³and the water

receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.
⁴In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. ⁵The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

8:1 “God” This is the term Elohim. See notes at Gen. 1:1

▣ **“remembered”** This term is used in the sense of God taking appropriate and personal action towards someone (cf. 8:1; 9:15; 16; 19:29; 30:32; 40:23; 42:9).

▣ **“Noah”** This name may mean “rest,” a popular etymology based on sound, not philology.

▣ **“God caused a wind”** God used a natural means in an accelerated way to dry up the flood waters, v. 2, as He did in the Exodus (cf. Exod. 14:21).

It is also possible to see God’s acts in chapter 8-9 as paralleling God’s acts in chapter 1. This is a new beginning for mankind. If so, the wind here parallels “the Spirit hovered” of 1:2.

▣ **“subsided”** This same term is used for the anger of the King in Esther 2:1.

8:4 “the mountains of Ararat” This has been explained in three ways: (1) a mountain on the Turkey/Russian border; (2) a mountain to the north near Lake Van; and (3) the term itself refers to a whole mountain range (Assyrian *urarto*), not specifically a peak (notice the plural “mountains”).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:6-12

⁶Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; ⁷and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; ⁹but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself. ¹⁰So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. ¹²Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

8:6 “forty days” This phrase usually means “a long, indefinite period of time.” In this context, the dates are so specific it might mean forty exactly.

▣ **“the window”** This is a different term from 6:16. Its size and location are uncertain but probably in the roof itself.

8:6-12 Be careful not to allegorize these birds! There is an exact parallel in Mesopotamian literature which seems too specific for coincidence.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:13-19

¹³Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and

behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. ¹⁵Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶"Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

8:13 "Noah removed the covering" This seems to imply he removed part of the roof. Although later this same term will refer to the animal skin covering of the tabernacle, it cannot mean that here.

8:15 "God spoke to Noah" This entire context reveals the patience and obedience of Noah.

8:17 This command of God parallels Gen. 1:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:20-22

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. ²²While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

8:20 "then Noah built an altar" His first act was that of worship and thanksgiving. Sacrifice is an ancient institution (cf. 4:3; 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:19).

▣ **"every clean animal"** The criteria determining clean and unclean is uncertain (cf. 7:2), but apparently was related to sacrifice, not dietary guidelines (cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14).

8:21 "the LORD smelled the soothing aroma" This phrase is used in the Bible in the sense of God accepting an offering (especially Lev. and Num.). It does not imply that the meat was food for God. Israel never viewed the sacrificial system as food for divine beings as the surrounding nations did.

▣ **"I will never again curse the ground. . . I will never again destroy every living thing"** These parallel statements show the tension in God's heart between His love (cf. Isa. 54:9) for His creation and His justice. Mankind is evil and corrupt but God has chosen to work with us in time and set it straight in the eschaton (i.e. last days).

Although it is surely true that God promises never to send another flood, II Pet. 3:10 asserts that He will purify the earth with fire. God will work with sinful mankind but His goal is righteousness (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48).

▣ **"the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth"** The evil so evident before the flood (cf. 6:5,11,12,13) is still within fallen mankind, as Noah and his family will clearly show!

8:22 It is this constancy in nature that has given rise to modern western science. God established uniformitarianism (i.e. the regular, uniform activities of nature). However, notice the initial phrase “while the earth remains.” Verse 22 is printed in English translations in a poetic passage.

GENESIS 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	God's Covenant with Creation (8:20-9:17)	God's Covenant with Noah	God's Covenant with Noah	The New World Order
9:1-7	9:1-7	9:1-7	9:1-6 9:7	9:1-7
9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-11 9:12-16 9:17
9:18-19	Noah and His Sons 9:18-19	Noah's Curse upon Canaan 9:18-19	Noah and His sons 9:18-19	Noah and His Sons 9:18-19
9:20-27	9:20-23 9:24-27	9:20-27	9:20-27	9:20-27
9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29

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WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-7

¹And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.
²The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky;

with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. ³Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, *as I* gave the green plant. ⁴Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from *every* man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. ⁷As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

9:1 “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” This is a second beginning for mankind (cf. 1:28). but notice that sin has caused a change in the command, “subdue and have dominion” is left out.

9:2 “fear. . .terror” Mankind has a new relationship with the animals, not peace and friendship as in Eden and the eschaton (Isaiah 11), but terror. The Septuagint adds “cattle” to the verse but domestic animals are not affected.

9:3 “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you” Mankind was originally a vegetarian (at least in the garden of Eden) but since the fall and since no crops could be produced for a while, meat was made available. Also notice that there was no distinction between clean and unclean animals as far as consumption was concerned (very different from Lev. 11), but there was a distinction in sacrifice (cf. 7:2ff).

