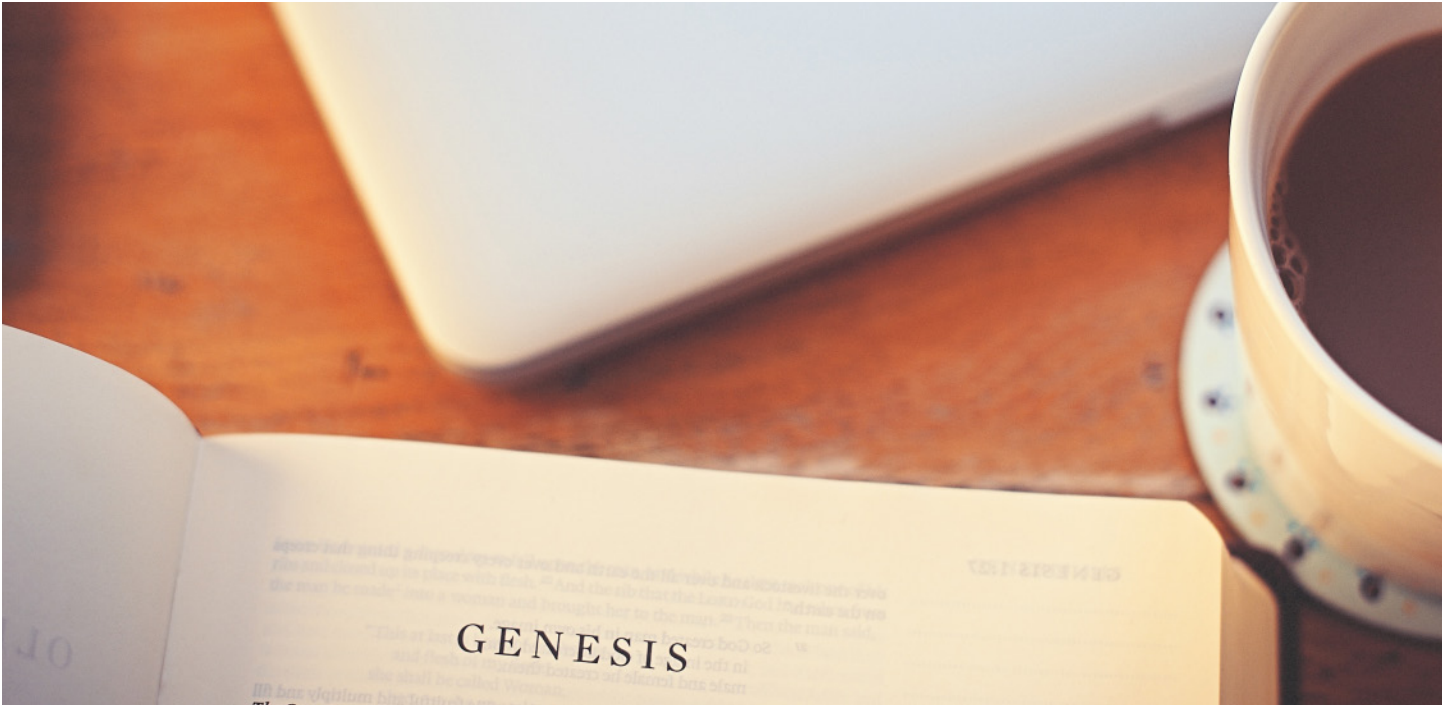


BEGINNINGS

Understanding the Book of Genesis
(Part 1)





WHY STUDY THE BOOK OF GENESIS?

The book of Genesis is the first book of the Bible. But its place as the first of 66 books that make up the Bible is not by happenstance. Its common name—Genesis—is a Greek word that means “beginning” or “origins.” The Hebrew title of the book is *Bereshith*, which is drawn from the opening words—*in the beginning*. As the book of beginnings, Genesis truly is one of the most foundational books in the entire Bible.

This amazing book not only contains some of the best-known stories of the Bible, it also contains *answers*. Many of the mysteries of the universe are revealed in the opening pages of the book of Genesis. Unfortunately, it is almost unanimously rejected by secular historians and scientists. But if you accept the premise that the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God—the revelation of truth by the Creator of all things—you have to accept that He is the only being who could possibly write a book that contains these answers (2 Timothy 3:16).

Though Genesis is not solely a book of science, biology, anthropology or history, it contains the origins and answers that all of those fields study. But it does not just provide the origins of the world around us; it reveals spiritual truths that go beyond *what* God created. It reveals *why*.

As the book of foundations, it provides the foundation to many truths revealed throughout the rest of the Bible.

For instance, in just the first three chapters we learn the identity of the Creator God, His nature, how He brought the physical universe into existence, why mankind is so different from the animal kingdom, the origin of marriage, and the cause for all evil and suffering in the world. These just scratch the surface of all that is revealed in this book.

Because this book is so important to understanding the Bible, we have prepared this special publication. The purpose of this study guide is to help you understand this extraordinary book—both its contents and how it fits into the rest of the Bible. Every commentary note will provide multiple scriptures that will unlock the deep meanings contained in the book. You will find that by understanding the book of Genesis, you will gain a more thorough understanding of the entire Bible. And, likewise, the rest of the Bible will help you gain a more thorough understanding of the book of Genesis.

This study guide will take you chronologically through Genesis by highlighting the key verses in the text. Often, one verse will be used to explain an entire section or chapter. We recommend using this as a complement to your personal study of the book. As you read through the book on your own, use the commentary notes on the selected scripture to understand the contents more deeply. You’ll find it helpful to look up and read on your own the many reference scriptures provided in the notes.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

- Chapters 1-2:** Prehistory and the creation of the universe and humankind.
- Chapters 3-4:** Sin enters humanity.
- Chapter 5:** Genealogy of Adam.
- Chapter 6:** The corruption of the antediluvian (pre-Flood) world.
- Chapters 7-9:** God instructs Noah to build an ark. The Flood and Noachian Covenant.
- Chapter 10:** The origin of nations and peoples descended from Noah.
- Chapter 11:** The Tower of Babel. Mankind spreads throughout the earth.
- Chapter 12:** God begins working with Abram to start a special nation.
- Chapters 13-26:** Abraham's life and the birth of Ishmael and Isaac.
- Chapters 27-35:** The life of Jacob.
- Chapter 36:** Genealogy of Esau.
- Chapters 37-47:** The life of Joseph.
- Chapter 38:** Judah and Tamar incident (inset).
- Chapter 48:** Blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh.
- Chapter 49:** Prophecies for the descendants of Jacob's sons.
- Chapter 50:** The death of Jacob and Joseph.

GENESIS 1: PREHISTORY AND THE CREATION OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

CREATION AND GOD'S IDENTITY

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

The belief that God created everything that exists has become controversial in the world we live in. The prevalence of the theory of Darwinian evolution has led many to profess atheism or agnosticism. But the Bible makes a bold claim in its opening sentence: The heavens (the galaxies of space and our atmosphere) and the earth were brought into existence at a specific time ("in the beginning") and by a specific being ("God").

No, the galaxies of the vast realms of space did not come into being by the uncontrolled explosion of hot, dense matter. No, human life did not evolve from a mixture of chemicals in a primordial soup that gradually evolved into complex, living organisms. Those ideas are man-made theories that ignore some of the most basic principles of science, including Newton's third law of motion. This law states that *for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction*. In simple terms, something has to be the *cause* that provides the energy for any movement or action to occur.

And this is exactly what the Bible tells us in its opening sentence: There is a God—a Supreme Being—and He is the *cause* for all that exists. This most basic *truth* is not just an idea. It comes with an *implication* that we all need to understand. This implication (which can change your life if you accept it) is found in the powerful argument the apostle Paul presented to the philosophers in Athens: "And He [God] has *made* from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26, emphasis added throughout).

Paul reinforces the basic truth of Genesis that God is the *cause* of creation. But Paul doesn't stop there. He adds a vital implication in verse 27: "So that they should *seek the Lord*, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him."

Seeking God doesn't mean just an academic acceptance of the reality of His existence. Seeking God means investigating, accepting and instilling His standards for living in your life. It's just logical: God *created* all of us and has the right to tell us *how to live* the life He gave us.

So where do you go to "seek the Lord"? God provided an instructional manual (the Bible) that contains His standards for human life. (A good place to start is by reading the core of His law—the [10 Commandments](#)—in Exodus 20.)

Recommended reading: Job 38 and Romans 1. To learn more about how to prove the existence of God, read “Proof of God.”

The Creator’s identity

Who is the God that begins the Bible by declaring that He existed before anything else existed? A casual reading of Genesis 1:1 in English merely tells us “God” created all things. But who is this God?

The Hebrew word translated “God” in our English Bible is *Elohim*. This is an

interesting word because it is actually the plural form of the singular Hebrew word *el* or *eloah* (meaning “god” or “mighty one”). This is our first hint that God is not a single solitary being.

In order to understand why a plural word is used for “God” in Genesis 1, we have to go to John 1:1 (which actually precedes it in historical chronology): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

The Word *is* God and is *with* God. John 1:3 reveals that the being called “the Word” was responsible for the creation work revealed in the first verse of Genesis: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Who was this being that created “all things”? John 1:14 reveals it was none other than **Jesus Christ**. But how can two beings be distinct, yet both be referred to as God? Putting Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 together, we are introduced to a wonderful truth that fully emerges throughout many scriptures in the Bible: that God is a family and that there are two members of that family, the Father and the Word (who later became Jesus Christ).

The work of creation in Genesis 1:1 was accomplished by Jesus Christ’s working on behalf of God the Father (1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9). This highlights an incredible truth that not all understand: The preexistent Jesus Christ is the God we read about most in the Old Testament. He did the work of creation and interacted with human beings on behalf of the Father.

Recommended reading: Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:4. For a better understanding of this large and important topic, download our free booklet *Getting to Know the God of the Bible*.

Key Concepts to Know

- *Eloah*
- *Elohim*
- The Word

Questions:

1. What is unique about the name *Elohim* used in Genesis 1?
 2. What section of Scripture actually precedes Genesis 1 in terms of its content?
 3. Who was the being who did the work of creation?
-

THE EARTH BECOMES “WITHOUT FORM AND VOID”

Genesis 1:2: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

The second verse of Genesis introduces us to the condition of the earth at some point after the creation. Most read this verse and assume that it describes the state of the earth as God originally created it in verse 1. This idea would have us believe that God created a world completely in darkness without any substance and order. The words “without form” and “void” are translations of the Hebrew words *tohu* and *bohu*. *Tohu* and *bohu* are often paired together in the Old Testament and portray a “place of chaos, formlessness, emptiness, a wasteland” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon*).

The idea that God created the earth as the *wasteland of darkness*

described in this verse contradicts God’s nature revealed elsewhere in the Bible. Deuteronomy 32:4 shows us that God’s “work is perfect.” In 1 Corinthians 14:33 Paul tells us that “God is not the author of confusion.” In 1 John 1:5 John reveals that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

Perfection and a complete lack of confusion and darkness define God and everything that God directly creates. This is the opposite of the state of *tohu* and *bohu* we find in Genesis 1:2. In fact, Isaiah wrote authoritatively that God “did not create it [earth] in vain [*tohu*]” and “formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18).

So if the Bible teaches that God would not have created the earth “without form and void,” how do we explain Genesis 1:2, which says the earth existed in this state after the creation?

Key Concepts to Know

- *Tohu* and *bohu*
- *Hayah*
- Lucifer

The truth is that Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 represent two different periods of time that are separated by perhaps millions of years. The key is the word translated “was” in our English Bibles. The word “was” is a translation of the Hebrew verb *hayah*. Hebrew lexicons point out that this word does not just denote the state of “being” at one moment in time, but can also describe a change (or progression) from one state of being or time period to another.

According to the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon*, *hayah* can be translated “to become” or “to come to pass.” The word is translated “became” or “become” 133 times in the Old Testament. (An example of *hayah* describing the transition from one state to another is Genesis 19:26 where Lot’s wife became—*hayah*—a pillar of salt.)

Taking all the evidence into account, the best translation of Genesis 1:2 seems to be “the earth *became* without form, and void.” The earth was not created in this state, but *became* like this in the intermediate time period between the original creation (verse 1) and the onset of the dark, desolate wasteland we read about in verse 2.

So what was the cause of this change in the state of the earth? Though Genesis 1 doesn’t describe it specifically, evidence from other parts of the Bible indicates that this was when the former archangel Lucifer led one-third of the angels in a war of rebellion against the government of God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-17; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4). This was when Lucifer became Satan the devil and a group of angels became demons. Apparently, the war that ensued between these spirit beings left the universe “without form and void.”

To learn about what happened between these two verses, read “[The Gap Theory](#).”

Questions:

1. What do the words *tohu* and *bohu* mean?
 2. What do the descriptions *tohu* and *bohu* teach us about the creation account in Genesis 1?
 3. What events occurred between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2?
-

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Genesis 1:3: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”

Isaiah 45:18 shows us that God’s original intent was for planet earth “to be inhabited.” When God has a purpose for something, He makes sure His purpose is fulfilled (Isaiah 46:10). God was determined that earth would not remain a dark, uninhabitable wasteland. Genesis 1:3 begins the record of God’s work of transforming the desolate wasteland the earth had become after Satan’s rebellion into the inhabitable planet we live on today.

The days described in the succeeding verses are often called “the creation week.” But this amazing historical record of God’s work to renew the earth and fill it with life is better termed *the re-creation*. This is the record of the incredible *renovation project* of restoring the earth to a state of beauty and order that would allow it to support the coming pinnacle of His physical creation—humankind!

God began the re-creation week by making alterations that allowed light to diffuse into the earth’s atmosphere. This was probably done by clearing and cleaning the atmosphere of dense, thick clouds of gas that had become so thick that light was completely blocked from reaching the surface of the earth.

Is it significant that God began the re-creation process by allowing light to reach the earth’s surface? Consider that one of the greatest metaphors of the character of the God who did this work is *light*. Jesus Christ, who was responsible for carrying out the work of re-creation, later said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). God’s ways are designed to illuminate and make clear. God’s law is likened to “a lamp” that brings “light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)—in other words, bringing clarity of direction to how a person lives his or her life. God’s calling and working with human beings is referred to as “being enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18).

Recommended reading: Genesis 1:3-25 to learn about the first five days of physical re-creation that prepared the way for the momentous sixth day. To learn more about the creation of light, read “[Did God Create Light Before the Sun?](#)”

Questions:

1. What is a more accurate way to describe the creation account of Genesis 1?
 2. What does the Bible use light as a metaphor to describe?
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Key Concepts to Know

- The re-creation
- Light as a symbol of God’s character

THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION (RENOVATION) GENESIS 1:3-2:3

Day 1

God divides light from darkness (verses 3-5).

Where did the light called "day" originate? The sun had been created earlier (verse 1); but it seems, from the perspective of the earth, it had been hidden behind gases so thick that no light was getting through. God now made this light visible.

Day 2

God parts clouds from oceans (verses 6-8).

Apparently water vapor had filled the atmosphere like perpetual thick fog. God now separated the oceans from the water-laden clouds above and put the weather systems in place to sustain the earth with moisture.

Day 3

God causes the dry land to appear and creates grass, herbs and trees (verses 9-13).

God readied the ecosystems for the creation and sustaining of sea and land creatures. To do this, God first made plants and trees. (God knew these would need sunlight for photosynthesis and insects for pollination, which He provided on days 4 and 5. Note that these steps cannot be separated by thousands or millions of years.)

