

Chapter 1: God Establishes His Cosmic Temple (Gen 1:1–13)

God “has made everything beautiful in its time; also, he has set eternity in [human] hearts” (Ecc 3:1).¹ Therefore, despite worshiping idols, those living in the Ancient Near East could capture glimpses of truth.² Members of those societies would have embraced several Creation accounts current in their day. Genesis 1 emerges as a very deliberate statement of the Hebrew perspective of creation over rival views.³

Moses edited preexisting material and his own writing into one coherent document shortly after the exodus.⁴ Joseph likely received the family records of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after Jacob elevated him to the position of firstborn (Gen 49:3–4, 22–26; 1 Chr 5:1–2). This explains the lengthy treatment of Joseph’s life (Gen 37; Gen 39–50). Moses apparently utilized these documents when writing Genesis.

Coming from approximately seventy years of slavery,⁵ the people of Israel needed a reminder of the history of God’s covenant with them and their ancestors. The Bible was written for us who read it today but not to us (1 Cor 10:11). Therefore, we can gain new insights by reading the Old and New Testaments through the lenses of Ancient Near Eastern, first century Jewish, and Greco-Roman culture. When we read the Bible, we are looking over the shoulders of people living in very different cultural contexts. As we comprehend their circumstances and viewpoints, we gain a richer understanding of Scripture.⁶

Moses received his education in Egypt’s court as the son of pharaoh’s daughter. He gained unique access to the ANE myths which show close connections with Genesis 1–11 (Exod 2:1–10; Acts 7:20–22). For example, scholars date both the Atrahasis Epic from Mesopotamia and the Eridu Genesis from Sumer earlier than 1600 BC.⁷ These works exhibit commonalities with Noah’s experiences and some very important differences. By reading this ancient literature, we can better grasp what Moses sought to communicate in the text of Genesis.⁸

Genesis 1 contains several features of Hebrew poetry, especially rhyme and repetition. Note the cadence of *tohu wabohu* (“formless and empty”) in verse 2. Thus, poetic narrative best describes this genre. Since poets arrange words to elicit images in our minds which create an emotional response, our interpretation of Hebrew poetry should focus upon what the entire passage seeks to communicate.⁹

Both Augustine (354–430) and John Calvin (1509–1564) recognized that Moses wrote of these events in a way which his audience would understand, rather than in a scientific manner. Augustine charged:

¹ Whenever an excerpt of the Bible appears in quotation marks, this is the author’s translation from the Hebrew *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) or the Greek *Novum Testamentum Graecae*, 28th ed. (NA²⁸). In order to preserve the emphasis of the biblical author, I have retained the word order whenever possible.

² Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 25.

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 9.

⁴ See pages xxiii–xv of the preface for additional detail about the composition and authorship of Genesis.

⁵ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 310.

⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (ed. D. A. Carson; New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004), 6.

⁷ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 23.

⁸ John H. Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 84.

⁹ William N. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 2nd. Ed.* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2004), 357.

“Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of the world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and the seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience.

“Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.

“The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men. “If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason?”

“Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by those who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For then, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, although they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion (Cf. 1 Tim 1:7).”¹⁰

Regarding Noah’s ark, Calvin asserted:

“Moses, who had been educated in all the science of the Egyptians, was not ignorant of geometry; but since we know that Moses everywhere spoke in a homely style, to suit the capacity of the people, and that he purposely abstained from acute disputations, which might savor of the schools and of deeper learning; I can by no means persuade myself, that, in this place, contrary to his ordinary method, he employed geometrical subtlety.

“Certainly, in the first chapter, he did not treat scientifically of the stars, as a philosopher would do; but he called them, in a popular manner, according to their appearance to the uneducated, rather than according to truth, ‘two great lights.’”¹¹

In segments of our society, people have erected a false dichotomy, asserting that science and the Bible clash. Yet, scientists seek to answer how the world and humanity came into existence, while theologians ask why they were created. No true conflict exists.¹² Science reveals the process God chose to create the universe. It does not pose a threat to our faith.¹³ Therefore, the question we seek to answer when studying Genesis is “What did Moses intend to communicate to his original audience?”¹⁴

¹⁰Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (trans. John Hammond Taylor; ACW; New York: Paulist, 1982), 1:19.

¹¹John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. John King; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 256–7.

¹²Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 349.

¹³Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 233.

¹⁴John H. Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 82.