9:4 “you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood” This is the theological foundation for the sacrificial system (cf. Lev. 17:10-16; Deut. 12:16,23; Acts 15:29) and the significance of the death of Christ. Sin costs a life. God mercifully substituted an animal life.

9:5-6 “By man his blood shall be shed” This is the first statement of “eye for eye” justice. It shows God’s ordaining government the right of capital punishment. In the OT, this was accomplished by the “go’el” (kinsman redeemer). For possible NT references see Acts 25:11 and Rom. 13:4.

Verse 5 is prose while v. 6 is printed in poetic parallel lines.

There is a possible Hebrew word play which may even affect etymology between blood (*dam*) and man (*adam*). In Assyrian the term man (*adamu*) is related to sanctuary (*adman*). Therefore, there may be a link between blood-worship-mankind (cf. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 45).

▣ **“For in the image of God He made man”** This shows the priority of humankind (cf. 1:26,27; 5:1,3). What an awesome privilege and responsibility.

9:7 “Populate the earth abundantly” The rabbis say that because of the context of murder (vv. 5-6) those who refuse to have children also violate this command.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:8-17

⁸Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. ¹¹I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth,

that the bow will be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

9:9 “I Myself do establish” This covenant is unconditional and totally from God’s grace. (cf. 9,11,12,17). Other covenants including Adamic and Abrahamic had conditions. See Special Topic on Covenant on p. 59.

9:12 “all successive generations” “All” (*olam*), as in v. 16, means “ever-lasting.” Also Rashi mentions that “generations” is misspelled in the Hebrew text. He interprets that as meaning that the covenant is only for generations with faulty faith.

9:13 “bow. . .a sign” The rainbow may first have appeared here. Genesis 2:5-6 implies that initially watering took place in a different way from rain (i.e. mist from the ground). It is just possible that the bow was a weapon that God put down (i.e. will not destroy mankind in judgment). It is also possible that God put a new meaning to a common physical occurrence.

9:15 “I will remember” This was a sign for God and mankind. This is a physical item symbolizing the fact that God does not forget (similar to the concept of “the book of life”).

▣ **“never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh”** This does not mean no floods at all but no universal flood that destroys all mankind and animal kind.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:18-19

¹⁸Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

9:18 “Shem” The etymology of this name can be “renoun” or “name.”

▣ **“Ham”** This name can mean “dark” or “burnt.”

▣ **“Japheth”** The etymology of this name can be “extender” or “enlarged” (See Hebrew word play in v. 22).

▣ **“Canaan”** He is mentioned for possibly two reasons: (1) Noah’s drunkenness and resulting curse will affect Canaan or (2) the Canaanites became Israel’s major theological problem in later years (i.e. Moses’ lifetime).

9:19 This was the repeatedly stated purpose of God (i.e. fill the earth). The tower of Babel was in direct deviance to this.

It is interesting that modern DNA studies have concluded that the original humans came from north Africa while modern philosophy has determined that all human languages started in northern India. Notice how geographically near this is to the biblical account.

Apparently all the different races of humans are direct descendants of these three brothers. Modern DNA research has shown that humans of all races are genetically the same!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:20-27

²⁰Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." ²⁶He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."

9:20 “Noah began farming” The NASB and RSV translations seem to read too much into the Hebrew wording; Noah was not the first farmer—what about Cain (4:2) or Lamech (5:29)?

9:21 “became drunk” Drunkenness is deplored over and over again in Scripture (cf. Prov. 23:29-35). Yet wine is not the problem, but mankind’s misuse of it (cf. Deut. 14:26; Ps. 104:15; Prov. 31:6-7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WINE AND STRONG DRINK

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for “wine,” which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine.” However, because of climatic conditions of the near east, fermentation began as soon as 6 hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see: Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* - Joel 1:5 and Isa. 49:26 show that it is obviously alcoholic.
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink.” It has something added to it to make it more intoxicating. The same Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.”

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - This is the Greek term parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).
2. *Gleukos* - The unfermented juice of grapes (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, often the first day (6 hrs. after juice is extracted).
- B. When a slight foam appears on the surface, Jewish tradition says that it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7).
- C. The primary fermentation is over in one week.

- D. The secondary fermentation takes about 40 days. At this stage it is considered aged wine and can be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that is resting on its “lees” (aging sediment) is considered good, but wine must be strained well before use.
- F. Three years is the longest period of time that wine can be stored. It is called “old wine.” It is considered the best usually after one year of fermentation.
- G. Only in the last 100 years, with sterile conditions and chemical additives, has it become possible to postpone the fermentation process.

III. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

- 1. Wine is a gift of God (cf. Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
- 2. Wine is part of a sacrificial offering (cf. Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Jdg. 9:13).
- 3. Wine was used at Israel’s feasts (cf. Deut. 14:26).
- 4. Wine is used as medicine (cf. II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
- 5. Wine can be a real problem (Noah: Gen. 9:21; Lot: Gen. 19:33,35; Samson: Jdg. 16:19; Nabal: I Sam. 25:36; Uriah: II Sam. 11:13; Ammon: II Sam. 13:28; Elah: I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers: Amos 6:6; Ladies: Amos 4).
- 6. Wine has its accompanying warning against abuse (cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hos. 4:11).
- 7. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazirites, Num. 6; rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hos. 7:5).
- 8. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (cf. Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Inter-biblical

- 1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
- 2. The rabbis say “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed” (BB 58b).
- 3. Mixed wine and water is not harmful, but delicious, and enhances one’s enjoyment (II Macc. 15:39).

C. New Testament

- 1. Jesus turned water into wine (cf. John 2:1-11).
- 2. Jesus used wine (cf. Matt. 11:16, 18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff)
- 3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:13).
- 4. Wine used as medicine (cf. Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
- 5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (cf. I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
- 6. Wine used in eschatological settings (cf. Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).

7. Drunkenness is deplored (cf. Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34 I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:1-14)

IV. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical Tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem
3. Our example is Christ (cf. Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Rom. 14; I Cor. 8:7-13).

B. Tendency to go beyond God-given bounds

1. God is the sources of all good things.
2. Man has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Rom. 14:14, 20).

9:22 “saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside” Ham's sin was his irreverence for his father (cf. Lev. 18:7ff). Hebrews were very conscious of nakedness.

In a theological sense, this shows the continuing downward pull of the fall. Noah drunk! Ham intensely enjoying both his father's folly and nakedness! This propensity towards irreverence and abuse of sexuality becomes so evident in Canaan's descendants! The tendencies must have been evident to Noah who curses Canaan, not Ham.

As a postscript, this episode has nothing, nothing to do with a biblical depreciation of the black race. Africans surely came from Ham but Canaanites were not black!

9:24 “Noah. . .knew” He possibly knew because he asked, but probably it was by the covering that Shem and Japheth placed on him.

▣ **“youngest son”** Ham is always listed second in the list of Noah's sons. This Hebrew word can be a superlative “youngest” or comparative “younger.”

9:25 “So he said” Remember the Hebrew concept of the power of the spoken word, Gen. 1, as well as the importance of the parental blessing, Gen. 49.

▣ **“Cursed be Canaan”** The rabbis say Canaan saw Noah's nakedness first and told his father, Ham, but probably Noah saw this evident disrespectful character in Ham's youngest son, or Canaan, the youngest son, is a way of referring to all of Ham's descendants. Notice that this is not a curse by God but by a alcohol abusing Noah!

▣ **“servant of servants”** This is a Hebrew superlative meaning “lowest servant.” This was fulfilled in Joshua's conquest of Palestine!

9:26 “the LORD” “YHWH” seems to be the special use of the covenant name (see note at 2:4) to recognize Shem as the chosen line.

▣ **“the God of Shem”** Shem means “name” and may be a play on God’s special name, YHWH. The line of Shem is the Messianic line. This is in opposition of 11:4!

9:27 “let him dwell in the tents of Shem” Some see this (1) in a political sense like the domination of Roman or European culture or (2) in a spiritual sense of the inclusion of the Gentiles with the blessings of the Jews, which was also part of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 12:3; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:28-29

²⁸Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. ²⁹So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

9:29 Death still reigned (cf. chapter 5)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

1. How did the fall affect God’s covenant with Noah?
2. Is capital punishment a biblical precept (cf. v. 6)?
3. Did Noah curse the black race?
4. To what does verse 27 refer?

GENESIS 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Nations Descend from Noah	The Table of the Nations	The Descendants of Noah's Sons	The Peopling of the Earth
10:1	10:1-5	10:1	10:1	10:1
10:2-5		10:2-5	10:2-5	10:2-5a 10:5b
10:6-14	10:6-14	10:6-14	10:6-12 10:13-14	10:6-7 10:8-12 10:13-14
10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-19 10:20
10:21-31	10:21-31	10:21-31	10:21-31	10:21 10:22-23 10:24-30 10:31
10:32	10:32	10:32	10:32	10:32