Day 4

God makes the sun, moon and stars visible (verses 14-19).

The light-giving sun and moon had already been created and placed in the heavens to divide light from darkness (verses 1, 3-5, 16-18). God now ensured the cloud cover would break to provide light and warmth from the sun. We're also told that they are for "signs and seasons" and for "days and years" (verse 14). The Hebrew word *oth*, translated "signs," is also used in Ezekiel 20:12, 20, where the keeping of God's sacred days are a "sign" to God of His people. "Seasons" is translated from the word *mo'adim*, which means "appointed times" and is used for "festivals." From the beginning of the age of man, God created the lights in the firmament for identifying appointed times for us to keep in recognition of His plan.

Day 5

God creates sea creatures and birds (verses 20-23).

On the fifth day the oceans and air teemed with creatures God created and blessed. He told them to multiply; but as with the grasses, herbs and fruit trees, they reproduce only within their "kind." God created potential for variety to develop to fit different environments, but there is a genetic boundary that cannot be crossed.

Day 6

God creates land creatures, then man and woman (verses 24-31).

God brought the land animals to life, each one designed to reproduce and develop within a narrow range called a "kind." He then created a man and, from his rib, a woman. They were created in God's image and likeness, by implication a part of the God kind (verses 26-27). The potential for development of God's nature was implanted with a spiritual component called "the spirit in man" (1 Corinthians 2:11), which gave mankind the ability to create, reflect, plan and design. The physical creation was now finished, but the spiritual instruction was about to begin.

Day 7

God created the **Sabbath** on the seventh day by resting and blessing the seventh day, separating it as holy.

SOURCE: "How Long Were the 'Days' in Genesis 1?"

MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

The entire six days of the re-creation week led to the momentous pinnacle of God's physical creation—the creation of humankind! The Father and the Word—were both intricately involved in the design and structure of humankind. Verses 26 and 27 show us that God did not completely start from scratch when He designed the shape and form of the first human being. In fact, He had a blueprint: Himself!

We read that God formed and designed man "in His own image; in the image of God He created him" (verse 27). What does that mean? The Hebrew word translated "image" is *tselem*, which

essentially means a representation, image or outline. This is one of two major ways that human beings are

distinct from the animal kingdom. Humans are a physical representation of the form of God. The Bible reveals that looking at the basic form of our human bodies gives us a general idea of the form of God—because we were made like Him.

Just as Adam and Eve were made in God's image and likeness, Adam "begot a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3).

Numerous scriptures throughout the Bible describe God's form. God has arms (Isaiah 40:10), hands (Psalm 110:1), fingers (Exodus 31:18), feet (Exodus 24:10), back (Exodus 33:23), ears (Psalm 88:2) and a face (Exodus 33:11).

But there is much more to being made in God's image than just our general form. Though we are designed according to the general pattern of God, we are not made of the same substance. The Bible tells us, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Human beings can't fully comprehend the nature of "spirit," because we are made of flesh (matter). Humans were formed by God out of "the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7).

But God's plan for humanity is more than a mere fleshly existence that ends in death. God's purpose for humanity is to *complete* His creation of beings in His

image and to add us to His family as His divine children (1 John 3:1-2). He is working out a plan to transform us from imperfect flesh to perfect spirit.

First, He begins that process by the creation of human beings who are formed in His general image. He gives human beings a "[spirit in man](#)" (1 Corinthians 2:11) that allows us to have some of His mental attributes—the ability to think, create, plan, form families, etc. What is missing is His perfect spiritual character (1 John 4:8).

Second, He works on developing *His spiritual character* in human minds and hearts. God's purpose for human beings in this life is to form His holy, righteous and perfect character in us (Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 4:13). This is done through the giving of the [Holy Spirit](#) (1 Corinthians 2:10) to those who repent, are baptized and have the laying on of a minister's hands. The Holy Spirit begets a Christian as a child of God (Romans 8:16).

After this process begins at baptism, a Christian is to continually grow toward the perfect character of God through a lifetime of overcoming sin and putting on God's righteousness (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10-12).

Third, the process of making human beings in His full image will be complete when they are *born into His family* at the return of Jesus Christ. Then we will be given the same composition of God—we will be transformed into spirit (1 Corinthians 15:44, 46-48).

At that time we will share the power and attributes that God has now: We will "bear the [full] image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:49); we will be given "immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:54); we will be "like Him" and "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2); we will be considered "divine" (2 Peter 1:4); and we will be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

To learn more about God's purpose for your life, read "[Why Were You Born?](#)" and our free booklet [God's Purpose for You: Discovering Why You Were Born](#).

Key Concepts to Know

- God's image
- The spirit in man
- Man's ultimate potential

Questions:

1. What blueprint did God use when He designed the human body and mind?
 2. What does the Bible call the element of the human mind that sets it apart from the animal mind?
 3. What is God's ultimate purpose for creating human beings in His likeness?
-

MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM

Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

The key truth that this verse reveals is that God created two separate and distinct genders—male and female. We read later that the creation of man and woman wasn’t an accident or mere happenstance, but was specifically “blessed” by God (Genesis 5:2)—meaning this was God’s will and was designed to be successful.

Though both are created in God’s image, God did create men and women to be different. They were not designed to be in constant conflict, but were designed to mutually complement each other.

Here are some ways God created the genders to be distinct:

- In **marriage**, men are to be gentle, caring and loving leaders to their wives (Ephesians 5:25); and wives are to be lovingly submissive to husbands (Colossians 3:18).
- Women should display feminine characteristics, such as “a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:4), while men are to display masculine characteristics, such as strength and family leadership (1 Kings 2:2; Ephesians 5:23; 1 John 2:14).
- Men and women are to wear gender-specific clothing styles (Deuteronomy 22:5). Though the kinds of clothing will vary according to culture and time frame, this is a general principle that can and should always be applied.
- Generally speaking, men are to have short hair (1 Corinthians 11:7, 14), and women are to have longer hair (1 Corinthians 11:6, 10, 15).

It is important to note that gender roles are only designed for the human sphere. Men and women are viewed by God equally with the same spiritual expectations (Galatians 3:28). Men and women both have the same potential to inherit eternal life in the **Kingdom of God** (Matthew 22: 30; 1 Peter 3:7).

When we cover Genesis 2, we will discover more details about *how* God created woman and the great purpose of marriage.

Key Concepts to Know

- **Marriage**
- **God-ordained gender differences**

Questions:

1. Identify one way God designed males and females to be different.
 2. Identify and briefly explain one scripture that shows men and women have equal spiritual potential.
-

HUMANITY GIVEN DOMINION OF THE EARTH

Genesis 1:28: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

There are two major points to take note of in this scripture: the command for human beings to reproduce and the authority of humanity over the animal kingdom.

First, God clearly commands the first couple (who will be introduced to us by name later)

to **reproduce** in order to populate the earth. Some have taken this to be a direct command to all couples (in all times) to produce multiple children. Though having large families is honorable, the command here was specifically for the purpose of populating the earth. God began with one married couple and expected them to populate the earth with their children. God gave a similar command to Noah after all humans (except Noah and his family) were destroyed in the Flood. God told those who were left to “fill [replenish, King James Version] the earth” (Genesis 9:1).

The Bible nowhere gives couples a specific command to have a certain number of children, but it does teach the blessings and benefits of having children (Psalm 127:3-4)—only within the marriage union (Hebrews 13:4).

Second, this verse clearly teaches that human beings are given “dominion” (authority) over the animal and plant kingdoms. As the pinnacle of God’s physical creation, human beings have supremacy over lower life-forms and are permitted to eat the animals that God

Key Concepts to Know

- **Human dominion over the earth**
- **The four planes of existence**

labels clean (Leviticus 11). Though humans are not to abuse or mistreat animals (Proverbs 12:10), the modern “animal rights” movement has no basis in Scripture.

We should also note that there are four basic planes (or levels) of existence in the present order:

- The God plane. Only two beings exist at this level right now—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.
- The angelic plane. The “ministering [serving] spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) created by God were created to serve God’s creation and humanity. This plane would include both the righteous angels and the rebellious angels (demons).
- The human plane. We are created in the “image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27) and are presently “a little lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:7), but we have the potential to be elevated to the God plane in the future (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).
- The animal plane. All living creatures are under the dominion of man, including mammals, insects, birds and aquatic life-forms (Genesis 1:28).

To learn more about the ultimate purpose for human life, read “[Purpose of Life](#)” and “[Why Were You Born?](#)”

Question:

1. Identify the four planes (or levels) of existence in the Spirit and created order of life.
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GENESIS 2: ADAM, EVE AND THE GARDEN

GOD RESTS ON THE SEVENTH DAY

Genesis 2:2: “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.”

After the six momentous days of re-creation (review what God created on each of these days in Genesis 1:3-31), God ended His work on the seventh day and rested (ceased from His work). We should note that God did not rest from His work because He was exhausted and tired.

God is not flesh (John 4:24), and He does not experience fatigue (Isaiah 40:28).

God rested for three major reasons:

- To show that His physical creation was complete after the creation of human beings.
- To set an example for human beings that a weekly day of rest is necessary.
- To establish the spiritual institution of the Sabbath day.

There is one more point we should note from this verse. Some teach that the days of creation we read about in Genesis 1 were actually long periods/epochs of time, not literal 24-hour days. Those who teach this typically subscribe to the theory of *theistic evolution*, which attempts to synchronize [Darwinian evolution](#) with a belief in God.

It is argued that God created the building blocks of life and then set in motion the

Key Concepts to Know

- Length of creation days
- Institution of the Sabbath day

evolutionary processes that took place over millions or billions of years to accomplish creation. So, for instance, proponents of this belief would teach that the fifth day (Genesis 1:20-23) occurred over millions of years as sea and avian life evolved from simple to complex life-forms.

This idea is *false*. Genesis 2:2 proves that the days of creation were literal 24-hour days. If the days represent epochs of millions or billions of years, then that would imply that the seventh day of rest would be an epoch of time also—meaning God would have been resting and inactive for millions or billions of years. This makes no sense and doesn’t fit with the chronology of Genesis, which reveals God planting a garden (Genesis 2:8) and working with the first created human beings shortly after the creation week (verses 16-25).

Exodus 20:8-11 makes it clear that the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest correspond to our seven-day week with its literal, 24-hour days.

To learn more, read “[How Long Were the ‘Days’ in Genesis 1?](#)”

Questions:

1. Identify one reason God rested on the seventh day of the week.
 2. How long were the days of creation?
-

GOD CREATES THE SABBATH

Genesis 2:3: "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Here we read of the origin and establishment of the seventh-day **Sabbath day**. God did three very important things on the seventh day. He:

- "Blessed the seventh day." The word *blessed* is from the Hebrew word *barak*, which literally means "to kneel" or "to praise or salute" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*). The word is usually used in the Old Testament in the context of people (or God) blessing other people. This essentially was a pronouncement of *good*, asking God to make a person prosper, grow and be successful (Genesis 9:1; 28:3). When God "blessed" the seventh day, He conferred specialness to it and filled it with *good*. That pronouncement of blessing makes the keeping of the Sabbath a blessing for those who observe it.
- "Sanctified it." The word *sanctify* in the Bible means "to set apart as holy" (*Zondervan Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 542). This means that the seventh day was specifically set apart from the other six days of the week as consecrated and sacred to God. Since it is sacred and holy, the seventh day is set aside for human beings to rest and worship God.
- "Rested from all His work." As was explained earlier, God rested to set us an example that we are to rest from all our labors on the seventh day (biblically this means from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday) and focus on our relationship with God. Some will argue that verses 2 and 3 do not refer to the Sabbath because the word *Sabbath* isn't mentioned by name. This is easily disproved in two ways:
 - The Hebrew word translated "rest" in verses 2 and 3 is *shabath*, which is the verb form of the noun *shabbath*, translated "Sabbath" (see Exodus 20:10).

Key Concepts to Know

- To bless
- To sanctify
- To rest (or *Sabbath*)
- The seventh-day Sabbath

The connection is unmistakable. God *sabbathed* on the seventh day, thus creating *the Sabbath*.

- The Fourth Commandment instructs us to "remember" the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). The word "remember" was used because the Sabbath had already been established thousands of years earlier in Genesis 2. Exodus 20:11 clearly identifies the seventh day of creation as the beginning of the Sabbath: "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth. ... Therefore *the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it*" (emphasis added).

To learn more about God's creation of the Sabbath, read "[Did God Create the Sabbath in Genesis 2?](#)" To learn how you can keep the Sabbath, read "[How to Keep the Sabbath as a Christian.](#)"

Questions:

1. **Genesis 2:3 tells us God "sanctified" the seventh day. What does the word *sanctify* mean?**
 2. **Why did God rest on the seventh day when He is spirit and never gets tired?**
-

THE CREATION OF HUMANITY

Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

This verse points us back to God's creative work that took place on the sixth day of creation. Here we have explanatory material

on the creation of humanity. This verse makes two major points:

Key Concepts to Know

- Composition of human beings
- The "breath of life"

- **Human beings** are composed of "the dust of the ground." As we have already seen, human beings are created in the general shape and form of God (Genesis 1:27) but are made out of a different substance: organic physical matter.

Our material bodies are designed to last for an average of 70 years (Psalm 90:10). After death, our physical bodies simply decompose and “return to the ground” (Genesis 3:19; see also Ecclesiastes 3:20, 12:7).

- Human life is made possible through the “breath of life.” In scientific terms, the “breath of life” refers to inhaling oxygen-rich air. The process that God designed to allow physical life is remarkable! Air containing oxygen (“the breath of life”) is taken into the body through the nostrils and mouth and transported through the bronchial tubes into the lungs. Thin air sacks in the lungs, called alveoli, then transfer the oxygen into the bloodstream. The blood then transports the oxygen throughout the body through a network of blood vessels. Oxygen makes life possible. Blood is the conduit through which life-giving oxygen is disseminated to the cells of the body.

This is just one way that a truth found in the Bible has been verified through science. Long before scientists understood how oxygen traveled through the bloodstream to fuel the cells of the body, God had already revealed that these are two vital elements of physical life. Genesis 2:7 reveals that “life” enters the body through “breath” (oxygen-rich air). Leviticus 17:11 reveals that the “life” is then transmitted throughout the body through the blood: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood.” Knowing just a little about the complex systems that God created to allow human life should lead us to echo the words of King David: “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

Read more in the article “[What Is a Human Being?](#)”

Questions:

1. What substance did God use to form the first human being?
 2. What did God do to give life to the first human being?
-

MAN CREATED AS A LIVING BEING

Genesis 2:7: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

This verse reveals another important concept we must explore. We read that “man became a living being.” The King James Version of the Bible translates this, “And man became a living soul.”

This statement is very significant. It teaches us what the nature of a human being is and what it is not.

A false idea that many believe is that mankind possesses an inner immortal soul. The belief is that the soul is a separate entity from the body and is immortal. When a person dies, the soul lives on (either in [heaven](#) or [hell](#)). However, this idea relies on Greek philosophy, not the Bible. The Genesis account does not teach the existence of a separate immortal soul. What we read here is that man *is* a soul. Man *became* a living soul when life entered him through God’s breath.

The Hebrew word translated “being” or “soul” in English Bibles is *nephesh*. This word very simply means *a living, breathing creature*. The *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* translates it as “that which breathes, living being, creature.”

The word *nephesh* can describe any kind of creature. The word translated “creatures” in Genesis 1:21 describing aquatic, mammal and avian life-forms is *nephesh*. On a physical level, human beings are composed of the same substance (matter) and are kept alive by the same physical processes as land mammals.