In the first chapter of the bible, each element of nature and all the animals played a role in the Lord’s plan for the world. Therefore, he described them as “good.”¹⁵ However, the climax of God’s creative work was the creation of people, those whom he made in his own image. He called them to live in close fellowship with God, acting as stewards of the world he created. After making Adam and Eve, the Lord then affirmed his work as “very good.”

In the Beginning of God’s Creating

1) Gen 1:1–2: “God” (*Elohim*) can refer to any deity. However, here it depicts the sovereign originator of the whole universe.¹⁶ These verses correlate with an Egyptian funerary spell (ca. 2134–1991 BC) from the *Book of the Dead*.¹⁷ The incantation states, “I am he that closeth and he that openeth, and I am but One. I am [the sun god] Ra at his first appearance. I am the great god, self-produced; His names together compose the cycle of the gods; Resistless is he among the gods.”¹⁸

People living in Egypt believed that when the sun god formed the universe, he began to rule as king over his creation.¹⁹ Consequently, Moses’s original audience—the Israelites who had recently escaped from Egypt—understood the concept of a creator ruling over what he made. Only the identity of this Lord was new to them (Exod 3:13–14).

Due to the nuances of Hebrew grammar, specifically the vowels employed by Moses, a good translation of this passage starts with “In the beginning of God’s creating of the heavens and the earth, the earth had been formless and empty.”²⁰ The Hebrew word “*reshith*” appears fifty-one times in the Old Testament.²¹ It means “beginning of” (Cf. Gen 10:10; Gen 49:3; Deut 21:17),²² with one exception (Isa 46:10).²³

Thus, Gen 1:1 does not function as a topic sentence. It describes the state of our world at the time when the Lord began his creative work.²⁴ Typically, the term refers to a time-period, such as the year of succession of a king to the throne, rather than to a single point (Deut 11:11–12; Jer 28:1).²⁵

In the early chapters of Genesis, usually the verb “create” (*bara*) occurs in association with “bless” (*barak*). The Lord’s purpose in creating intertwined with his desire to bless (Gen 1:21–22; Gen 1:27–28; Gen 2:3–3). Although the text does not specify that God created from nothing, Ps 148:5 lends credence to the view of *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”) creation, as does Prov 8:12, 22–31, when the personification of Wisdom speaks.²⁶

¹⁵John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 88.

¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 15.

¹⁷P. Le Page Renouf, *The Book of the Dead* (London: Society of Biblical Archaeology, 1904), 40, <https://archive.org/details/egyptianbookofde00reno/page/40>.

¹⁸Renouf, *The Book of the Dead*, 17, 35, <https://archive.org/details/egyptianbookofde00reno/page/n71>.

¹⁹Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 86.

²⁰Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 104.

²¹Result of Logos 7 word study on “רֵאשִׁית” (*reshith*).

²²S. Rattray and J. Milgrom, “רֵאשִׁית” (*reshith*) in *TDOT* 13:268–72, 270.

²³Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 104.

²⁴Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 104.

²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 68–9.

²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 14.

The phrase “heaven and earth” is a common Hebrew example of merism. This literary device names two opposite ends of a spectrum with the understanding that they include both them and everything in between.²⁷ In other words, God created the entire cosmos, all that exists (Isa 44:24).²⁸

Verse two opens with the perfect tense: “The earth had been (*hayah*) formless and empty,”²⁹ another indication that this sentence does not occur later in time than the first verse. In Hebrew, the perfect tense describes a completed act.³⁰ Thus, Moses described the situation before the activity of verses 3–31 commenced.³¹

Intriguingly, Gen 1:2 resembles these opening lines of the Babylonian creation epic entitled *Enuma Elish*:³²

“When on high the heaven had not been named, firm ground below had not been called by name, naught but [the] primordial [water god] Apsu, their begetter, [and the water goddess] Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all, their waters commingling as a single body; no reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared, when no gods whatever had been brought into being, uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined.”³³

Both *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1 open by describing the state of the world before the creating began. In the Genesis account, Moses portrayed the formulation of order from disorder. Unlike other Ancient Near Eastern descriptions, he communicated no sense of forces of chaos being restrained, nor of any personified evil, such as Tiamat, the Babylonian goddess of the primordial depths.³⁴