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

- A. What is the theological purpose of the detailed nature of chapter 10?
1. It shows that God is concerned with all nations. Chapter 11 is chronologically out of order. This seems to show that 10 is not a result of 11:1-9 but 1:28; 9:1,7.
 2. It sets the stage for the call of Abraham and his seed as a kingdom of priests to bring all the world to YHWH (cf. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).
 3. It follows the pattern of Genesis of the narrowing focus of the Messianic line (cf. 9:26).
 4. There seems to be about 70 groups mentioned. The rabbis say that there are 70 languages of the world, possibly from Deut. 32:5. Many link Luke 10:1 with this to assert the worldwide missionary thrust of the Gospel.
- B. How and why does it disagree with modern ethnological research?
1. Modern research is based on linguistic principles while the biblical account focuses on geographical data. This geographical information is affected by (1) date and (2) people movements both from migration and war (cf. Ezek. 16:3; Hosea 12:7).
 2. One must take into account the theological nature of this account
 - a. Selective coverage
 - b. Unity of mankind (Adam and Noah)
 - c. Those nations farthest from contact with Israel are dealt with least (or not at all)
 3. This chapter contains many plural names. This shows that often an ancestor stands for a group. Often, groups occupy more than one geographical location.
 4. This is not a western, detailed, scientific account. We often forget that this is the first attempt at a list of this type. Its accuracy is assured by our pre-suppositional commitment to Scripture. However, this does not mean it was meant to inform us exhaustively in all areas or conform to our western mind-set. For its day it is shockingly accurate!
 5. This list, as all of the Torah, was subject to scribal revisions and updating. Several of the names in this list (i.e. Cimmerians, Scythians, Philistines, and Medes) are not found in other ancient Near Eastern literature until 1500-1000 B.C.
 6. It is possible because the peoples of Asia and Polynesia (and thereby the Americas) and many of the peoples of Africa are not dealt with, that this list may only include parts of the racial diversity observable today. If this is true then it is a theological overstatement to say the races came directly from Noah's three children.

This is not meant to diminish the oneness of humans (which DNA studies have confirmed) which is clearly asserted in the original human pair in Gen. 1 and 2.
- C. Its structure
1. Japheth, vv. 2-5, occupies the region north of Mesopotamia from Spain to the Caspian Sea.
 2. Ham, vv. 6-20, occupies the region south of Mesopotamia from Africa to India
 3. Shem, vv. 21ff, deals with the Semites' occupation of Mesopotamia from the Mediterranean Sea to India.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1

¹Now these are *the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.*

10:1 “Now these are *the records of the generations*” This phrase is repeated three times in the context of chapters 10 and 11 (10:1; 11:5,27). This may have been the author’s way to outline the book or a Babylonian colophon to mark the cuneiform clay tablets that go together.

▣ **“Shem, Ham, and Japheth”** This order of listing their names is not primarily related to their age but a theological arrangement, listing those in the Messianic line first, and those farthest removed last.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:2-5

²The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. ³The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. ⁴The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. ⁵From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

10:2 “Gomer” This seems to refer to the Cimmerians which are mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad*, chapter 11:13-19. They inhabited northern Asia Minor. They possibly migrated north and became European tribal groups. This can be seen through a similar term for them in north Germany, “Cimbi” and in Wales, “Cymri.”

▣ **“Magog”** There has been much discussion about this name because of its connection to Ezek. 38-39 and end-time events. However, it must be asserted that Magog, along with Meshech and Tubal, also mentioned in v. 2, are primarily tribes connected with Asia Minor and the coast of the Black Sea. It is quite possible that they migrated north and became the tribal groups of modern Russia. But, in ancient times, they were much closer to the Promised Land. Most assert that Magog is connected with the Scythians, southeast of the Black Sea. This information comes from Josephus.

▣ **“Madai”** Most assert that this refers to the Medes, who lived south and southwest of the Caspian Sea, who become so important to Israel in their joining with Persia to overthrow the Neo-Babylon Empire (Nebuchadnezzar).

▣ **“Javan”** This seems to refer to the Ionian (southern) Greeks (cf. Dan. 8:21; 10:20; 11:2). This group is spelled “Javana” in Sanskrit; “Juna” in old Persian and “Jounan” on the Rosetta stone. They later became, not only the kingdom of Greece, but possibly a part of the sea peoples in the Aegean area (i.e. Phoenicians and Philistines).

▣ **“Tubal”** Many assert that this refers to the Tiberenians of central Asia Minor. Both Tubal and Meshech occur in Ezek 38-39 as residing in Asia Minor.

▣ **“Meshech”** Many assert that this is a tribal group who lived south and southwest of the Black Sea (cf. Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2; 39:1). This information comes from Herodotus.

▣ **“Tiras”** There have been several possible identifications for this group, as is so common among commentators. Many of these names and locales are simply uncertain. The possibilities include (1) the Etruscans; (2) an Aegean pirate nation called Pelasgians; (3) Josephus says the Thracians; or (4) Rashi says that it refers to Persia.