Nephesh also teaches us that humans die—just like animals. A human being does not possess an **immortal soul**—a human *is* a soul. But is the human soul immortal?

Notice Ezekiel 18:4: “The soul who sins shall die.” When God commanded the first two humans not to eat fruit from a specific tree, He said the penalty for disobeying would be that they would “surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The New Testament reinforces this truth in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death.” Paul also plainly called human beings “mortal” and taught that immortality is something that has to be given by God—“when ... this mortal has put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

But does the use of the word *nephesh* to describe human beings mean we are worth nothing more than animals? The Bible teaches that there is an important spiritual dimension in our lives that separates us from the animal kingdom. It is the “*spirit in man*” (1 Corinthians 2:11). The spirit in man is what gives us the ability to “know the things of a man.” In other words, the spirit in man is the

Key Concepts to Know

- *Nephesh*
- The spirit in man

element in our minds that separates us from animals and allows us to do the things that are unique to **human beings**.

To learn more about what the “spirit in man” is and how it enables us to have a relationship with God, read “[Spirit in Man: What Is It?](#)”

Questions:

1. **When life entered Adam, he became a living *nephesh* (“soul”). What does the Hebrew word *nephesh* mean?**
 2. **Were human beings created *mortal* or *immortal*?**
 3. **What is the major element that distinguishes a human being from an animal?**
-

GOD PLACES MAN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Genesis 2:8: “The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.”

Key Concept to Know

- The Garden of Eden

In Genesis 2:8 we are introduced to the location where our first parents were placed by God. God planted a garden for the first humans to learn, live, develop and work in. The name of this location—*Eden*—provides a description of what it was like. *Eden* means “pleasure” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*) or “paradise” (*NIV Study Bible*, p. 10). This garden was apparently located in the area of modern Iraq (east of Jerusalem and near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Genesis 2:14).

The Garden of Eden was the perfect environment for humans to live in. The climate would have been finely tuned to be perfect for humans to live without clothing—it would not have been too cold (requiring covering) or too warm (resulting in heat stroke or heat exhaustion).

The garden was filled with vegetation that was designed to provide perfect nutrition (verse 16) for impeccable human health. At this time, all animals were tame and designed to live at peace with human beings. Adam was given the task of naming all the animals (verses 19-20). Adam’s regular job was to “tend and keep” the garden (verse 15).

This garden represented perfect *peace* and *safety* for the first human beings. There was no danger, worry, violence, sickness or stress.

Why was life so idyllic and perfect in the Garden of Eden at this time? The answer is because God’s presence was directly there and **sin** had not yet entered the human realm. God’s government—with God’s laws in place as the perfect standard—ruled the garden.

The Bible reveals, “God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Perfect peace, order and innocence characterized life for the first humans because they were initially only influenced by God, and for a short time they obeyed Him (that, of course, later changed).

Studying Galatians 5:22-23 and James 3:17-18 provides a beautiful description of what life is like under the perfect guiding influence of God’s government and law. Until the first humans made the decision to go a different direction, they enjoyed the blessings and benefits of living in a *perfect* world, under a *perfect* God who oversaw and implemented a *perfect* government based on *perfect* laws that resulted in a *perfect* environment.

But, as the next verse will reveal, God placed them in an ideal environment but also gave them a choice to make. This choice would have implications for the remainder of human history.

Questions:

1. **Where was the general geographic location of the Garden of Eden?**
 2. **Why was the Garden of Eden a totally perfect, peaceful and safe environment for Adam and Eve to live in?**
-

THE TWO TREES

Genesis 2:9: “And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

This verse shows us the important choice God gave the first human beings.

Two distinct trees were planted in the garden separate from all the others. The first tree was called “the tree of life,” and the second tree was called “the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil.” The first humans were told that “every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Genesis 2:16-17). God’s intent was for them to eat from the “tree of life,” which would eventually result in eternal life (Genesis 3:22).

But God gave them a choice. He didn’t want humanity to obey Him because they were like robots, programmed to do what He said, or because they had no option or opportunity to make another choice. God put them in the garden, showed them the perfect benefits and blessings of living under His government—and then presented them with the *choice*.

They had to decide, in essence, whether to choose God’s way and live a perfect, blessed life and eventually live forever, or choose another way and live with the consequences of a life cut off from God. This was the same basic choice He gave the nation of Israel: “I have set before you today life and good, death and evil” (Deuteronomy 30:15).

Let’s look closer at what these trees symbolized:

- The tree of life symbolized the Holy Spirit of God. This guides us in *the way of life* that will eventually lead to eternal life (Genesis 3:22). It represented the entire way of life characterized by dependence on, guidance from and obedience toward the true God (Deuteronomy 30:16). This essentially describes the life of a person “led by the Spirit of God” (Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit is the source of eternal life (John 6:63; Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 6:8).
- The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented the *way of life* that would eventually lead to death (Genesis 3:17). This is the *way of life* characterized by rejection of God and His guidance (Romans 1:28; 8:7; Colossians 1:21) and living life driven by self-will (Proverbs 14:12; Judges 21:25; Romans 2:8). We should also note that God specifically labeled this tree “the knowledge of good *and evil*” (emphasis added). Even when mankind operates apart from God, good can occasionally be chosen and produced. But sin (the result of living outside of God and His law) still results in death (Romans 6:23).

Key Concepts to Know

- Tree of life
- Tree of the knowledge of good and evil

This was the choice set before the first human beings. The stakes were high. Their decision would set the course of all human history that would follow them. Unfortunately, they made the wrong choice.

The same choice is still set before us. We still have *two trees—or ways of life*—to choose from. Jesus Christ set the choice before us, using slightly different wording: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Whatever terminology is used—two trees, two ways or two gates—the same essential decision stands before us today.

Which tree have you chosen to eat? Read more about the *right choice* in the article “[The Tree of Life](#).”

Questions:

1. What did the tree of life symbolize?
 2. What did the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolize?
 3. How does the choice that was before Adam and Eve represent the choice we face in our lives?
-

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE: MAN’S NEED FOR A HELPER

Genesis 2:18: “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’”

God created the first man from the dust of the ground and gave him life by the direct breath of

God (Genesis 1:7). But God knew that His creation of one solitary man was incomplete. The first man, Adam, was surrounded by animals that were unable to provide companionship and help on his level (Genesis 2:19-20). Adam was also in the company of God, who provided guidance and instruction, but God operated on an infinitely higher level than Adam.

Key Concepts to Know

- Man’s need for a “helper”
- The creation of Eve

Adam had no one like him to whom he could directly relate on an equal level. He had no one with whom to share the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden with. He was alone.

God realized that this was “not good.” Adam needed a “helper.” The Hebrew word for “helper” is *ezer*. The word literally means “one who helps.”

Here we find the origin of the institution of **marriage**. The reason God created the two sexes and the marriage institution (which we will cover in greater detail in a future post) was not just for the purpose of reproduction but to provide help and companionship.

We read of God’s creation of woman in verses 21-22. God put Adam into a “deep sleep” and removed a rib, which He used to create Eve—the first woman. Though we are not told why God specifically chose to use this part of Adam’s body to form Eve, it seems to imply the place God intended for woman to serve in His plan. Women were created with equal abilities and potential as men (1 Peter 3:7). A woman is to serve *beside* her husband in the marriage relationship—not above him (the Bible clearly designates leadership to the husband) or below him as an inferior servant (husbands are commanded to love, value and honor their wives).

Read Ephesians 5:22-31 to learn the beautiful biblical standard for how the marriage relationship is to function and work.

Questions:

1. How did God create Eve?
 2. Identify one reason God created Eve.
 3. Does the Bible teach that women were created with inferior abilities to men?
-

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE: TWO BECOME ONE

Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Verse 18 revealed one of the major reasons for the creation of the institution of marriage. In Genesis 2:24 we read a summary statement about how the marriage relationship is to function and what it is to produce.

We can break this verse down into four points:

- Marriage is an exclusive union between *one male* and *one female*. This verse represents God’s original, pure definition of marriage.
- Marriage forms a unique family unit. The building block of society, in God’s view, is the family unit. The nucleus of this family unit is the husband-wife relationship.
- The marriage relationship is to be the closest possible relationship on the human plane. The word translated “joined” in the New King James Version is the Hebrew word *dabaq*, which means “to cling, stick, stay close, cleave, keep close, stick to, stick with” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*). This describes the close emotional bond that is to develop between a husband and wife. Later, Christ expounded on this verse by saying, “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). Though there are some biblically defined circumstances where **divorce** is permitted, God’s standard is that marriages are to stay intact until death (Romans 7:2).
- Husband and wife are to become “one flesh.” This teaches us two things. First, we learn that the husband and wife are to form one unit. They are to think and act in unity and express a level of mutual care and love for each other that is deeper than any other human relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33). Second, this phrase describes the **sexual union** between husband and wife. Sex, in the Bible, is described as a very pure act when it is practiced **within** the marriage union. It is designed to physically and emotionally bond a married couple (1 Corinthians 7:2-4) and provide for reproduction (Genesis 9:7; Malachi 2:15).

To learn more about God’s standards for marriage, read “[How to Have a Happy Marriage](#).”

Questions:

1. God said a husband and wife were to be “joined together.” What does the Hebrew word *dabaq* (“joined”) mean, and what

Key Concepts to Know

- The definition of marriage
- The meaning of “one flesh”
- The purpose of the sexual union in marriage

implication does it have on the nature of the marriage relationship?

2. What are two purposes for sex in the marriage union?

GENESIS 3: SIN ENTERS HUMANITY

THE SERPENT ENTERS THE GARDEN

Genesis 3:1: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’”

In Genesis 3:1, we are introduced to another personality—the serpent. In the Garden of Eden, there was a serpent who communicated with Eve. We need not assume that the garden was full of talking animals, as this wasn’t just any snake.

The Bible reveals who this serpent was in Revelation 12:9: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan.” The serpent was Satan the devil—the adversary of God—manifesting himself in the form of a serpent.

Satan was a former archangel of God who, because of pride and lust for God’s power, led a rebellion by one-third of the angels against the government of God (Ezekiel 28:14, 17; Isaiah 14:13-14; Revelation 12:4). After the ensuing war failed, Satan and the other rebellious angels (now demons) were cast to earth (Luke 10:18).

Satan and his **demons** now prowl the earth as the adversaries of God and mankind. Genesis 3:1 provides us one of the most significant adjectives that describe the tactics of Satan—cunning. The word describes the great subtlety, shrewdness and craftiness in how he operates. His primary operation is to deceive the world (Revelation 12:9) and try to undermine the **plan of God** (Matthew 4:1-11).

Key Concepts to Know

- Identity of the serpent
- Satan the devil

Far from operating as is popularly imagined—an easily recognized red creature with horns and a pitchfork—Satan uses tactics that are much more clever. We are told that “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The main thing we need to be on alert for is not falling for any form of Satan’s deception. Here are three keys to not being deceived by Satan:

- Know the Word of God in order to refute Satan’s lies and half-truths (Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10).
- Be “rooted and built up in Him [Christ] and established in the faith” (Colossians 2:7).
- Use regular “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21; 1 Corinthians 7:5).

To learn more about Satan’s goals, deception and influence, read “[God vs. Satan](#).”

Questions:

1. Who does the Bible identify as the serpent who deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden?
2. How does the Bible describe Satan’s approach to deceiving human beings?

THE FIRST LIE: THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Genesis 3:4: “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

After Eve repeated God’s command not to eat the fruit from the “tree of the knowledge

of good and evil” and the penalty God had decreed for breaking that command (death), the serpent (Satan) made a statement that has changed all of human history.

He directly contradicted God and lied to Eve by saying: “You will not surely die.”

There were two destructive consequences of this statement:

- The doctrine of the **immortality of the soul** entered the human realm. The Bible clearly reveals that

Key Concepts to Know

- The first lie
- The immortality of the soul deception

human beings are mortal and die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 6:12, 23; Acts 2:29; 1 Corinthians 15:54). Yet Satan directly contradicted this truth by saying that humans will not and do not die. Most are surprised to learn that the common teaching of the immortality of the soul (through the soul going to heaven or hell) is false and unbiblical. Satan is the source of this doctrine.

- Humanity fell for the idea that it is permissible to doubt, question and reject the clear revelation of God. Satan introduced to humanity this way of thinking that would later be labeled as *carnality*. Romans 8:7 tells us, “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” Human beings under the influence of Satan prefer to keep God, His truth and His revelation out of their thoughts (Psalm 10:4). This is a tendency that true Christians must fight and avoid. We are to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5) and be characterized by faith and obedience to God’s Word (Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:14-15, 22).

For more evidence that humans do not possess an immortal soul, read “[Immortal Soul: What Is a Soul?](#)”

Questions:

1. What is the first lie that the serpent told Eve in the Garden?
 2. What common false teaching has this lie led to that permeates religion today?
-

THE FRUIT OF ALL EVIL

Genesis 3:6: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

In Genesis 3:6 we read of the most significant decision in human history. After listening to Satan introduce the thought that God’s revelation could be wrong and that eating the forbidden fruit could have positive benefits, Eve began to question God herself. The combination of Satan’s influence and her own human

reasoning proved deadly. The result was the first sin entering the human realm.

By rejecting God’s revelation and eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve sinned (1

John 3:4), brought upon themselves the penalty of **death** (Romans 6:23), rejected God’s

government over their lives (Romans 1:28) and set mankind on a course of sin and separation from God (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21).

Consider the results of Adam and Eve’s sin:

- They rejected God’s wise instruction to not eat the forbidden fruit.
- They accepted Satan’s faulty reasoning that humans can decide what is good and evil for themselves.
- They sinned against God and earned the death penalty.

We should also note that, contrary to the commonly believed doctrine of “original sin” (also known as “the fall of man”) human beings do not inherit sin from Adam at birth. Adam and Eve set human beings on the course of separation from God and sin—and all human beings (except Jesus Christ) have figuratively taken of the same fruit and sinned themselves (Romans 3:23).

It is the deadly combination of the deceptive influence of Satan the devil (Ephesians 2:1-2; Revelation 12:9) and a human nature that has a propensity toward selfishness and rebellion (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; Romans 8:7) that has produced the evil that has come from humanity for the approximately 6,000 years since Adam and Eve’s first sin.

The apostle Paul warns us to learn an important lesson from the account of Adam and Eve’s first sin: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent *deceived* Eve by his craftiness, so *your minds* may be *corrupted* from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3, emphasis added).

To learn more about why evil and suffering exist in today’s world, read “[Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?](#)”

Key Concepts to Know

- The result of Adam and Eve’s decision
- The danger of deception
- The error of the doctrine of “original sin”

Questions:

1. What entered the human realm when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit?
 2. What result did this have on the ensuing history of mankind?
-

ADAM AND EVE HIDE FROM GOD

Genesis 3:8: “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

The first consequence of Adam and Eve’s momentous decision to reject God’s revelation was a *fundamental change in their relationship with their Creator*. Before sin, they had experienced a close, open relationship with their God. He communicated with them openly and they lived in His presence, free of shame and guilt and with nothing to hide.

After sin, they covered and hid from Him. Their close relationship with Him was broken.

This teaches us one of sin’s essential consequences: Sin separates us from God. This was more fully explained by the prophet Isaiah over 3,000 years later: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you” (Isaiah 59:2).

The Bible reveals that when our life is characterized by sin and rebellion against God, our communication with Him—which is primarily through [prayer](#)—is hindered (Isaiah 1:15; Jeremiah 11:11).