Even though the deep waters obeyed the Lord’s commands (Ps 104:6), the combination of the words “formless” (*tohu*) and “empty” (*bohu*) still implies a dreadful situation (Isa 34:11; Jer 4:23).³⁵ However, God did not create the earth to remain in chaos (Isa 45:18),³⁶ but to function as a place of order.³⁷ Moses wrote, “And the spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” The same Hebrew word means “wind,” “breath,” “spirit,” or “Spirit.”³⁸

This creative activity involved God at work in the organization of the cosmos, not the destructive force connoted by translating *ruakh* as “wind.”³⁹ Therefore, we can best translate *ruakh* as “Spirit” in Gen 1:2.⁴⁰ Like the glory cloud or flame appearing in other covenants (Gen 15:17; Exod 19:9; Matt 17:5; Acts 2:1–4), the Spirit acted as a divine witness to the covenant of creation.⁴¹

²⁷Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 302.

²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 15.

²⁹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “הָיָה” (*hayah*) in *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 224, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/224/mode/2up>.

³⁰F. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar (GKC)* (ed. Emil Kautzsch; trans. Arthur Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 309, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/n3/mode/2up>.

³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 116–7.

³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 107.

³³E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 1:1–8, 60–61.

³⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 73.

³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 15–6.

³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 109.

³⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 73.

³⁸William L. Holladay, “רוּחַ” (*ruakh*) in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (CHALOT)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 334–5.

³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 17.

⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 114.

⁴¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 16.

Due to the polytheism in surrounding nations during the Old Testament era, Moses focused upon the existence of one God. Introducing an idea such as the Trinity would have sowed confusion and tempted Israel to expand their number of gods. Israelites viewed “the spirit of the Lord” as an emanation of God’s power and authority, akin to “the hand of the Lord” (2 Ki 3:15; Ezek 1:3).⁴²

In a related language called Ugaritic, the Hebrew word for “hovering” describes the action of birds,⁴³ such as a vulture circling over an awaited feast,⁴⁴ or an eagle hovering over its brood (Deut 32:11; Matt 3:16). An Assyrian emperor described himself as one whose wings were spread like an eagle’s over his land to faithfully tend to his people.⁴⁵ Likewise, the awesome presence of God mysteriously and protectively fluttered over the primordial waters.⁴⁶

a) Read Gen 1:1–2. What was the cosmos like at the beginning of God’s creating? How was the spirit of God at work? What aspects of these verses would have surprised Moses’s original audience?

Let There Be Light

b) Gen 1:3–5: Moses arranged the first chapter of Genesis thematically, rather than in chronological order.⁴⁷ It moves from an inoperative condition of chaos into an established functional pattern.⁴⁸ The first three consist of the creation of kingdoms/habitations with a second set of three days in which God made their kings/inhabitants.⁴⁹ Thus, the first day corresponds to the fourth, the second to the fifth, and the third to the sixth.⁵⁰

light	sun, moon, and stars
seas and sky	sea creatures and birds
dry land	land animals and humans

This format combated Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) mythologies, which worshiped creation and its creatures instead of the creator on whom they ultimately depended.⁵¹ In all the ANE creation stories, the world arose in at least one of these four ways: 1) as the work of God or

⁴²Walton, *Genesis*, 76–7.

⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 115.

⁴⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 78.

⁴⁵Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, 153.

⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 17.

⁴⁷Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 25.

⁴⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 84.

⁴⁹Meredith G. Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *PSCF* 48, no. 1 (March 1996): 2–15, <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>.

⁵⁰James W. Skillen, “The Seven Days of Creation,” *CTJ* 46, no. 1 (4 January 2011): 111–39, 124.

⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

gods; 2) due to the spoken word; 3) from conflict with opposing forces; or 4) by self-reproduction and birth. Genesis depicts only the first two of these categories.⁵²

In God's first recorded act in the biblical narrative, he fabricated the entire universe through his sovereign decree (Cf. Heb 11:3).⁵³ Likewise, the Egyptian god Ptah envisioned creation in his mind and then spoke it into being.⁵⁴ People in the ANE believed that things did not exist, nor did they receive their function, until someone named them.⁵⁵ Therefore, by naming and assigning purpose to creation, God demonstrated his power and authority over all he made.