10:3 “Ashkenaz” This is the name adopted by later Jews of Europe (i.e. Germany). The current theories are (1) Scythians in the area of Germany; (2) people close to Lake Urumia; or (3) a tribal group of Bithynia in Asia Minor.

▣ **“Riphath”** This has been alleged to be a tribal group near the river Rhebas or a tribal group near the Bosphorus.

▣ **“Togarmah”** These are (1) a tribal group in the area of Cappadocia in Asia Minor; (2) near the ancient city of Carchemish; or (3) a tribal group in Phrygia. All three of these possibilities are in modern Turkey.

10:4 “Elishah” Most assert that this refers to the native population of Cypress. They are mentioned in Ezek. 27:7.

▣ **“Tarshish”** Although Albright located this at Sardinia, most modern researchers locate it in southern Spain (i.e. Tartessos). It is mentioned in II Chr. 9:21; Ps. 48:7; 72:10; Jonah 1:3; 4:2).

▣ **“Kittim”** There is a consistent opinion that this refers to the settlers on the east coast of Cypress.

▣ **“Dodanim”** Many assert that the similarity between the Hebrew letters, D (ד) and R (ר), has been confused and that this refers to the tribal inhabitants of the Island of Rhodes (cf. NIV translation). However, others assert that it is northern Greece and still others say it is southern Italy. It is obvious that this is simply unknown.

10:5 “From these coastlands of the nations” This phrase is used metaphorically for far away peoples, but here it seems to refer to the inhabitants along the coast of the Mediterranean and Black Seas which follows the migration of the children of Japheth.

▣ **“their lands. . .his language. . .their families. . .their nations”** This seems to be a fourfold division of how this chapter is divided: (1) geographically; (2) linguistically; (3) ethnically; and (4) politically.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-14

⁶The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. ⁷The sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan. ⁸Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." ¹⁰The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, ¹²and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim ¹⁴and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.

10:6 “Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan” These sons of Ham are discussed further in the following verses: Cush in vv. 7-12; Mizraim in vv. 13-14; and Canaan in vv. 15-19. Put, although not discussed, seems to refer either to East Africa (Somalia), southern Arabia, Libya or Cyrene. It is obvious from this many possible locations that we are uncertain.

10:7 “Seba” This is the area of the upper Nile as far as we can tell from the information that is now available. It is mentioned in Isa. 43:3.

▣ **“Havilah”** This is literally “sandland,” possibly located somewhere in Egypt.

▣ **“Sabhah”** This can either be in the area of modern Ethiopia, which would be east Africa, or a city in Arabia.

▣ **“Raamah”** This seems to be the Sabateans of southwest Arabia.

▣ **“Sabteca”** This also refers to Ethiopia.

▣ **“Sheba”** This seems to be the famous area of the Queen of Sheba, southwest of Arabia (cf. I Kgs. 10:1-10; Job 1:15; 6:19; Ps. 72:10,15; Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20).

▣ **“Dedan”** This seems to be somewhere in Arabia. It is obvious that the sons of Cush are located in east Africa and the Arabian peninsula. It is mentioned in Isa. 21:13; Jer. 25:23; 49:8; Ezek. 25:13; 27:20.

10:8 “father of Nimrod” Nimrod is particularly named because he was a founder of the first major civilization. This would mean that descendants of Ham developed Babylon. He is linked with the sons of Cush because of the linguistic similarities to the name Kassites. There are two groups from Cush, one in v. 7 on the eastern side of the Red Sea and this one in v. 8 on the western side of the Red Sea.

▣ **“Nimrod”** The term seems to mean “revolt” according to Rashi and Leupold. With this in mind the next two major phrases, “mighty one” and “mighty hunter,” are interpreted negatively as “tyrant” or “conqueror” or “killer of men.” However, we are uncertain if this is the connotation, but it seems to fit the context. This man is going to build some of the major cities of Mesopotamia and he will apparently start the first world power. Many have asserted that this refers to Tukuli-ninurta I, but he did not live until the thirteenth century B.C. when he controlled Assyria and Babylon. He was called Ninus, but his time is much too late to fit that of Nimrod. Others assert that this refers to Sargon I, ruler of the city of Akkad.

10:9 “a mighty hunter before the LORD” Some commentators assert that God taking notice of a hunter is beneath His dignity, but if the phrase refers to the first conqueror and developer of a human world system (cf. Mic. 5:6), then God taking notice of him is understandable.

10:10 “Babel” The Babylonians say that this term (*bab-ili*) means “the gate of the gods.” However, in Genesis 11, the Jews interpreted it as meaning (*balil*), “he confused.”