The main thing we need to learn from Adam and Eve’s story is that we need to “draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). That is done by striving to live a righteous life through obedience to His commandments, fervently [repenting](#) when we sin and living a life characterized by faith and trust in God.

This will open the lines of communication with God in our lives: “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,

and His ears are open to their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12; see also Psalm 34:15-17; Proverbs 15:29).

To learn more about how to develop a closer and stronger relationship with your Creator, see the section [“Prayer, Fasting and Meditation: Relating to God.”](#)

Questions:

1. How did Adam and Eve’s sin affect their relationship with their Creator?
 2. According to Isaiah 59:2, what affect does sin have on our relationship with God?
-

SELF-JUSTIFICATION AND AVOIDANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY ENTER HUMANITY

Genesis 3:12: “Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’”

After their sin of taking of the forbidden fruit and subsequently hiding from the presence of God, Adam and Eve are confronted by God in the garden.

When God finds the couple hiding in the garden and asks Adam why they are hiding, his response is that they were “naked” (verse 10).

This shows that something had fundamentally changed in their relationship with their Creator. Sin had resulted in the couple hiding from their Creator because they were naked and “afraid,” instead of innocently interacting with Him. When God confronts them about their eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam *blames* his wife Eve for his decision to rebel and eat the fruit. Eve, likewise, blames her sin on the serpent (verse 13).

As we covered previously, Adam and Eve’s sin set humanity on a specific course. The basic mistakes and attitudes they demonstrated have been repeated by mankind for 6,000 years of human history. The tendency demonstrated here—refusing to take responsibility for personal sin through [self-justification](#)—has become a hallmark of human beings’ approach to their own faults (Proverbs 20:6; 21:2). Like our first parents, we often refuse to take responsibility for our sins. Instead of

Key Concepts to Know

- How Adam and Eve’s relationship with God changed
- The consequences of sin

Key Concepts to Know

- Self-justification
- Repentance

admitting that our sins and failings are our fault, we try to place the responsibility on others.

Rather than self-justification, we should be developing the habit of genuine **repentance** toward God. We are told not to deny our sins because that is just deceiving ourselves (1 John 1:8). Instead, we are to “confess our sins [to God], [because] He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (verse 9).

King David is a good example of what our approach should be after we sin. Psalm 51 is an excellent study of the antithesis to Adam’s response to his sins. When we sin, we should:

- Take full responsibility for our sins (Psalm 51:3).
- Acknowledge that ultimately all our sins are against God (verse 4) for breaking His law (1 John 3:4).
- Understand that God wants repentance from the inside out, not mere outward penance (Psalm 51:6).
- Specifically ask for mercy and forgiveness (verses 1-2) through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7).
- Ask God to help us **change** through the power of the Holy Spirit so we can overcome our sins and grow in righteousness (Psalm 51:10-12).

The good news is that we can personally escape the pattern of behavior started by Adam and Eve. Study the entire chapter of Psalm 51 for more insight into what the proper response to sin should be.

To learn more about how to properly repent of sin, read “[How to Repent](#).”

Questions:

1. When confronted with their sin, Adam and Eve justified their decision. What should Adam and Eve have done?
 2. Identify one thing Psalm 51 teaches us about how to approach God when we have sinned.
-

CURSE ON THE SERPENT

Genesis 3:14: “So the LORD God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.’”

Genesis 3:14 begins a section of Genesis that has been called the “Protoevangelium” by modern theologians. This

word means “beginning of the gospel.” It is used because theologians have correctly pointed out that this begins a thread that runs through the rest of the Bible—that God has a plan to counter the influence of Satan and redeem mankind from sin through Jesus Christ, and that the **Kingdom of God** will ultimately triumph over sin and evil.

This important portion of the book of Genesis begins with God addressing the instigator of mankind’s sin—the serpent (Satan, Revelation 12:9). Though Adam and Eve (and the rest of mankind) were personally responsible for their sin (Romans 5:12), Satan was still the deceiving influence that instigated the sin.

Satan is “cursed” in this verse for his role in the deception that led to the first human sin. This curse will ultimately be fulfilled when God defeats Satan: “That through death He [Christ] might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The next verse will explain more details about how Satan will be ultimately defeated.

To learn more about the cause of evil in today’s world, read “[The Problem of Evil](#).”

Question:

1. Why was the serpent (Satan) cursed?
-

THE FIRST PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH

Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

The section of Scripture known as the “Protoevangelium” continues with this crucial scripture. Genesis 3:15 essentially describes a macro-level view of history from this point forward.

It introduces the need for *the Messiah*—Savior—to ultimately defeat the influence of Satan. Thus, this

Key Concept to Know

- Curse on the serpent

Key Concepts to Know

- First prophecy of the Messiah
- Enmity between Satan and Christ

scripture is the first *messianic prophecy* in the Bible.

Let's break this verse down to understand more about what we are to learn:

- **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** This statement can be understood on multiple levels. First, on the physical level, this verse declares that there would be enmity (hatred, hostility) between humans (especially females) and snakes. This is true, as human beings generally have a fear and dislike for snakes, some of which are extremely dangerous. Second, this explains the hatred that exists between Satan and the human race (the progeny of the woman). Satan is described as a “murderer” (John 8:44), an “enemy” (Matthew 13:39) and an “adversary” (1 Peter 5:8) of humanity. That enmity Satan has for humanity is based on his desire to subvert God's plan of “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10).
- **“And between your seed and her Seed.”** The prophecy here broadens to look further into the future. “Her Seed” is a reference to Jesus Christ, who was the most important descendent of Eve (through Abraham) as revealed in Galatians 3:16 (see also Galatians 4:4). The work of **Jesus Christ**, as the prophesied Messiah, includes many aspects that put Him in direct conflict with Satan. Satan's seed is anyone who has his mind and attitudes. In John 8:44, for example, Satan is said to be the father of the Pharisees, who want to destroy Christ. Here are a few ways that Jesus Christ and Satan are in direct conflict:
- Christ is the *Light*, revealing God's truth (John 1:9); while Satan is darkness, *blinding humanity* (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4).
- Christ came to *save* men's lives (Luke 9:56; 1 Timothy 1:15), while Satan seeks to murder human beings—not just physically, but to spiritually *destroy* them by leading them down the path to eternal death (John 8:44).
- Christ leads human beings to *righteousness* (Romans 3:22; 5:17; Philippians 1:11), while Satan seeks to lead humanity toward *wickedness* (Ephesians 6:12).

These and many other reasons are why Satan and Christ are prophesied to be at “enmity.” This is especially clear in the direct confrontation between Christ and Satan in Matthew 4:1-11. This account shows how Satan tried to destroy the plan of God by tempting Jesus Christ to sin and

thus disqualify Himself from being the Savior. He believed that if Jesus sinned, the plan to bring human beings into God's family (Hebrews 2:10) would fail. God's plan to bring human beings into His family requires that human beings be forgiven through Christ's perfect sacrifice and then walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4) until a future time when they will be resurrected as immortal spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). Satan wanted to thwart this—but he failed, and the plan of God continued forward.

To learn more about the role of Jesus Christ in the plan of God, read the articles in our section “[Who Is Jesus?](#)”

Question:

1. **According to Genesis 3:15, there would be “enmity” between what two beings?**
-

PROPHECY OF SATAN'S ULTIMATE DEFEAT

In the last part of this verse, we see a very specific prophecy that has huge implications.

We read that this “enmity” between Satan and Christ would culminate in two specific prophetic events: the serpent (Satan) would “bruise His [Christ's] heel” and “He [Christ] shall bruise your [Satan's] head.”

- **“You shall bruise His heel.”** This refers to an attack leading to a temporary wound to the woman's “Seed” (referring prophetically to Jesus Christ). This pictures Satan symbolically striking at Jesus Christ in a way that would not destroy Him. This was fulfilled at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Though the sacrifice of

Key Concepts to Know

- **How Satan would “bruise” Christ's heel**
- **How Christ will “crush” Satan's head**

Jesus was a part of God's plan from the beginning (1 Peter 1:19-20), the Scriptures are clear that Satan had a part in instigating and carrying out the crucifixion. Luke 22:3 and John 13:27 reveal that Satan was partly responsible for Judas' betrayal of Christ, which led to the crucifixion at Golgotha.

The Bible reveals that the angelic realm (Satan's plane of existence) cannot fully understand the depths of the plan of God (1 Peter 1:12). Satan, who is deceived by his own pride, believed he could sabotage the plan of

God. After his first major attempt to kill Jesus as a baby failed (Matthew 2:13-16), his next recorded attack was the direct temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). After Satan failed to tempt Christ to sin, his final tactic against Christ was to instigate the brutal murder of the Messiah. The crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19) was the result of that attempt.

Christ's death was the bruising of the heel prophesied in Genesis 3:15. Though Christ was dead for three days and nights, He was miraculously resurrected by the Father (Ephesians 1:20) and now lives eternally at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). This is why the prophecy refers to Satan's strike at Christ as merely a bruised heel—a minor wound—because Christ rose again and is carrying out the plan that will ultimately destroy death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

- **“He shall bruise [or crush] your head.”** This refers to the ultimate fate of Satan. The surest way to kill a snake is to crush its head. The Bible uses this imagery to teach us about Satan's fate. Unlike the strike against Christ, which would cause a temporary wound, the strike against Satan will be a permanent wound. The ultimate fate of Satan will be the complete destruction of his power and influence.

Ironically, it was through Christ's death (which was instigated by Satan) and resurrection that Satan's power will be destroyed (Hebrews 2:14). We are to be encouraged that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20). The details of Satan's head wound are found in Revelation 20:1-3, 10. Satan's ultimate fate will be the total elimination of his power and ability to influence anyone with his deceptions.

To learn more about the ultimate fate of Satan, read [“God vs. Satan.”](#)

Questions:

1. Identify one way Satan “bruised” Jesus Christ's heel?
 2. How will Jesus Christ “crush” the head of Satan the devil?
-

SIN'S EFFECTS ON WOMEN

Genesis 3:16: “To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you

shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”

God turns His attention specifically to Adam and Eve and explains to them the consequences of their decision to reject His government over their lives. Essentially, He tells them that because they have rejected His rule over their lives, they no longer will have the blessings that He gave them in the garden. Instead of the life they formerly had in the garden, when God blessed them by providing for all their needs, they would have a difficult and painful life without His presence.

This is a lesson mankind is still learning and is something we need to remember: obedience to God's government brings blessings. Sin brings hardships and curses (study Leviticus 26 carefully to see how this principle applies to nations).

The specific results that God warned Eve's female descendants would face were:

- **Sorrow and pain in the reproduction and parenting process.** As a result of being separate from God, the entire process would be much harder and more painful than it would have been with God directly involved in their lives.
- **Oppressive and despotic treatment by men.** Women throughout the majority of human history have been treated harshly, or even abused, by men and have been considered to be of lesser value than men. The World Health Organization recently reported that over a third of women around the world are victims of physical and sexual abuse (*The Week*, July 5-15, 2013, p. 8). God's will was *never* for men to abuse and mistreat women. God's standards for how men should treat their wives are found in Ephesians 5:25-31; Colossians 3:19; and 1 Peter 3:7. Though these scriptures specifically apply to husbands and wives, the general principle is that men should treat *all* women with *respect* and *honor*.

Even though history is characterized by women facing these challenges, this will change when God's government is restored to this earth (Acts 3:21).

Key Concepts to Know

- **Oppressive treatment of women**
- **God's standard for the treatment of women**

To learn more about God’s standards for marriage and the *blessings* it brings, see the articles in the section “[How to Have a Happy Marriage](#).”

Questions:

- 1. What were the two curses God predicted women would experience as a result of being separated from Him?**
 - 2. How does God want men to treat women?**
-

AGRICULTURE WITHOUT GOD’S BLESSINGS

Genesis 3:17: “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.’”

We are continuing to read of the specific curses given by God to the three parties responsible for the first human sin. We’ve covered the curses given to the serpent (Satan) and Eve and the repercussions of those curses through the history of humanity. Now let’s look at the specific curse pronounced on Adam. Again, we should look at this section as God’s pronouncement of what life would be like without His active guidance, involvement and blessing from that time forward.

Notice that God begins the curse on Adam by reminding him that he should have obeyed God instead of heeding what Eve said.

It is important for us to be aware that *sin is sin*—no matter how the sin comes about

or what excuse we make for it. We are responsible for ourselves and must make sure we don’t follow others into sinful practices (Proverbs 1:10-14; 4:14-15).

God then announces that the curse on Adam (and mankind) would include the removal of God’s blessing on agriculture. Before Adam and Eve’s sin, all Adam had to do was “tend and keep” the garden in which God had

Key Concepts to Know

- The effect of sin on agriculture
- Future restoration of agricultural blessings

placed him (Genesis 2:15). Adam still had to work to cultivate the garden; but under God’s complete blessing, it was relatively easy.

After sin and the removal of God’s direct blessings, the ground would become much more difficult to cultivate and would require harder and more strenuous work (“in the sweat of your face,” Genesis 3:19) to yield produce. Without God’s blessing, it would be a constant struggle to control weeds (“thorns and thistles,” verse 18).

This was not how God intended for the creation to operate. As originally designed by God’s hand, the earth’s habitat was to be beautiful, ordered and nearly self-sustaining (Genesis 2:5-6). Without God’s blessing, it would be the opposite.

The good news is that this curse will be reversed when all things are restored to God’s original purpose and design after the return of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19). Several prophecies of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ reveal how agriculture will be restored to the original blessings of the Garden of Eden (Amos 9:13-14).

To learn more about what life will be like when “all things” are restored in the Millennium, read “[1,000 Years—the Millennium](#).”

Question:

- 1. What result would mankind’s sin have on agriculture?**
-

THE WAGES OF SIN

Genesis 3:19: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

The last and most severe curse pronounced on humanity here in Genesis 3 is the pronouncement of the *death penalty*.

Whereas the serpent had tried to convince Eve that they would “not surely die” (Genesis 3:4) as a result of disobeying God, God remained consistent. When He first put Adam in the garden, He decreed that the penalty of eating the

Key Concepts to Know

- The wages of sin
- The forgiveness of sin

fruit of the forbidden tree would be death (Genesis 2:17). Because of their sin, they would die and return to “dust” (decompose).

This “curse” because of sin applies to each and every human being who has ever lived (except Jesus Christ). The apostle Paul, in the book of Romans, explains more fully how this curse operates. In Romans 6:23, he explains: “For the wages of sin is death.” This death penalty went into effect when Adam and Eve sinned and applies to all human beings, because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin is defined as “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version).

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they transgressed God’s law. We also symbolically eat of that same fruit every time we break God’s law.

Thankfully, just as God decreed death to be the penalty of sin, He has decreed there is a way to be released from that penalty! This concept is called *forgiveness* and *remission* in the Bible and follows genuine repentance. To have sins forgiven and the death penalty removed, it is necessary that the death penalty be paid by another death, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

This was pictured, symbolically, through the sacrifice of animals under the Old Covenant system in ancient Israel (Hebrews 10:3-4). But the animal sacrifice system only foreshadowed the ultimate path to forgiveness that would be made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Read Hebrews 9:16 through 10:18 to learn more about this incredible truth.

To learn more about animal sacrifices and the ultimate Sacrifice for sin, read [“Animal Sacrifices Prefigured Christ.”](#)

Question:

1. What is the ultimate penalty that results from mankind’s sin?
-

CUT OFF FROM THE TREE OF LIFE

Genesis 3:22-23: “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.”