A similar concept occurs in the beginning of Enuma Elish.⁵⁶ It says: "When on high the heaven had not been named, firm ground below had not been called by name, naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, (and) Mummu Tiamat, she who bore them all, their waters commingling as a single body. No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared, when no gods whatever had been brought into being, uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined - Then it was that the gods were formed. Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, by name they were called."⁵⁷

This idea parallels the Lord's creation of light.⁵⁸ However, Moses did not deify the forces of nature but cited their obedience to God's commands.⁵⁹ Since the people of Egypt and nearby nations routinely worshiped the sun and moon as gods,⁶⁰ Moses sought to prevent idolatry by calling them simply "lights" created by God (Gen 1:16).

Light signifies life, salvation, the Lord's presence, and even his commands (Ps 56:13; Isa 9:2; Exod 10:22–23; Prov 6:23).⁶¹ People in the ANE considered the sun only one source of light in addition to the stars and even the moon, which all made light of their own. After all, daylight appears before the sun rises and remains visible after it sets.⁶² By not describing the creation of the sun until "a fourth day," Moses conveyed the idea that God is the ultimate source of light (Gen 1:14–19).⁶³

He reported, "And God saw the light, that it was good. And God separated the light from the darkness." The Lord delighted in his handiwork.⁶⁴ One of the nuances of "separated" (*badhal*) is being set apart for a specific function,⁶⁵ a concept we see repeated in Gen 1:6–7, 14, 18.⁶⁶ Light and darkness not only cannot reside together, each serves a different purpose.⁶⁷ They appear in alternating periods of time, rather than being restricted to distinct spheres.⁶⁸

⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 119.

⁵³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

⁵⁴John A. Wilson, trans., "Theology of Memphis," in *ANET*, lines 53–4, 4–6.

⁵⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 86.

⁵⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 71–2.

⁵⁷"Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic)," *ANET*, 1:1–10, 60–1.

⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 107.

⁵⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 60.

⁶⁰John A. Wilson, trans., "A Hymn to Amon-Re," in *ANET*, 365–7.

⁶¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 18.

⁶²Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (IVPBBCOT)* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen 1:5–8.

⁶³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 18.

⁶⁵Swanson, James, "בדל" (*badhal*), *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament) (DBLSDH)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 976.

⁶⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 18.

⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

⁶⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 79.

Moses continued, “And God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’” In the ANE, to give something or someone a name signified one’s authority (2 Ki 23:34).⁶⁹ By naming the light and the darkness, the Lord dethroned the celestial deities whom the Israelites had seen people worship in Egypt.⁷⁰

The creation of the sun and moon on “a fourth day” highlights the difficulty of a precise definition for the term “day.” Light had been present since “a first day.” In addition, the Hebrew word “*yom*” often loses the specific meaning “day,”⁷¹ becoming a vague term for “time” or “moment.”⁷²

On each of the first five days in Gen 1, no definite article occurs before the number of each day (e.g. “a second day”). In Hebrew grammar, authors employed the word “the” (*ha*) to denote a specific person or thing.⁷³ Consequently, the syntax of Gen 1 permits a range of ideas in the length of time during which God created.⁷⁴ The lack of a definite article also permitted Moses to depict the events of days one through five in a sequence other than their chronological order for literary purposes.⁷⁵ Presenting the process in a series of “days” accommodates the finite thinking of human minds.⁷⁶

Using the same formula to conclude the account of each day, Moses wrote, “And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.”⁷⁷ On “a first day” God created time,⁷⁸ alternating periods of darkness and light. He listed evening first due to the preexisting condition of darkness.⁷⁹

Read Gen 1:3–5. What pattern occurs in Gen 1? How does Enuma Elish correspond to this passage? Why did Moses call what God created on the first day “light” when he did not make the sun until the fourth day? What features of Gen 1 make a precise definition of the word “day” extremely difficult? How can we interpret the word “day” here?

In the Beginning Was the Word

2) John 1:1–2: The opening section of the book of John reflects why the ancient church depicted this gospel as a soaring eagle. John skillfully interwove foundational Christian concepts, such as Jesus’s divinity and preexistence, with his humanity and sacrifice for our sins. In fact, the early

⁶⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 19.

⁷⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3* (ed. Martin Rüter, Ilse Tödt, and John W. De Gruchy; trans. Douglas Stephen Bax; DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 48.

⁷¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יֹמִים” (*yom*), *BDB*, 398–401,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/398/mode/2up>.

⁷²Holladay, “יֹמִים” (*yom*), *CHALOT*, 529.