▣ All of the cities listed in this verse were major cities in Shinar at one time or another.

▣ **“Calneh”** Some say that this refers to a city of Nippur while others re-verbalize this to mean “all of them.”

▣ **“the land of Shinar”** This is linguistically related to the term “Sumer” or “Sumeria.” It refers to an area of southern Mesopotamia.

10:11 “he went forth into Assyria” Some say that this refers to Nimrod and that seems to fit the context best (cf. Mic. 5:6). However, others, including the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Syriac, Martin Luther, and John Calvin, say it refers to Asshur.

▣ **“Nineveh”** This is the major capital of the Assyrian Empire located on the Tigris River (cf. II Kgs. 19:36; Isa. 37:37; Jonah 1:2; 3:2-7; 4:11; Nah. 1:1; 2:8; 3:7; Zeph. 2:13)..

▣ **“Rehoboth-Ir”** This literally means “wide street city” or “wide places of the city” and probably is a description of Nineveh.

▣ **“Calah”** This is a major Assyrian city. Its modern name is Nimrud which is obviously connected to the name, Nimrod.

10:13 “Mizraim” Many assert this refers to upper and lower Egypt.

▣ **“Ludim”** This may refer to Lydians in Asia Minor.

▣ **“Anamim”** This may be a tribal group occupying the oasis west of Egypt.

▣ **“Lehabim”** This seems to refer to the desert tribes of the northern African coast.

▣ **“Naphtuhim”** This seems to be the tribal group near the city of Memphis. All of those mentioned in v. 13 are obviously connected with Egypt and the surrounding area.

10:14 “Pathrusim” This means southland and probably refers to upper Egypt.

▣ **“Casluhim (from which came the Philistines)”** There has been much discussion about this phrase because from Amos 9:7 it seems to imply that the Philistines came from Crete. This is one of those places where this reference may be geographical. The continuing wave of invasions and migrations of the sea peoples of the Aegean affected most of the coastlands of the Mediterranean world, including Egypt and Palestine.

▣ **“Caphtorim”** This seems to refer to the inhabitants of the island of Crete known as Caphtor.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:15-20

¹⁵Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth ¹⁶and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Gergashite ¹⁷and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite ¹⁸and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. ¹⁹The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. ²⁰These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

10:15 “Sidon” This is the famous Phoenician seaport and originally its capital, north of Palestine.

▣ **“Heth”** This seems to be a non-Semitic name. It is possibly the beginning of the Hittite group. In the Bible they are located in two places: (1) around the city of Hebron and (2) north of Palestine in central Turkey. They dominated this entire region between 1800-1200 B.C. The tribal group called Hivites may also be connected to the term Heth.

10:16 “the Jebusite” These were the occupants of the city of Salem or Jebus, later Jerusalem.

▣ **“Amorite”** The term Amorite can be a collective term (cf. Gen. 15:6) like the term Canaanite. We think it had the connotation of “high-lander” (the literal name meant “westerner”) while Canaanite had the connotation of “low-lander” (the literal name meant “land of purple”). In the Bible the inhabitants of

Canaan are listed in several places: (1) by two tribal groups in Gen. 13:7, 34:30; Judg. 1:4,5; (2) by seven nations in Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; 24:11; (3) by ten nations in Gen. 15:19-20; and (4) the most common usage is a sixth nation designation that is used the majority of times in the Pentateuch.

▣ **“Girgashite”** This was a Canaanite tribe often named in the various lists of the tribes of Canaan (cf. Gen. 10:16; 15:21; Deut. 7:11; Josh. 3:10; 24:11; Neh. 9:8; I Chr. 1:14), but no locality is ever identified.

10:17 “the Hivite” They seem to be the inhabitants of central Palestine. Some identify them with Hurrians. Numbers 13:29 is a good geographical summary of the division of these tribes in Palestine.

▣ **“Arkite”** This seems to be the inhabitants of a coastal city and island north of Sidon.

▣ **“Sinite”** This seems to be the inhabitants of a city close to Arke.

10:18 “Arvadite” This seems to refer to the inhabitants of an island off the coast north of Palestine. Like the two previous ones it is north of Tripolis.

▣ **“Hamathite”** This refers to the inhabitants of a city on the Orontes River.

10:19 “Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim” These are cities of the plains that God later destroys. They are located in the southern end of the Dead Sea.

▣ **“Lasha”** Jerome says that this was east of the Dead Sea.