Here we read of the final consequence that came upon Adam and Eve as a result of their sin—their banishment from the Garden of Eden. Verse 22 reveals a key point about the reason for Adam and Eve’s removal from the garden. They were banished to cut them off from the tree of life.

To understand why they had to be separated from the tree of life, we have to understand what it symbolized. As we covered previously, the tree of life symbolized the Holy Spirit of God, which helps us live the way of total obedience and reliance on God. God is the source of eternal life through His Holy Spirit (John 6:63; Romans 8:10).

Adam and Eve had rejected God as the total source of truth and knowledge and had decided to not obey and rely on Him. Because they had brought the penalty of death on themselves and were disqualified from receiving the eternal life that the [tree of life](#) offered, they had to be “cut off” from the tree of life.

Verse 24 provides more details on how this happened: “So He [God] drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

We should understand that this does not just picture Adam and Eve being “cut off” from the tree of life but reveals the overall state of mankind ever since. God, in essence, had closed access to His knowledge, His Holy Spirit and the way to eternal life from mankind.

Since then, mankind has followed the same path as Adam and Eve: being influenced by the way of Satan (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9), living a life characterized by human reasoning (Proverbs 14:12) and eating of the symbolic “fruit” of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God has given mankind 6,000 years to go this way to demonstrate the destructive consequences of sin. This era of history will culminate in a time when sin will become so bad that mankind will destroy itself if God does not [intervene](#) (Matthew 24:22).

The good news is that God has a plan to redeem and save human beings from the way of life that Adam and Eve chose. This plan currently consists of a small group of people that God has called out of this world and into His [Church](#) (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Peter 2:9;

Key Concepts to Know

- Mankind “cut off” from the tree of life
- God’s plan of redemption

Revelation 17:14). The amazing truth is that God will open access to the rest of humanity in a future time (read our article on the “[Second Resurrection](#)” to learn more details about this).

To learn more about God’s plan to open access to eternal life to the rest of mankind, read “[Plan of Salvation: How God’s Holy Days Reveal His Plan.](#)”

Questions:

1. Why did God remove Adam and Eve from access to the tree of life?
 2. Will mankind ever have access to the tree of life again?
-

GENESIS 4: THE FIRST MURDER

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4:1-2: “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’ Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”

The first piece of information we receive after Adam and Eve were expelled

from the Garden of Eden is the conception and birth of their first child. After giving birth, Eve named her son Cain, which means “acquired.”

Though Genesis 4:2 is a simple and straightforward verse about the birth of Adam and Eve’s second son, it sets the context for a very important set of events. We should note that some commentators feel that Cain and Abel were twin brothers, with Cain being born first followed by Abel. Though this is plausible, the text allows for Abel to be the second-born son.

Let’s consider the different occupations the two brothers had:

Key Concepts to Know

- Cain and his occupation
- Abel and his occupation

- **Cain was a “tiller of the ground.”** This meant that his interest was horticulture, and he cultivated produce to feed himself and his family. Because God no longer directly blessed the ground (Genesis 3:17-18), Cain’s job would have been very difficult and would have necessitated his inventing tools to successfully remove “thorns and thistles” and to cultivate the soil. Cain’s probable invention of sharp tools may help explain what we will read in the following verses.
- **Abel was a “keeper of sheep.”** This means that he tended sheep and was what we would call a “shepherd.” As we will see, Abel will represent the first righteous offspring of Adam and Eve. It is interesting to consider that some of God’s greatest servants had a background in shepherding: Moses (Exodus 3:1) and David (1 Samuel 16:11). Jesus Christ used shepherding to describe His role as the leader and caregiver of God’s people (John 10:11-16; 1 Peter 5:4).

Not only did the two brothers have different occupations, as we’ll see, they had two different approaches to worshipping God.

Questions:

1. What was Cain’s occupation?
 2. What was Abel’s occupation?
-

CAIN AND ABEL BRING OFFERINGS

Genesis 4:3-4: “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering.”

We now come to the first time that an “offering” (a gift to God as part

of formal worship by humans) is mentioned in Scripture. As we will see, this account will contrast the offerings of the two brothers, Cain and Abel, and God’s reaction to each one.

Key Concepts to Know

- The purpose of an offering
- The difference between Cain’s and Abel’s offerings

This verse indicates that their worship was not random, but came at a specific time—“in the process of time it came to pass.” This can also be translated “at the end of days,” which could imply the end of the week, the end of the year or the end of the harvest. Commentators have different speculations about what this “process of time” represented. Many commentators believe this refers to a formal sacrifice that occurred on the weekly *Sabbath*.

Whenever it took place, it is likely that there was much that God would have taught this first family that is not recorded in the Bible. They would have been aware of the basic principles of His law. Since “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) and Romans 4:15 teaches that “where there is no law there is no transgression,” the law must have been understood, at least in its basic form, by the first family. The Bible reveals there can’t be sin without law. Since offerings were brought to God, we can also assume that God instructed the first human beings how to present offerings and why they were necessary.

We should also consider the two primary reasons physical offerings were brought to God in the Old Testament:

- **To give thanks to God for His blessings and to ask for His continued blessings.**
- **To atone for and acknowledge one’s personal sins to God** (see *Adam Clarke’s Commentary of the Bible*, note on Genesis 4:3).

As we will see, there was something about Cain’s offering that was not right and that displeased God. It is also interesting to note that after their banishment from the garden, the first family did not totally reject the true God. They maintained a form of worshipping Him through these sacrifices, but combined that worship with sin and the formulation of their own ways of living apart from His guidance.

Cain brought an “offering of the fruit of the ground,” which makes sense since he was a farmer (Genesis 4:2). Though we will see that there was a problem with Cain’s offering, it was not wrong merely because it was from the field instead of the flock. God clearly prescribed agricultural offerings in the sacrificial system He later gave to ancient Israel (Leviticus 2:1-16).

Abel presented the “firstborn of his flock and of their fat” to God. Abel was a “keeper of sheep” (Genesis 4:2), so it makes sense that he offered animals.

But the difference between Cain’s and Abel’s offerings was not just in what was offered, but in the attitude and approach of each in giving the offering. We read here that “the LORD respected Abel and his offering,” or as the New

English Translation says, “the LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering.”

The first hint we have of the possible disparity between Cain and Abel’s offerings is in the fact that we are specifically told that Abel presented the *firstborn* of his flocks. This indicates that Abel gave specific thought and care to his offering by marking the firstborn of his flocks and dedicating those as holy to God. Dedicating the firstborn to God as holy is something God expected in later offerings (Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:12, 17; Proverbs 3:9).

Hebrews 11:4 tells us that Abel’s offering was a “more excellent sacrifice,” not just because it was an offering of a firstborn animal, but also because of Abel’s righteousness behind it. Abel desired to give the best to God.

To learn more about the purpose of animal offerings and what they foreshadowed in God’s plan, read “[Animal Sacrifices Prefigured Christ](#).”

Questions:

1. **Identify two reasons offerings were brought to God in Old Testament times.**
 2. **Identify one reason Abel’s offering was accepted by God.**
-

WHY CAIN’S OFFERING WAS REJECTED

Genesis 4:5: “But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”

This verse concludes the narrative on the offerings of Cain and Abel. Putting the content of verses 3-5 together, we learn that Cain brought an agricultural offering that was not pleasing to God, while Abel brought a sacrifice of the firstborn of his flock that was pleasing to God.

What were the core differences in the offerings of the brothers that led to God rejecting Cain’s offering and accepting Abel’s?

There are two major explanations that should be considered for a full understanding:

1. **The difference in the *quality* and *effort* between the two offerings.**

Verses 3-4 give us some key clues about the difference in quality of the offerings that Cain and Abel presented to God. Cain’s offering of the “fruit of the ground” is contrasted to Abel’s offering of the “firstborn of his

flock and of their fat.” We can deduce that Cain’s offering was an offering that had little care and thought put into it.

It seems that Abel selected and gave his offering with much care and reverence in order to bring God the best available with a humble attitude of worship. Abel’s offering is called “a more excellent sacrifice” in Hebrews 11:4. Cain’s offering likely was prepared in the opposite spirit, most likely thrown together of whatever he had left of his harvest, with little thought given to the quality of what he was giving to God.

What can we learn from the difference in quality between Cain and Abel’s offerings? The main lesson we can apply today is to always give God our best and worship and honor Him with our *maximum effort* and *energy*.

2. The difference in the *lives* and *attitudes* behind the offerings.

While there were likely quality differences between the two offerings, the true disparity in the offerings was in the lives and attitudes of the men behind them.

Cain was very clearly living a life that was not pleasing to God. Later, when God addressed Cain about his offering, God told Cain that “if you do well, will you not be accepted?” (verse 7, emphasis added). The implication is that Cain was not doing “well” and was living a life unacceptable to God. We learn in the New Testament that Cain was “of the wicked one” and “his works were evil” (1 John 3:12).

God is very clear that He expects our inward spiritual state to be consistent with our outward actions. Proverbs 15:8 is clear that “the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.”

Abel, on the other hand, was living a life that was acceptable to God. His quality offering accurately reflected the quality of the life behind it. The New Testament clearly identifies Abel as “righteous” (1 John 3:12). His offering was “more excellent” and was a witness (or outward evidence) of his inward righteousness and faith (Hebrews 11:4).

Another significant lesson we can learn is that we cannot rely on just the outward appearance of religious worship to please God. Cain tried to hide his unrighteous life through an offering. But God “looks at the heart,” not merely at “outward appearance” (1 Samuel 16:7, see also Jeremiah 17:10).

Jesus Christ corrected the Pharisees for a similar issue. The Pharisees appeared righteous externally, but were inwardly unrighteous and living lives unacceptable to God (Matthew 23:25-28).

True Christians are to “love the LORD your God with all your *heart*, with all your *soul*, with all your *strength* and with all your *mind*” (Luke 10:27, emphasis added)—meaning our love for God and righteousness must go down to the core of our being. That does not mean God is not concerned about our outward appearance and actions. The Bible is clear we are to be “doers of the word” (James 1:22) as a result of the “implanted word” of God inside of us (James 1:21).

Study the following scriptures and meditate on the quality and heart God wants as we approach Him: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; 2 Timothy 2:15.

Question:

1. Identify one possible reason Cain’s offering was rejected by God.

GOD’S WARNING TO CAIN—AND US

Genesis 4:7: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

God spoke these words to Cain after He saw that Cain was visibly angry over God’s rejection of his offering (Genesis 4:5). Instead of responding to God’s displeasure with a repentant attitude and a desire to change, Cain responded with jealous *anger* and bitterness towards his brother. God, who knows the heart, could discern that Cain’s anger was rising to the point of danger.

Key Concepts to Know

- The danger of anger and bitterness
- The necessity of repentance
- The nature of sin

So God spoke to Cain with encouragement and warning:

- “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” While God had rejected Cain’s offering because of the attitude behind it, He still offered Cain this word of encouragement that Cain *could* change. He could still repent and “do well” and “be accepted.” This is what God wanted Cain to do. God’s will is always that people should repent (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Had Cain reacted properly to God’s rejection,

his anger would have given way to “godly sorrow [that] produces repentance leading to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

- **“And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.”** God warned Cain that he was inching dangerously close to sin—transgressing God’s law. Sin begins with what is in our attitude and mind. At this point, unless he stopped himself, repented and committed to change, Cain’s attitude and mind were going the direction of hatred toward his brother, which is the root of **murder** (Matthew 5:21-22). Study James 1:14-15 closely to learn about the process of how thoughts can precipitate sin.
- **“And its desire is for you, but you shall rule over it.”** God’s final words of warning to Cain are that if he continued down the road to sin, sin would eventually rule over him. Sin would become his master and he would become its slave.

Jesus taught that “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34). Sin is likened to slavery because it entraps us in negative behavior that destroys our life (physically and spiritually), often leads to other sins, becomes an addiction that is extremely difficult for human beings to control, and places us under the oppressive control of Satan.

To learn more about sin as slavery, study the following scriptures: Proverbs 5:22; Romans 6:6, 12, 16, 19-20; Ephesians 2:2.

Cain ultimately ignored God’s warning. But today we can take God’s warning to heart and use it to stop the destructive progression of sin in our lives!

To learn more about how to stop the progression of sin in your life, read “[Effects of Sin](#).”

Question:

1. **What was Cain’s emotional response when God rejected his offering? What should his response have been?**
-

THE FIRST MURDER

Genesis 4:8: “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.”

We’ve covered what led up to Cain’s murder of Abel—his anger and jealousy toward his brother. Instead of taking God’s words about his inferior offering and lifestyle as an impetus to change and improve himself, he allowed his anger toward Abel to develop into hatred, which resulted in *murder*.

God had warned Cain to control his thoughts because they were dangerously close to resulting in sin (Genesis 4:7). Instead of ruling over his impulses, he gave in and allowed

the process described in James 1:14-15 to play out in his life. This resulted in the first murder.

Key Concepts to Know

- **The spirit of murder**
- **The Sixth Commandment in effect before Sinai**

Just as his parents set humanity on a course of rejecting God’s leadership in their lives, Cain set humanity on a course of hatred and murder, which has been played out in countless crimes and wars down through history. John 8:44 reveals that Satan is the originator of murderous thoughts.

God later codified the command against murder in the **10 Commandments** (Exodus 20:13). Read “[Were the 10 Commandments Around Before Moses?](#)” for biblical proof these laws existed long before Moses and Mount Sinai.

The most important lesson we can learn from Cain’s sin is that we have to overcome thoughts of anger and hatred toward other people—before they turn into words or acts of violence.

Jesus Christ taught that hate and anger break the *spirit* of the Sixth Commandment (Matthew 5:21-22). Those who harbor hateful thoughts and attitudes against others walk “in darkness” (1 John 2:11). Hatred is an attitude that true Christians must overcome (Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Titus 3:3). True Christianity is living the way of life characterized by *love toward others* (Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:35; Colossians 3:14).

To learn more about the deep meaning of God’s Sixth Commandment against murder, read “[The Sixth Commandment: You Shall Not Murder](#).”

Question:

1. **What was the root cause of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel?**
-

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

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

After Cain's murder of Abel, Cain tried to cover his sin by claiming ignorance of Abel's whereabouts. Cain knew exactly where Abel's body was located. But when God approached Cain and asked where his brother was, Cain responded

with this outright lie: "I do not know."

This lie, told directly to God, is the

first recorded human lie. Interestingly, murder and lying are connected in John 8:44 as two central characteristics of the character of Satan. This account shows us the common progression of **sin**. Sin often begets further sin. In this case, Cain's sin of murder led to his sin of lying.

A similar progression can be found in the account of David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). David's sin of adultery was followed by lying and a murder to cover up the adultery.

In contrast, Christians are to be known as truth tellers in all things (Ephesians 4:25).

After his lie, Cain further answered God with this sarcastic statement: "Am I my brother's keeper?" By saying this, Cain was essentially saying he was not responsible for his brother's well-being. This shows a calloused lack of love and concern on Cain's part. This was a result of his hatred and **anger**. Human history has been marked by this core attitude of a lack of concern for the care and well-being of others.

True Christians understand the error of Cain's statement. Philippians 2:3-4 clearly expresses the attitude we are to have toward others: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

This *outgoing concern* toward other people is the result of a life driven by love (Mark 12:31; Luke 6:27; 1 John 4:16).

To learn more about the depth of love God expects from His people, read our article "[Love of God](#)."

Questions:

1. Cain's murder led to another sin. What was that sin?

2. What principle of godly character did Cain break when he said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

ABEL'S BLOOD CRIES OUT

Genesis 4:10: "And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'"

God now reveals to Cain that He, as the all-knowing and omnipresent God, knows Cain had murdered Abel and had lied.