⁷³Gesenius, *GKC*, 407, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/406/mode/2up>.

⁷⁴Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 49.

⁷⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 77.

⁷⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 19.

⁷⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 84.

⁷⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:5.

church may have used this passage as a hymn.⁸⁰ The first words of this gospel deliberately reflect Gen 1:1. Since the opening word or two of a Hebrew bible book forms the title, the Hebrew name for Genesis means “In the Beginning of” (*bereshith*).⁸¹

By his choice of opening words, John took his readers back to the creation of the heavens and the earth.⁸² While Genesis discussed the original creation, the gospel of John expounded upon God’s new generative work (John 17:24–26).⁸³

John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He, in the beginning, was with God.” His assertion that the Word was “in the beginning” refers to Jesus’s existence before anything else was created and to his role in originating creation (Isa 43:10–13; Col 1:15–17).⁸⁴ What is true of God is also true of the Word.⁸⁵ Everything in the universe depends upon Christ for its existence (John 1:3).⁸⁶

Unfortunately, the Greco-Roman concept of the “Word” (*Logos*) has no parallel in modern cultures,⁸⁷ making the meaning of the term difficult for us to grasp. The 6th century BC philosopher Heraclitus wrote, “This *Logos* is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it...all things come to pass in accordance with this *Logos*.”⁸⁸ Heraclitus viewed the Word as the impersonal, omnipresent wisdom steering all that exists, detached from all emotion,⁸⁹ the creative energy behind the rationality of the universe.⁹⁰ Stoic philosophers, such as Zeno of Citium (336–265 BC), extended the concept to include the rational soul.⁹¹ They considered the *Logos* a force which inaugurates and permeates and superintends all.⁹²

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (20 BC–50 AD) expanded these Greco-Roman concepts of the word. For example, he wrote, “The shadow of God is his word [*logos*], which he used like an instrument when he was making the world. And this shadow...is the archetype of other things.”⁹³ Philo reckoned the *logos* as “divine reason, which is the helmsman and governor of the universe.”⁹⁴ In addition, he asserted that the *logos* is “[F]illing all things with its essence. And the word, which connects together and fastens everything, is peculiarly full of

⁸⁰Gary M. Burge, *John* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 51–2.

⁸¹Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1983), 1.

⁸²D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 114.

⁸³Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 64.

⁸⁴Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich., “ἀρχή” (*archē*) in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 3rd. Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 138–9.

⁸⁵Burge, *John*, 54–5.

⁸⁶Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 65.

⁸⁷George R. Beasley-Murray, *John, 2nd Ed.* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 10.

⁸⁸Heraclitus, “Fragment 1,” in *Heraclitus* (trans. Philip Wheelwright; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 19, <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/logos.html#Her1>.

⁸⁹Beasley-Murray, *John*, 6.

⁹⁰Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 102.

⁹¹Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 114.

⁹²Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 103.

⁹³Philo, “Allegorical Interpretation,” in *The Works of Philo* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3.31.96, 133, <https://archive.org/stream/workspphilofjudaeu01philuoft#page/132/mode/2up>.

⁹⁴Philo, “On the Cherubim,” in *The Works of Philo* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 1.11.36, 184, <https://archive.org/stream/workspphilofjudaeu01philuoft#page/184/mode/2up>.

itself, having no need whatever of anything beyond.”⁹⁵ Philo also called the *logos*, “his firstborn son...the lieutenant of the great king.”⁹⁶

Therefore, when John cited Jesus as the *Logos*, he employed a term well-known to his contemporaries.⁹⁷ In the language of his era, “the word” conveyed “a communicated utterance,” “a formal account of one’s actions,” “a reflection,” or “the reason or cause of something.”⁹⁸ However, building upon the Old Testament (Ps 33:6–11),⁹⁹ John added his own twist so that the *Logos* referred to the independent expression of God as a living person, namely, Jesus.¹⁰⁰ This represented a major shift from the Greco-Roman idea that the *Logos* remained detached from human concerns. John amply demonstrated Christ’s passionate involvement in people’s lives (e.g. John 4). Indeed, Jesus identified with us so fully that he suffered and died to secure our salvation (John 1:9–14, 18; John 19:28–30; John 5:24–29).¹⁰¹