10:20 This is a summary of the divisions much like v. 5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:21-31

²¹Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, *and* the older brother of Japheth, children were born. ²²The sons of Shem *were* Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. ²³The sons of Aram *were* Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. ²⁴Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. ²⁵Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah ²⁷and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah ²⁸and Obal and Abimael and Sheba ²⁹and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east. ³¹These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

10:21 “Eber” The etymology of this name is very similar to the term “Hebrew,” which refers to a much wider group than simply the Jews. There has been much speculation about the connection between Eber and the phrase found on many documents and stele(s) in Egypt called “Habiur” (cf. Gen. 14:13). A possible etymology of the name Eber is “to pass over and through,” which seems to imply a nomadic group.

▣ **“the older brother of Japheth”** Rashi asserts that the Hebrew is ambiguous as to who is the older brother.

10:22 “Elam” This was a major kingdom to the east of the Tigris River whose capital was Shushan. This is probably the most eastern of the groups mentioned in this chapter.

▣ **“Asshur”** This can refer to (1) a person; (2) a city; or (3) a nation (i.e. Assyria).

▣ **“Arpachshad”** This seems to be a tribal group north of Nineveh (another capital of Assyria). The NIV translation has Arphaxad.

▣ **“Lud”** This possibly refers to the Lydian nation of Asia Minor. Heroditus asserts that they claimed origin from Nineveh, a Semite city.

▣ **“Aram”** This refers to the area of modern Syria.

10:25 “Peleg” This is the specific line from which Abraham will come and it is fully discussed genealogically in 11:18-27.

▣ **“for in his days the earth was divided”** The Hebrew term literally means “irrigation canals” which would fit southern Mesopotamia, but the popular etymology is “divisions.” There is a sound play between Peleg and divided (*niplega*). This may refer to the dividing of the languages mentioned in chapter 11. Therefore, the dispersions of chapter 10 are out of chronological order when compared to chapter 11.

10:26-29 This is a delineation of the Arabian tribes.

10:28 “Sheba. . .Havilah” This, along with Asshur in v. 22, seems to be included in both the Hamite list and the Semite list. This is either because of (1) geographical migration; (2) victories of war; or (3) the merging of two families by marriage. This list is not specific in many ways.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:32

³²**These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

1. What is the purpose of Genesis 10?
2. Why is Nimrod singled out for special treatment?
3. Why are Israel, Moab, and Edom not mentioned in this list of nations?

GENESIS 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
11:1-9	The Tower of Babel 11:1-9	The Tower of Babel 11:1-9	The Tower of Babel 11:1-9	The Tower of Babel 11:1-4 11:5-9
11:10-11	Shem's Descendants 11:10-11	Genealogies of Abraham 11:10-11	The Descendants of Shem 11:10-11	The Patriarchs After the flood 11:10a 11:10b-11
11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13
11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15
11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17
11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19
11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21
11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23
	11:24-25	11:24-25	11:24-25	11:24-25
	11:26	11:26	11:26	11:26
	Terah's Descendants		The Descendant of Terah	The Descendants of Terah
	11:27-30	11:27-30	11:27-30	11:27a 11:27b-30
	11:31-32	11:31-32	11:31-32	11:31 11:32

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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

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

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

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The chronology of chapters 10-11 is reversed.
- B. Although the confusion of languages with its resultant scattering of peoples seems to be an act of judgment, remember that it is the development of nationalism which has, up to this point, thwarted the political movement toward a one world government. Therefore, this was in a sense another blessing of God.

For the Christian, Pentecost was the theological reversal of the Tower of Babel!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-9

¹Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. ²It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." ⁵The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

11:2 "they journeyed east" This seems to imply a movement from the location of the ark, the mountains of Ararat. The literal phrase "journeyed" means "pulled up stakes." Mesopotamia is southeast of the mountains of Ararat (which run from modern Turkey to Iran).

11:3 This describes the construction techniques that are historically accurate for Mesopotamia (no tress). There were no rocks in this area, so bricks were fired. King James has "slime," but it obviously refers to the black, sticky substance that boils up in this area. We would call it tar, asphalt, or pitch.

11:4 There seem to be four elements involved in this account: (1) the building of a city and a tower; (2) the size of which would rival the other structures of its day; (3) they wanted to make themselves a name; and (4) they did not want to be scattered abroad (i.e. all the earth). The exact connotation of this is uncertain. Many have asserted that it relates to the Babylonian ziggurats, but the Hebrew word is *migdal* which is translated "fortified tower" (cf. Judg. 8:9-17). It is obviously an attempt by mankind to organize themselves apart from God, and thereby to thwart His will. Philo even says that they wrote their name on every brick so that they would not be dispersed. This is the first example of human pride, organized and functioning apart from God (cf. Daniel and Revelation 18 and 19).