God uses figurative language to represent Abel's death:

"The voice of your

brother's blood cries out to Me." Obviously, Abel's blood was not literally "crying out" because the Bible teaches that the "dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Jesus Christ identified Abel as the first of the righteous martyrs for God's way of life. Speaking to the Pharisees, who would later instigate His martyrdom, Jesus Christ said: "On you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (Matthew 23:35).

Hebrews 12:24 likens Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice to Abel's—in that both gave their lives for doing right—but Jesus' sacrifice "speaks better things than that of Abel."

Abel's death should remind us that God's people often suffer and are persecuted for obedience to God. The **fifth seal** of the book of Revelation pictures the martyrdom that some of God's people will face in the end time. Figuratively, these martyrs cry out: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10).

The good news is that prophecy reveals that the martyrs for God's truth will be rewarded for their faithfulness (Revelation 20:4).

Study these scriptures to learn more about why true Christians often suffer persecution in this life: Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:22-23; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 John 3:11-14.

Key Concept to Know

- The antithesis of murder is love and concern for others

Key Concepts to Know

- Martyrdom
- Imagery of blood "crying out"

Question:**1. What does Abel's fate teach us about the lives of other righteous people?**

CAIN CURSED AND BANISHED

Genesis 4:11: "So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

As a result of committing murder, Cain was given a specific "curse" from God for his sin:

- Cain would be "cursed from the earth" (English Standard Version: "from the ground"). Because Cain shed his brother's blood on the ground, the ground would "no longer yield its strength [abundant crops or produce] to you" (Genesis 4:12). *The Soncino Books of the Bible* explains: "Wherever he lives, the curse will follow him and the soil will be barren for him. The remainder of his existence will consequently be an unceasing vagabondage" (*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 15). This punishment is similar to one of the curses later prophesied to come on Israel for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:16-17).
- Cain would be "a fugitive and a vagabond" on the earth (Genesis 4:12). He would now be separated from his family and live out his life as a wanderer in "the land of Nod" (Nod is a wordplay on "vagabond," *Nelson's NKJV Study Bible* note on verse 16).

We should not forget that Cain's ultimate punishment would be death for his sin (Romans 6:23). Though Cain certainly was worthy of a swift death penalty carried out by God or his family, God permitted Cain to live out his life in exile. God even mercifully provided Cain with some sort of "mark" that protected him from being murdered (verse 15).

Cain's sin led to him being banished from the presence of his family—the only civilization that existed at the time. He was permitted to take his wife and build a new civilization in his exile. We are told he settled in the "land

of Nod on the east of Eden" (verse 16). There he built a city named Enoch (verse 17).

The location of Cain's city is unknown and was destroyed during the global flood that came in Noah's time (Genesis 7). All we know is its location relative of Eden—to the east.

Some wonder where Cain found his wife. Since Cain was the firstborn son of the first created human beings, he must have married one of his sisters. The Bible reveals that Adam and Eve had many of other children (Genesis 5:4). At that time, the original humans would have had the genetic purity and variety that would have allowed children to safely be born to siblings.

Later, however, God made laws against incest, which included marrying anyone "near of kin" (Leviticus 18:6-17). Violations of these laws are still sins today and most countries still prohibit marriage between siblings. To learn more about the first human family, read "[Where Did Cain Get His Wife?](#)"

Key Concept to Know

- The curse on Cain

Question:**1. What was the curse on Cain?**

SETH REPLACES ABEL

Genesis 4:25: "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, 'For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.'"

After the death of Abel, the Bible doesn't mention any of the other sons born to Adam and Eve (Genesis 5:4) as being righteous.

Cain, banished to the east where he built a civilization apart from God, had no

descendants listed as righteous through whom God was able to work. God couldn't work through Cain because of his unrighteousness.

Adam and Eve gave birth to a son named Seth. The name *Seth* means "compensation" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*). Seth was the replacement for Abel who was murdered. Eventually Jesus Christ was one of his descendants and was the "Seed" through whom God would save mankind.

Seth's descendants are those through whom:

Key Concept to Know

- The line of Seth

- God would physically preserve humanity. Genesis 6 and 7 reveal how God destroyed nearly all of humanity through a global flood because of wickedness. God used Noah (a descendent of Seth) to preserve the human race through Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth (Genesis 10). All humanity alive today, then, traces its lineage to Adam and Eve through the line of Seth.
- God would work with a chosen nation. Abraham, the progenitor of the Israelite nation, was a descendent of Seth through Noah's son Shem (Genesis 11:10-26). God called and raised up Israel to be an example to the other nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 4:6-8).
- God would spiritually save humanity through the Messiah—**Jesus Christ**. Jesus Christ was born from the Israelite tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). It is through Jesus Christ that humans can be saved from their sins (Acts 4:12), through whom the prophecy of “her Seed” will be fulfilled (Genesis 3:15), and through whom mankind will receive salvation and be part of the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 9:28).

Question:

1. Who represented God's way of life after the death of Abel?
-

MEN CALL ON GOD

Genesis 4:26: “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”

After the death of righteous Abel, God replaced him in Adam and Eve's family with Seth. God hoped Seth would continue the way of life that

Abel previously characterized. Here we are told that men “began to call on the name of the LORD.” There are two possible meanings of this. Some interpret “began to call on the name of the LORD” as a reference to men *polluting* or *defiling* of His name (Hebrew *chala*, as in Genesis

Key Concepts to Know

- Calling on God's name
- Righteous individuals in all ages

49:4 and Exodus 20:25). Others believe this refers to men worshipping or praying to the true God, although two are specifically identified as such.

Enoch and Noah, two of Seth's descendants, clearly worshipped the true God. There are no righteous descendants of Cain mentioned in the text. It appears that Cain's descendants continued in their lifestyle of living outside the guidance, presence and true worship of God (Genesis 4:23-24). The two members of Seth's line who are listed as righteous:

- Understood God by His personal, covenant name.
- Understood God as the source of blessings and relied on Him for those blessings.
- Understood proper worship toward God as Abel had understood and practiced.

A study of biblical history shows that God's pattern is to call a few individuals to represent Him in every age. God has almost always had a small group of people He was working through (1 Kings 19:18; Isaiah 1:9; Matthew 16:18; Romans 11:5).

To learn more about the group of people God is now working with, read “[The Church: The Body of Christ](#).”

Question:

1. Did God continue to call a few individuals to represent Him?
-

GENESIS 5: THE GENEALOGY OF ADAM

ADAM'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:4: “After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.”

This verse shows us two important pieces of information:

- **Life spans in the antediluvian world were much longer than they are today.** Adam lived to the age of 930 years. He was 130 years old when he fathered Seth and lived 800 years after that. Reading through Genesis 5 shows the long ages of the individuals in the genealogical chain from Adam to Noah. There are different possible

reasons for these long life spans, including better atmospheric conditions and stronger genetics. It

is interesting to note that after the flood (Genesis 7), somehow God saw to it that human life spans would drop dramatically (Genesis 11:10-32).

- **Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters.** Some wonder how civilization could have grown so rapidly from one couple. The answer is that Adam and Eve fulfilled the command in Genesis 1:28 to “be fruitful and multiply.” We also see that Adam and Eve’s offspring rapidly reproduced as well (Genesis 5:4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26). Adam and Eve produced children before and after the birth of Seth. Though we cannot know exactly how long Eve’s period of childbearing lasted because of the different physiological conditions of that era, who knows how many dozens of children they produced? With each new generation, it is easy to see how the antediluvian civilization grew rapidly in population.

Key Concepts to Know

- Long life spans in the antediluvian world
- Rapid reproduction and population growth

Antediluvian

This word refers to the era of human history before the Flood. It is derived from the Latin words *ante*, meaning “before,” and *diluvium*, meaning “flood.”

Question:

1. How did the pre-Flood world grow in population so rapidly?
-

ENOCH TAKEN BY GOD

Genesis 5:24: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

As we read the genealogy of the antediluvian patriarchs, we come across an interesting person: Enoch. Enoch

stands out from this list of patriarchs in Genesis 5 because we are told he “walked with God” (verses 22, 24). This descriptor is absent from the individuals immediately preceding and following Enoch. The only individuals in this chapter who are specifically identified as having a relationship with God after Abel are Enoch and Noah.

Enoch lived in a historical era that was increasingly becoming wicked and violent. He lived just three generations before the time of Noah when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5)

and “the earth [was] filled with violence” (verse 13). It is likely that wickedness already affected society in Enoch’s era. Enoch’s faithfulness to God would have made him stand out and be unpopular.

This helps explain why we read that God did something very unusual with Enoch: “God took him.” In Hebrews 11:5 we get more information: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (King James Version). The Greek word for “translated” is *metatithemi*, which means “to transfer, to be carried away or removed” (*Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary*). The basic meaning is to be transferred from one location to another.

Many mistakenly interpret Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5 to teach that Enoch was taken to heaven and never died. But this is impossible since Hebrews 11:13 clearly says that “these *all* died in faith, *not* having received the promises, but having seen them afar off” (emphasis added). Verse 39 clarifies that none of the individuals in this “faith chapter” of the Bible “received the promise,” because all of God’s people will receive the promise together (verse 40).

We also have to remember that Jesus Christ clearly taught that “no one has ascended to heaven” (John 3:13). Since “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35) and Christ is “the truth” (John 14:6), it is impossible that Enoch was taken to heaven.

So what happened to Enoch? Enoch “was taken away so that he did not see death” (Hebrews 11:5), meaning that he was taken from a violent society (Genesis 6:13) where he would likely have been killed (like Abel) by others who were jealous and angry at him for his righteousness and blessings. It seems Enoch, like Elijah, was transferred to another geographical location on earth where he was protected and lived out the rest of his 365 years in safety from the evil that surrounded him.

Key Concept to Know

- What happened to Enoch

For a more detailed explanation of what happened to Enoch, read “Are Enoch and Elijah in Heaven?”

Questions:

1. Was Enoch taken to heaven?
 2. Why was Enoch taken to another location?
-

GENESIS 6: THE EVIL OF THE PRE-FLOOD WORLD

MEN MULTIPLY

Genesis 6:1-2: “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

Here we read about the growth of the antediluvian world. The generation during which Noah lived was characterized by evil and wicked human beings (verse 5). Part of this evil came from the increase in population. We have already covered how the rapid growth of the human population before the Flood was helped by the long life spans of individuals, which allowed couples to produce possibly many dozens of children. The problem was the wicked characteristics of the growing population. The Bible teaches that “when the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases” (Proverbs 29:16). The rapid reproduction of a wicked society produced even greater wickedness.

We then read a scripture that has confused many. We are told “the sons of God saw the daughters of men” and “took

wives for themselves of all whom they chose” (verse 2).

The major questions that arise are *who* were the “sons of God” and *why* was God so disappointed by these marriages?

One of the most common erroneous explanations of this verse is that the term “sons of God” refers to angelic beings coming down to earth and being attracted to human women (“daughters of men”), resulting in marriage and reproduction between angels and human beings. Those who espouse this idea point to verse 4 and claim that the result of angelic-human procreation was “giants.”

Though the Bible uses the phrase “sons of God” in various ways, including references to both men and angels (Job 1:6), we can say with authority that the above theory regarding Genesis 6:2 is incorrect. This is a situation where we have to apply one of the most basic rules of Bible study—consider multiple scriptures on a subject to get a complete picture of the biblical teaching.

Jesus Christ, when asked a question about marriage after the resurrection of the dead, said that human beings who are resurrected to spirit life “neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels” (Luke 20:35-36; see also Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25).

We learn two important truths about angelic beings through Christ’s statement: They are immortal and they do not marry. The implication of the statement is that angels cannot marry or have children. The ability to procreate was given to the physical created realm, but not the angelic realm. God specifically designed human beings to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28) and become “one flesh” at marriage (Genesis 2:24, “one flesh” being a reference to the sexual union).

When God created physical life in Genesis 1, He created a specific law that governed reproduction. Physical life can only reproduce “according to its kind” (Genesis 1:21, 24-25). Human beings were unique because they were created outside of the animal “kind.” Humans were created, “according to Our [God’s] likeness” (verse 26). Human beings *can only* reproduce with other human beings because they are distinctly made after the *God “kind.”*

Hebrews 2:5-9 makes it very clear that humanity is part of a unique *plane of existence* that is distinct from the angelic plane. Physical human beings are created “a little lower than the angels” (verse 7), with the potential to be elevated above the angelic plane (Hebrews 1:5-13). Angels were created as “ministering [serving] spirits sent forth to minister [serve] for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

Key Concepts to Know

- Antediluvian population growth
- Angels did not procreate with human women
- Two theories explaining who the “sons of God” were

The mistaken theory of angel-human marriages is further disproven by *studying the context* of this chapter.

Notice God's response to these marriages: "My Spirit shall not strive with *man* forever" (verse 3, emphasis added). God was angry at *man*—not angels. The Hebrew word for "man" is *adam* and only refers to human beings—never angels (the Hebrew word for "angel" is *mal'ak*). Verse 4 refers to the children of these marriages as "men of renown" (not hybrid angelic-human beings). Verses 5-6 also show that God's displeasure was with *men*—not angels.

The scriptures we have covered show that it is impossible that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2 were angels or demons.

Who were the "sons of God"?

Though the text of Genesis 6 does not specifically identify who exactly these men were, there are a number of possibilities that have been proposed by students of the Bible. Here are two possible explanations of this verse:

- **Marriages between men and women characterized by idolatry and violence.** This explanation views the "sons of God" as generally evil men marrying women of the earth. Genesis 4:26 can be translated "men began to profane the name of the LORD" or "men began to take on themselves the name of the LORD" and can thus describe the growth of idolatry. According to this understanding, the "sons of God" would refer to idolatrous human beings who impregnated human women who then gave birth to children who further defied God. This generation is described as entirely evil—"every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (verse 5). Later in the chapter we read that "violence" was another characteristic of the majority of people at this time (verses 11, 13).
- **Marriages between men of the line of Seth and women of the line of Cain.** This is the most common explanation that is proposed by Bible scholars. This explanation is largely based on a different interpretation of Genesis 4:26, that of a reference to Seth's descendants having some form of worship of the true God (though some interpret this verse differently). If there was knowledge and worship of the true God among the descendants of Seth, it is possible that they could have been referred to as the "sons of God." If the phrase "sons of God" here is a reference to the descendants of Seth, it

is possible that the phrase "daughters of men" is a reference to women of Cain's line, which became totally separated from God (Genesis 4:16-24).

Alfred Edersheim explains, "The corruption of mankind reached its highest point when even the difference between the Sethites and the Cainites became obliterated by intermarriage between the two parties, and that from sensual motives" (*Bible History Old Testament*, p. 39). The intermarriages between these two previously separated family lines would have been a symptom and a cause of the spiritual degeneration of the descendants of Seth, leading to even greater societal "wickedness" and "evil" (Genesis 6:5).

Though we cannot definitely state the specific identify of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men," the fact that the "sons of God" *do not* represent angelic beings is certain.

To learn more about the situation in Genesis 6, read "[Sons of God in Genesis 6: Who Are They?](#)"

Question:

1. Identify one reason Genesis 6:2 does not describe angels procreating with human women.
-

A WICKED AND EVIL HUMANITY

Genesis 6:5: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

The societal conditions of the world prior to the Flood had so degraded that mankind had become

completely characterized by wickedness and evil. As a result, we are told that God "grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:6) for creating man.

This is the first verse in the Bible where the word *heart* (Hebrew *labe*) is used. In the Bible, when the term "the heart" is used in the context of human character, it is referring to "the seat of the mind, intellect, purpose" (*Soncino Books of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 19). In other words, "the heart" refers to who we are and what we are down to

Key Concept to Know

- The characteristics of the antediluvian culture

the core of our being. God is revealing that He is not just concerned with outward conduct—but with the inward thoughts and motivations of human beings.

The majority of people before the Flood were so evil and wicked that their negative character went down to their heart. The Bible teaches that human nature, at its core, is “deceitful ... and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). But the level of human wickedness had reached a unique low before the Flood. Two of the characteristics of the sinful state of antediluvian human beings were sexual lust (Genesis 6:2, 4) and murderous violence (verse 11).

Jesus Christ compared the end times to this antediluvian period: “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark” (Matthew 24:37-38). Peter described the people of this time as “ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5).

The social conditions during the end time are described in detail in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Since Christ likens the end times to the antediluvian world, we can assume many of these same conditions describe what society was like then. Putting all these scriptures together, the fundamental issue during this time period was people living lives totally driven by lust and hate with absolutely no fear of God or sense of morality (Romans 1:28). The Bible also defines this as being “carnally minded” (Romans 8:6-8).

Throughout the Bible, God reveals that His desire is for human beings to *repent*—which means a change of life to the core of the heart. The New Covenant was prophesied to include God’s law (the definition of His character) being written on the hearts and minds of human beings (Jeremiah 31:33). God wants *us* to have the opposite of the characteristics of the antediluvian world! We are to be “spiritually minded” (Romans 8:6) and to love God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Question:

1. What were the moral characteristics of the generation before the Flood?
-

GOD’S RESPONSE TO A WICKED HUMANITY

Genesis 6:6: “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

Because of the condition of humanity at this time, we read something unique

about God’s response: He “grieved in His heart” for man’s condition and was sorry (“repented” in the King James Version) that He created humanity. This is in contrast to God’s pleased reaction when He completed the physical creation (Genesis 1:31). The influence of Satan and the resulting sin had corrupted what God had created perfect.

This verse teaches us that the almighty God is also a God who experiences emotion.

We learn two very important truths about God’s nature from this verse. First, we learn that *God occasionally changes His mind based on human circumstances*. The Bible is very clear that God’s nature and character are unchangeable. God says plainly about Himself: “For I am the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). Jesus Christ is described as “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). These verses describe the total consistency of God’s nature and purpose. God is *always* a God of love and will *always* work in a way that allows His ultimate plan to move forward and be completed.

But the Bible also reveals that God does occasionally change how He deals with mankind based on the choices and actions of humans. At this point, mankind’s total degradation of character necessitated that God make a change in how He dealt with humanity by mercifully putting the majority of the population (except Noah and his family) to death. This in no way affected God’s ultimate plan of “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). The antediluvians who were killed in the Flood will be raised to life at a future time (John 5:28), and those who didn’t have a chance will be given the opportunity to repent and change their lives (2 Peter 3:9).

Other examples of God changing His mind based on choices made by humans are found in Exodus 32:14; 1 Samuel 15:11; and Jonah 3:10. None of these examples demonstrate any change in God’s core nature or plan of salvation for human beings. We are assured that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29).

God’s sadness at human sin

The second part of this verse reveals that God “was grieved in His heart” because of the sin and suffering the antediluvian society had brought upon itself.

Key Concepts to Know

- God’s sorrow at humanity’s wickedness
- God can change His mind and feel sadness

This teaches us that *God experiences sadness as a result of human sin and suffering.*

God literally felt regret and displeasure at the moral downturn of humanity. God's core nature is *love* (1 John 4:8). God cares for human beings (1 Peter 5:7), and His whole plan is designed to help mankind have happy, fulfilling lives and eventually be ready to live eternally in His family (John 10:10; 3:16; Hebrews 2:10). He gave humanity His law to provide the instructions that would reveal how to live a happy and fulfilling life (Deuteronomy 5:29).

When human beings are ignorant of or disregard His law and live in a way that brings continual negative consequences, God experiences both anger and sadness. He does not enjoy punishing sinful human beings. God specifically tells us that "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). God felt the same grief when He could no longer work directly with the nation of Israel as a result of their national sins (Psalms 81:11-13; 95:10).

Jesus Christ, who was **God in the Old Testament**, demonstrated this same emotional response when He confronted sin and suffering throughout His human lifetime (Luke 13:34; John 11:35).

To learn more about this topic, read "**Genesis 6: Does God Make Mistakes?**"

Question:

- Genesis 6:6 shows that God can change His mind based on choices human beings make. But what never changes about God?**
-

GOD TO DESTROY MANKIND

Genesis 6:7: "So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

Here we read God's decision in response to the nearly complete moral degeneration of humanity before the Flood. We read earlier that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Not only were man's actions characterized by *wickedness*, but his heart (his inward motivation) was *evil*.

The natural consequence of man's wickedness was suffering and violence. Because of the extent

of sin in antediluvian society, the earth had become a miserable and dangerous place that was "filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11-13). It was so violent that it was unsafe for any righteous human beings to live there and could have eventually resulted in mankind destroying itself.

Key Concepts to Know

- **God's decision to destroy the antediluvian generation**
- **Why a loving God would destroy human life**

How could a loving God kill human beings?

Many wonder why and how a loving God could make this decision to *destroy the majority of humanity*. God is a God of love and loves all human beings (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8). But God also reveals that He *hates sin* (Psalm 45:7). God's decision to destroy humanity at this time does not at all contradict God's unchanging character of love. This decision reflects a loving God who occasionally acts to stop behavior that He hates and the suffering it produces.

Here are two reasons why God's decision to destroy the majority of those in the antediluvian world does not contradict His core nature of love or His prohibition against taking human life (Exodus 20:13):

- God has decreed that the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The direct application of this law is that those who ultimately refuse to obey God, despite His desire to offer them repentance, will be given the penalty of eternal death in the future lake of fire (Revelation 20:15; Malachi 4:1). In the present age, God typically has a "hands off" approach to sinners and lets them live out their lives with the consequences of their own sins (Proverbs 1:31; Romans 1:24, 26, 28). But God also reserves the right to exact the penalty described in Romans 6:23 at other times. God occasionally ends physical life when:
 - Human sinfulness reaches an unusually high level in society (Genesis 18; Deuteronomy 7:2-5; 9:5).
 - When human beings are standing in the way of His plan and purpose being fulfilled (Exodus 11:1-5; Joshua 6:17).

In the case of the antediluvian world, the wickedness of man had reached such a high degree that God decided to mercifully destroy

the majority of humanity, putting an end to the suffering and violence they experienced. He restarted human society through Noah and his three sons' families. God did not enjoy doing this, for He takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11).

- God is the Creator of human life and has the right to end it. God destroying human life is not sin because:
 - God is the originator and creator of human life (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:5). The God who created human life also has the right to end it.
 - God will resurrect all human beings (Job 14:15; John 11:17-27). Though God occasionally ends human life, it is only temporary because He has a plan that includes the resurrection of every human being who has ever lived and died (1 Corinthians 15:22; Hebrews 9:27). At a future resurrection, all those who died in the Flood will be resurrected and have Jesus Christ revealed to them as their Savior (Revelation 20:12).

God loves the human beings of the antediluvian world that He mercifully destroyed in the Flood. He did not destroy them forever or condemn them to pain in an ever-burning "hell," but "desires [them] ... to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

To learn more about how God will offer salvation to all mankind, including the antediluvians who died in the Flood, read about the "[Plan of Salvation](#)."

Question:

1. Is there hope for those who died in the Flood? If so, what is that hope?
-

NOAH FINDS GRACE

Genesis 6:8-9: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."

The previous verse revealed God's decision to destroy the wicked human beings that made up the antediluvian society. But God was not destroying mankind completely. God decided to preserve humankind through one man—Noah—and his family.

The Bible actually introduces us to Noah in Genesis 5:29-32. There we read that his father, Lamech, named him Noah (meaning "rest") and prophesied that he would bring "comfort" to humanity (Genesis 5:29). This *comfort* came through Noah's role in helping to preserve humanity and providing the family line from which the "Seed" (Messiah) would come (Genesis 3:15).

We read here that Noah was unique because he "found grace in the eyes of the LORD." This is the first time in the Bible that the word *grace* is used. The Hebrew word translated "grace" is *chen* and means to show favor and mercy (see *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* and *Zondervan Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*).

Grace is an important concept that runs throughout the Bible. It describes a core aspect of God's unchanging character—His *goodness, mercy and kindness towards human beings* (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 145:8-9). The concept is more fully developed in the New Testament to explain God's unmerited pardon of human sin because of God's love and favor expressed through the sacrifice and life of Jesus Christ (see Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9).

Though grace is sometimes misunderstood to mean that nothing is required of human beings to please God (Jude 1:4), the truth is that those who receive God's grace are to live a life of obedience to God (Romans 6:1-2, 14-15; Ephesians 2:10). That applied to Noah as well!

But why did Noah receive God's grace?

Genesis 6:9 is the key. Noah lived a way of life that set him apart from the society around him. We are told that Noah was:

- "A just man." The Hebrew word translated "just" is often translated "righteous" throughout the Old Testament. The word essentially means "just, lawful, righteous" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*). Since righteousness is defined by obedience to God's law (Psalm 119:172), Noah was a man defined by his faithful obedience to God's law. [God's laws were in force](#) long before they were written on stone tablets and given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Noah is also called "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), implying that he proclaimed God's standard of living to the "world of the ungodly" that surrounded him.

Key Concept to Know

- The connection between grace and righteousness

- “Perfect in his generations.” Noah *stood out* as a man of complete integrity and character among the generation (or contemporaries) that surrounded him.
- “Walked with God.” Noah’s conduct and direction in life was in accord with God’s way of life (Deuteronomy 5:33).

The way of life that Noah lived was why he “found grace” in God’s eyes (Genesis 6:8). God gives favor to those who live a life characterized by justness, integrity and right conduct (Isaiah 55:7; Acts 5:32).

Noah’s example is a major lesson for Christians today—we, too, are expected to *stand out* from those around us: “Come out from among them and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Like Noah, we are to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Living a life of obedience to God’s law is also the way we (like Noah) can “be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass” (Luke 21:36).

Noah’s calling and work foreshadowed the future work of Jesus Christ. God used Noah to bring deliverance from a depraved and evil world that was destroying itself (Genesis 6:5, 11-13). Jesus Christ will return to earth to save humanity from a time when human conditions will in certain ways be “as in the days of Noah,” and in other ways worse (Matthew 24:21-22, 37-39).

Questions:

1. **Genesis 6:8** tells us Noah “found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” Identify two characteristics of God’s grace toward human beings.
 2. Why did Noah stand out as different in his society?
 3. What lesson can Christians today learn from Noah’s example?
-

NOAH COMMANDED TO BUILD AN ARK

Genesis 6:14: “Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.”

God had already determined that the wicked human population had to be destroyed and rebuilt through the family of Noah. Here we read of the means by which God

would save from destruction eight individuals, including his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth (verse 10). He would save them through an “ark.”

The word *ark* is a translation of the Hebrew word *tebah*, which means “a vessel” (*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*). *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* notes that the word “focuses on the structure as an abode rather than its shape or size” (Vol. 2, p. 83). This floatable vessel was specifically designed to be living quarters for the eight human beings and the many animals that God would save.

God gave Noah explicit instructions on the ark’s dimensions: “And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits” (Genesis 6:15).

To understand how big the ark actually was, we have to know the length of a cubit. The general consensus among scholars is that a biblical cubit is equivalent to 18 inches (or 0.46 meter). This is roughly the length from a man’s elbow to his extended middle finger.

With this definition of a cubit, the dimensions of the ark would have been roughly:

- 450 feet long.
- 75 feet wide.
- 45 feet high.

To put these numbers in perspective, Noah’s ark would be about 1½ football fields long and more than three stories tall. By the standards of the ships of the ancient world, this was a very large structure. But we should also understand that the ark was not designed to be a sailing ship that would navigate the waters. The ark was only designed to be a floating structure that would preserve human and animal life and not sink.

God specifies that the ark was to be constructed of “gopherwood.” It is not known exactly what kind of wood this was, since there is no modern wood known as gopherwood. It would have been a very strong wood that would be resistant to water. Some speculate that this was an ancient name for cypress wood, since cypress was often used to make ships in the ancient world.

The ark was to be covered in pitch to make it watertight. It is interesting that a similar description is made in Exodus 2:3 of the “ark” used to preserve the life of Moses

Key Concepts to Know

- The dimensions and composition of the ark
- The symbolism of the ark

from the Egyptian Pharaoh's mandate (Exodus 1:22). It is hard not to compare the two "arks" as the means of saving human beings (Noah's family and the Israelite nation in captivity) and the work of Jesus Christ—through whom salvation of all humanity is ultimately made possible (Acts 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). The apostle Peter makes the analogy of Noah's family being saved through the water of the Flood and baptism being a necessary prerequisite for salvation.

Questions:

1. What is the approximate length of a biblical cubit?
 2. What were the approximate dimensions of the ark?
-

GENESIS 7: THE WORLDWIDE FLOOD

CLEAN AND UNCLEAR ANIMALS ON THE ARK

Genesis 7:2: "You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female."

Noah was commanded to take seven pairs (a pair being a male and a female) of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals. This was to preserve the life of the different kinds of animals that God had created (Genesis 7:3). God performed a miracle by leading the animals to assemble and enter the ark in pairs (verse 9).

This verse is very important because it demonstrates that the knowledge of the laws of clean and unclean meats existed long before they were enumerated by Moses in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. These were universal laws that were designed to govern what was proper meat for human consumption.

Key Concepts to Know

- The animals Noah was to take on the ark
- Difference between clean and unclean animals

Here's a sample of what Noah would have taken on the ark:

- seven male/female pairs of sheep (14 total).
- seven male/female pairs of deer (14 total).
- seven male/female pairs of pigeons (14 total).
- one male/female pair of swine (2 total).
- one male/female pair of dogs (2 total).
- one male/female pair of porcupines (2 total).

There are a number of reasons Noah was instructed to take clean animals at a rate of seven times that of unclean animals. First, Noah and his family would consume some of the meat of the clean animals during their time on the ark. Second, Noah would perform sacrifices after the Flood—which could only be offered with clean animals (Genesis 8:20).

Animal kinds

Genesis 7:14 gives us further insight into the animals taken on the ark: "They and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort."

Three major classifications of animal life were to be taken on the ark. During the 18th century, Carolus Linnaeus and others developed taxonomies for classifying biological organisms. The three general classes of animals that were to be taken on the ark were:

- Mammalia ("every beast").
- Reptilia ("every creeping thing").
- Aves ("every bird").

Every kind within the above three classes was taken on the ark. For instance, under Mammalia would have been mammals such as cows, horses and dogs. Under Reptilia would have been lizards, tortoises and snakes. Under Aves would have been birds such as doves, eagles and ostriches.

It is possible that other classes of animals were also taken. What about amphibians, which spend part of their lives in water and part of their lives on land? What about insects? The bottom line is that any kind of creature that couldn't survive for over a year without dry land was preserved on the ark.

To learn more about God's laws of clean and unclean meats, read our article "[Clean and Unclean Animals: Does God Care What Meats We Eat?](#)"

Questions:

1. How many pairs of clean animals was Noah to take on the ark? How many pairs of unclean animals?

2. What does God’s command about clean and unclean animals on the ark teach us about the food laws found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14?
3. Using Leviticus 11 and the command found in Genesis 7:2, identify how many of each of the following animals would have been taken on the ark:
 - a. Rabbits?
 - b. Cows?
 - c. Geckos?
 - d. Chickens?