11:7 “Let Us go down” This is a PLURAL form, much like 1:26; 3:22. Although this passage seems anthropomorphic in English, it is not referring to a weakness on God’s part but to an act of grace whereby He stops sinful mankind from trying to run their lives in their own fallen way (cf. Rom. 1-3).

11:9 “Babel” It is interesting to note that archaeology has unearthed literary documents from the Sumerian culture in Mesopotamia which assert that at this time all people spoke in one tongue (i.e. Samuel Noah Kramer in his article “The Babel of Tongues: A Sumerian Version” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88:108-111). The popular Hebrew etymology is “confusion,” which seems to describe God’s confusing their one language. Babylon becomes a symbol of a fallen world power, exemplified in Nimrod, later in Nebuchadnezzar, and finally in the sea beast of the book of Revelation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:10-11

¹⁰These are *the records* of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; ¹¹and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:12-13

¹²Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; ¹³and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

The Masoretic Text excludes *Kainan* in v. 13 but the Septuagint includes him as does Luke 3:36.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:14-15

¹⁴Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; ¹⁵and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:16-17

¹⁶Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; ¹⁷and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:18-19

¹⁸Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; ¹⁹and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:20-21

²⁰Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; ²¹and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:22-23

²²Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; ²³and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

1. What was the tower of Babel?
2. What was man trying to do in Gen. 1 against God?

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 11:24-13:18

- A. This section of Genesis begins the fuller discussion of the line of the Messiah through Abraham.
- B. Genesis' fifty chapters are concerned with the redemption of God's covenant people, not creation. Calling one to call all is the focus of the book.
- C. Abram is seen in his weaknesses as well as in his faithfulness. The God of election and mercy calls him out for his own redemptive purposes.
- D. God chose Abraham to choose a world (cf. 12:3c; Exod. 19:4-6; II Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). God wants all people made in His image to be redeemed (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ezek. 18:23,32; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
- E. The *Talmud* specifies seven blessings of the call:
 1. Abram would be the father of a great nation.
 2. He would be blessed in his lifetime.
 3. His name would be renowned.
 4. He would be a blessing to others.
 5. Others will be blessed who honor him.
 6. Others will be cursed who reject him.
 7. His influence would be universal.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:24-25

²⁴Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; ²⁵and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

11:24 "Terah" "Terah" possibly means "tarrying," "delaying," or "migrating." From Josh. 24:2 it is obvious that he and his family were polytheists. The names of his family suggest primarily that they worshiped the moon goddess *Zin*. She was worshiped in Ur, Tema, and Haran. However, Gen. 31:53 implies that he knew of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:26

²⁶Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

11:26 “Abram, Nabor and Haran” This might be the order of importance and not age. The name Abram can mean (1) “exalted father”; (2) “exalter of father”; or (3) “the Exalted One is my father.” The name Nahor means “panting” or an Assyrian place named, while Haran means “mountaineer.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:27-30

²⁷Now these are *the records of the generations of Terah*. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰Sarai was barren; she had no child.

11:28 “Haran died in the presence of his father Terah” This is a Hebrew idiom for Haran dying before his father.

▣ **“the Ur of the Chaldeans”** The Chaldean culture developed (i.e. built on the strengths of the Sumerian culture) and thrived after Abram’s day.

11:29 “and Iscah” This person and the reason for her presence in this verse is unknown. The rabbis (also Josephus, Jerome, and Augustine) say it is Sari, but the text asserts that they have different fathers.

11:30 “Sari was barren” The inability of Sari, Rachel, and Rebecca to have children was one of the ways God used to exhibit His power and control of human history and genealogy. Human sexual generation is not the key aspect to the lineage of the Messiah.

This same style of theological aspect to Israel’s history is also seen in the fact that the firstborn is not in the Messianic line. Culturally the firstborn was the head of the clan, but not so among YHWH’s people. It was His choice!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:31-32

³¹Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. ³²The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

11:31 “they went out” There is much discussion as to whether Terah took his family or if Abram took them. Some postulate God calling Terah but he lapsed back into idolatry. It seems to be that Abraham is the focus of the entire section, not Terah. By leaving Ur Abram was leaving not only his extended family, but also their national deities. He left a comfortable, settled life to follow a new God who had spoken to him in rather cryptic fashion.

11:32 “the days of Terah were 205 years” When one adds 11:26 with 12:4 which equals 145 years and subtracts this from 205, it becomes obvious that Terah lived 60 years after Abraham left Haran. This seems to conflict with Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7:4. Several aspects of Stephen’s historical review conflicts with

our understanding of Old Testament history. Possibly he was using rabbinical interpretation. Others assert that Abram, though listed first in 11:26, was born much later and that Stephen was accurate.

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

“In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.”