THE WORLDWIDE FLOOD

Genesis 7:11: “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

Noah was 600 years old when the Flood began. We are told the Flood began on the 17th day of the second month.

It is interesting to note that the water was not just a flood in the traditional sense of torrential rains. The water that covered the earth was partly from “the fountains of the great deep.” Apparently, springs and aquifers under the earth’s surface were released and allowed to flood the surface of the earth. This happened in conjunction with opening of “the windows of heaven”—torrential rain. The heavy rain lasted for 40 full days and nights (verse 12).

The Flood literally covered the entire earth with water: “And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered” (verse 19). Some Bible critics claim that this was a local flood that only flooded the Levant (the geographical area where most of the Bible is set). The Bible clearly teaches that this was a worldwide flood.

The Flood covered “all the high hills” (verse 19). “Hills” is a translation of the Hebrew word *har*, which

Key Concepts to Know

- How God flooded the earth
- Why the Flood covered the globe

includes mountains. So the waters rose so high that no piece of land was visible. Currently, the highest point on earth is Mount Everest, which stands 29,029 feet above sea level. Genesis 7:20 tells us that the waters rose 15 cubits (22.5 feet) above the highest mountain. If Mount Everest were the same size at the time of the Flood, the waters would have risen to 29,051.5 feet above sea level. This extra depth above the tallest mountain may have been to ensure that the peaks of the earth’s mountains would not scrape the bottom of the ark—which could have had the same effect that an iceberg had on the *Titanic* in 1912.

The result was “all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man” (verse 21).

As we explained earlier, God has a plan that will ensure all people killed in the Flood will have a future opportunity for salvation. To learn more about the Flood, read “[The Biblical Flood: Fact or Fiction?](#)” and “[Noah and the Flood.](#)”

Questions:

1. What were the two sources of water for the Flood that destroyed the earth?
2. How do we know that the Flood covered the entire earth?

GENESIS 8: THE FLOODWATERS RECEDE

NOAH GIVES THANKS

Genesis 8:20: “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”

After Noah and his family left the ark, one of the first things Noah did was build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God of *every* clean animal that was on the ark. The size and scope of this offering is fascinating to ponder. The specifications for clean animals are found in Leviticus 11:3. It is possible that Noah sacrificed around 100 animals.

The type of sacrifice Noah

Key Concepts to Know

- Noah's sacrifice of thanksgiving
- God's response to Noah's sacrifice

offered is later called a “freewill offering” in the Mosaic law (Leviticus 22:17-22; Numbers 29:39; Deuteronomy 12:17; Amos 4:5). A freewill offering was essentially an offering of thanksgiving voluntarily given to God. This offering of a clean animal could be made at any time—and was usually offered around God’s holy days or to give thanks for a specific blessing.

The key lesson we should learn is that it is important to thank God for His blessings. In Noah’s case, he offered a freewill sacrifice to give thanks to God for preserving him and his family in the ark and for allowing them to be used to repopulate the earth.

Notice how God responded: “And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done’” (verse 21).

This is one of very few verses where we are given an insight into the very thoughts of God. The Hebrew literally means that God said this *to His heart*—not to Noah. God decided He would never again destroy all life with a flood.

Consider the following scriptures on giving thanks to God for His blessings in our lives: 2 Corinthians 9:11-12; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2.

To learn more about the laws of God that predate Moses, read “[Were the 10 Commandments Around Before Moses?](#)”

Questions:

1. What did Noah do to thank and praise God after the earth had dried?
 2. What decision did God make after Noah's offering?
-

GENESIS 9: THE NOACHIAN COVENANT

GOD PROMISES TO NEVER FLOOD THE EARTH AGAIN

Genesis 9:11: “Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of

the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Here we read of God entering into a covenant (a formal agreement) with Noah—who

represented all of mankind at that time. Before the Flood, God had made a covenant with Noah that He would spare the lives of Noah and his family on the ark (Genesis 6:18-19). Now God made another covenant with Noah—one in which He promised to never again destroy all of mankind with a flood. A major reason God made this covenant seems to be Noah’s expression of thanks to God for preserving his family (Genesis 8:20-21). Noah’s faithfulness apparently led to God entering into a covenant with him. This same basic formula was repeated later with Abraham (Genesis 15:6).

Theologians refer to this as the Noachian Covenant. The central provision of this covenant was that God would never again destroy all humanity or the entire earth through a flood (verse 11).

The rainbow sign

This covenant came with a specific sign: “I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth” (Genesis 9:13). The phenomenon of a rainbow—which is the refraction of light in a moist atmosphere, usually following rainfall—is something that typically gets people’s attention when it occurs. Few consider what the rainbow pictures. Every time we see a rainbow in the sky, we should remember this covenant that God made with all humanity and the confidence we can have that God will never again send a flood to destroy all of mankind.

Thankfully, this covenant is still in effect today.

Bible prophecy reveals that in the end times God will intervene in human affairs to **punish** mankind for its sins (Revelation 15:1). But God’s future wrath will culminate in God’s *saving humanity from itself* (Matthew 24:22)—not destroying humanity with a flood.

Questions:

1. What did God promise in the Noachian Covenant?
 2. What was the sign of the Noachian Covenant?
-

Key Concepts to Know

- The Noachian Covenant
- The rainbow sign

GENESIS 10: THE TABLE OF NATIONS

THE PEOPLES DESCENDED FROM NOAH

Genesis 10:32: “These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.”

After the destruction of human civilization by the Flood, God instructed the immediate family of Noah to begin the process of rebuilding humankind. Upon leaving the ark, God commanded Noah and his sons to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1).

Genesis 10 is the historical record of the fulfillment of this command.

This chapter is often referred to as “the Table of Nations” and shows the peoples and nations that descended from Noah’s three sons.

All peoples and nations today descend from Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. God’s intention following the Flood was for the three sons and their families to spread throughout the earth and develop distinct cultures and civilizations throughout the geographical regions of the earth.

God created the earth with a circumference of 24,901 miles and intended its diverse regions, continents and climates to be inhabited by human life. He never intended mankind to crowd together in one geographical area.

But, instead of populating the entire earth, the people refused to move and stayed in the land of Shinar—a location in modern Iraq (Genesis 11:2). At that time, “the whole earth had one language and one speech” (verse 1).

Key Concepts to Know

- **Human civilization rebuilt through Noah’s three sons**
- **God’s intention for mankind to fill the earth**

Question:

1. **What was God’s intention for the descendants of Noah’s three sons after the Flood?**
-

GENESIS 11: THE TOWER OF BABEL

THE FOUNDATION OF BABEL

Genesis 11:4: “And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’”

God’s will was that humanity spread throughout the earth. But, instead of obeying God’s

command (Genesis 9:1), almost all of the descendants of Noah defied God. They decided to settle close together and build a unified culture. This sadly demonstrates that the Flood had not taught humans the lesson of recognizing God as the supreme authority over their lives.

Let’s break down this scripture and discover what exactly was happening:

- “Let us build ourselves a city”: This indicates that the spirit and motivation behind the founding of this city (later called Babel) was to build a city for all of mankind. It would become a symbol of man ruling himself in defiance of God. Our human minds tend to believe the deceiver’s view of God (Revelation 12:9) and then reject and resist God’s direction in our lives (Romans 8:7). This problem was clearly on display in the building of this city and was the same prideful and arrogant spirit that Satan stirred up in such great rulers as a later king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. He declared: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30).
- “And a tower whose top is in the heavens”: The centerpiece of this city was to be a tower. Scholars believe this was a *ziggurat*—an ancient pyramidlike structure unique to this region of Mesopotamia, often displaying a shrine to a pagan god at the top. We are told that they planned to build this tower so high that its top would extend into “the

Key Concepts to Know

- **Babel unites against God**
- **The purpose behind the Tower of Babel**
- **Nimrod: the founder of the Babylonian system**

heavens.” Perhaps these people believed that building a tower into the heavens could save them in the case of another massive flood. The global flood stayed in the human consciousness for many generations—as demonstrated in the Gilgamesh epic and other ancient literature. It is a reasonable hypothesis that a fear of a flood could have motivated the building of this tower. It seems obvious that the people didn’t really believe in the Noachian Covenant—that God would never destroy humanity again with a flood.

- “Let us make a name for ourselves”: This reinforces the point that the core motivation behind this project was a desire to gain personal power rather than seeking the leadership and guidance of the Creator. The basis of this motivation is selfish human pride (Proverbs 16:18; Mark 7:21-23).
- “Lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth”: We can safely deduce from this statement, that their purpose was to oppose the will of God for mankind to spread throughout the entire earth. The apparent intent was to unite all of mankind under one human authority. This has been the goal of the [Babylonian](#) system throughout history, and it will be attempted one final time before the return of Jesus Christ (Daniel 4:1; 5:19; Revelation 17:12-13, 15; 18:2-3).

The Bible indicates this movement was led by a man named Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-10). Nimrod is called “mighty” and was the founder of the Babylonian political and religious system that has influenced the world throughout history.

The problem with this concentration of power is that humans are inherently incapable of maintaining humility, submitting to moral law and serving the needs of subjects without God’s guidance. All examples of human empires throughout history have shown the corruption, abuse and tyranny that result from it. Only the rule of the Kingdom of God—under the direct authority of Jesus Christ—will successfully govern the entire earth (Daniel 7:27).

Questions:

1. What was the problem with the attempt to build a tower in Babel?
 2. Who led this effort to create a single civilization united against God?
-

GOD CONFUSES THE LANGUAGES AT BABEL

Genesis 11:7: “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

God had come down to view the tower that was being built in the great city that would come

Key Concepts to Know

- God confuses the languages and forces mankind to scatter
- How mankind will be unified again in the future

to be known as Babel. His first response was to observe that because of the wrong motives, linguistic unity and technological advancement, “nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them” (Genesis 11:6).

In order to stop this attempt to unify all people under one system at Babel, God performed a miracle that forced the city’s inhabitants to fulfill His will for mankind to “fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). God miraculously divided the language of the people. Instead of being unified by one language, they were divided into separate nations with distinct languages. God has the power to modify the human brain and install an entirely new linguistic system.

This confusion of speech brought two main results. First, God caused the people of the earth to be “scattered ... abroad from there over the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9). Second, the chaos that came from not understanding each other stopped the building of this great city as a center for all human activities and endeavors (verse 8). The civilizations of the world would now progress according to God’s purpose—living independently and developing distinct cultures and languages (Acts 17:26).

This great city was now called “Babel” (Genesis 11:9)—meaning *confusion*.

This confusion of languages and scattering of mankind throughout the earth will be reversed in the future. God has a plan to reunite the nations under one world government.

The first step of this plan involves calling select individuals from various ethnic backgrounds into an international institution called the [Church of God](#) (Galatians 3:28). Interestingly, the Church of God was started by the great miracle of uniting a group of people by allowing them to hear and understand the words of God’s servants in their own language (Acts 2:4).

The next step of this plan takes place when Jesus Christ establishes the **Kingdom of God** on earth. The only way a world government will work is under the direct leadership of God. When God rules the world, the Kingdom will be composed of “all peoples, nations, and languages” (Daniel 7:14). The world capital will be Jerusalem, not Babel (Isaiah 2:3). Eventually, there will be one language that will unify the people of the earth: “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord” (Zephaniah 3:9; compare Isaiah 19:18).

The confusion and division God brought on humanity at Babel will be reversed—when the whole world comes under God’s righteous government!

To learn more about this incredible reversal to come, read “[The Promise of One Pure Language](#).”

Questions:

1. Why did God confuse the languages at Babel?
 2. When will a single world language be reinstated on earth?
-

THE DESCENDANTS OF SHEM

Genesis 11:10: “This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood.”

After the account of the Tower of Babel, Genesis includes a detailed genealogy of the descendants of Noah’s son Shem. As we have covered, Noah had three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth). We have learned that all the earth was populated from the descendants of these three men (Genesis 9:19). The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 already provided an overview of the descendants of these three brothers. Why did God inspire another, more-detailed genealogy for Shem?

The reason is because Abraham, the next faithful servant with whom God would directly deal, would descend from the line of Shem. It is important to understand that a major theme of the Old Testament is the history of God working with the people of Israel (the descendants of Abraham). That is why special emphasis is given to the genealogy of Abraham, who was originally named Abram.

Genesis 11:10-26 records the line that led to the birth of Abram:

Shem → Arphaxad → Salah → Eber → Peleg → Reu → Serug → Nahor → Terah → Abram.

One man of note in the genealogy of Abram is Eber. Genesis 10:25 reveals that Peleg (Eber’s son) was living during the time when “the earth was divided” at Babel. Since his sons were living when the earth was divided into separate linguistic and regional groupings, it seems that Eber’s name took on a special significance in identifying the Semitic peoples who would produce Abram, and thus the Israelites. The word *Hebrew* is closely connected with the name *Eber*. The meaning of both words is “the region beyond” or “one from beyond” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 720).

It is interesting to note that the progenitors of the Israelites living during the formation of languages were “the sons of Eber” and the language spoken by the Israelites became known as “Hebrew.” The first time we see this identification used in the Bible is in Genesis 14:13 where Abram is identified as “Abram the Hebrew.”

Question:

1. What is the etymological root of the word *Hebrew*?
-

THE FAMILY OF ABRAM

Genesis 11:31: “And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.”

We are now introduced to the family that produced God’s chosen people. Abram was one of the three sons of Terah (Genesis 11:27). Abram had two brothers named Nahor and Haran. Lot, who would become a major part of Abram’s life later, was the son of Haran (making him Abram’s nephew).

Key Concepts to Know

- The genealogy of Shem to Abram
- The origin of the word *Hebrew*

Here are some further details we learn about this family:

- Abram’s father, Terah, worshipped idols—not the true God (Joshua 24:2). This shows that not every individual in the family line with which God chose to work was righteous. Terah’s name indicates that he was a worshipper of the moon god.
- Haran, the father of Lot and probably Terah’s youngest son, died at a comparatively young age prior to the death of his father (Genesis 11:28).
- Because of Haran’s premature death, the rest of the family—especially Abram—took responsibility for caring for Lot (verse 31).
- Abram married his half-sister Sarai (meaning “princess”). Sarai was the daughter of Terah, but she and Abram had different mothers (Genesis 20:12). Sarai was unable to bear children.

This family lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was probably located in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) on the Euphrates River not far from where the Tigris and Euphrates converge. The ancient city of Ur was located

Key Concepts to Know

- The family of Abram
- Abram’s family leaves their homeland

close to the modern Iraqi city of An Nassiriya. Ur was an important urban commercial center of the ancient world. Archaeological excavations have revealed that Ur was an extremely wealthy city that included advanced architectural structures.

At least four members of Abram’s immediate family left Ur of the Chaldeans and headed north to Haran en route to Canaan. Abram and his family left Ur and later Haran because God commanded Abram to “get out of your country” (Genesis 12:1, 4; Acts 7:2-4).

We will learn more about this incredible man named Abram in Part 2.

Questions:

1. Who were the three sons of Terah?
 2. Who was Abram’s nephew?
 3. What is the modern geographic location of Abram’s hometown of Ur?
-

This ends the first part of Beginnings: Understanding the Book of Genesis. Please download Part 2 to continue the story of Abram and the remainder of the book of Genesis. Part 2 begins by explaining why God asked Abram to leave his homeland and the significance it has for us today.

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LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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