“The Word was near (*pros*) God,” meaning the *Logos* was in God’s presence.¹⁰² The same construction occurs in Mark 6:3,¹⁰³ where translators usually render this preposition as “with.” Given the difficulty of the Greek, “The Word was with God” best expresses John’s meaning, for “with” can express both spatial closeness and relationship.¹⁰⁴

Not only was the Word with God, “the Word was God” (*theos ēn ho logos*). Some sects hold that the lack of a definite article “the” (*ho*) before “God” (*theos*) means that “the Word was a god.” However, in Greek grammar, nouns without “the” (*ho*) occurring before “to be” verbs (*ēn*) express the nature or character of the subject. In other words, “The Word had the same nature as God,”¹⁰⁵ and he perfectly reveals God to us (Cf. Phil 2:5–11).¹⁰⁶ This grammatical form also appears in Matt 27:54. If John had written “The Word was the God” (*ho logos ēn ho theos*), he would have meant that God and the Word were the same being. However, that contradicts “the Word was with God.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore, this specific construction says that Jesus is truly God without being the same person as the Father (John 1:18; John 20:28).¹⁰⁸

John considered the preexistence of Christ so important that he repeated the idea in verse two.¹⁰⁹ A Jewish monotheist making such an assertion must have staggered his readers (Cf. Deut

⁹⁵Philo, “Who is the Heir of Divine Things?” in *The Works of Philo* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 38.188, 130, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojudaeu01philooft#page/130/mode/2up>.

⁹⁶Philo, “On the Tilling of the Earth by Noah,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, Vol. 1* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bell & Sons, 1800), 12.51, 389, <https://archive.org/details/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft/page/388>.

⁹⁷Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 103.

⁹⁸Danker, et al., “λογος” (*logos*), *BDAG*, 598–601.

⁹⁹Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 115.

¹⁰⁰Danker, et al., “λογος” (*logos*), *BDAG*, 601.

¹⁰¹Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 103–4.

¹⁰²Danker, et al., “προς” (*pros*), *BDAG*, 875.

¹⁰³Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10.

¹⁰⁴Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 67.

¹⁰⁵Philip B. Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, no. 1 (3 January 1973): 75–87, 87, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H7.jpg>.

¹⁰⁶Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” 75, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H1.jpg>.

¹⁰⁷Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, 84–5, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H6.jpg>.

¹⁰⁸Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10–1.

¹⁰⁹Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 67.

6:4–9; Zech 14:9).¹¹⁰ By building this passage upon the opening lines of Genesis (Cf. Gen 1:1–2), John pointed to the involvement of the entire Trinity in creation.

a) Read John 1:1–2. How did John adapt the Greco-Roman and Jewish concepts of the *Logos* to write about Jesus? Why did the apostle omit a definite article (“the”) before the word “God” to capture the nature of Jesus’s relationship with God? How have you experienced Christ’s passionate involvement in your life?

The Light Shines in Darkness

b) John 1:3–5: John wrote, “Everything through him was made, and apart from him was made nothing which had been made.” He asserted that creation occurred through Jesus, the Word (*logos*) (John 1:1–2; Col 1:15–17; Rev 3:14).¹¹¹ By that activity God revealed himself to humanity for the first time (Heb 1:1–4).¹¹² The apostle specified that the Father did not first create Christ and then permit him to create the universe. Instead, the Word always existed.¹¹³

John implied that only the Son created, for the Father made everything “through him” (cf. 1 Cor 8:6). Yet, both remain at work in our world (John 5:17–19).¹¹⁴ What God does, the Word does, making every act of Jesus a divine enterprise (John 14:10).¹¹⁵

He wrote, “In him was life, and the life was the light of human beings. And the light in the darkness shines, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John narrowed his scope from Jesus’s work in all creation to his formation of life.¹¹⁶ Then he asserted that Christ’s activity expanded to include the new creation.¹¹⁷ Thus, “life” (*zōē*) carries a double meaning, referring to both physical and spiritual realms (John 5:24–26; John 10:10, 28–29).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 69.

¹¹¹Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11.

¹¹²Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 70.

¹¹³Burge, *John*, 55–6.

¹¹⁴Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 71.

¹¹⁵Burge, *John*, 56.

¹¹⁶Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 73.

¹¹⁷Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11.

¹¹⁸Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 73–4.

In the book of Isaiah, light accompanies the messiah (Isa 9:1–7; Isa 42:5–7; Isa 49:5–6).¹¹⁹ Not only does Jesus confer light and life, he embodies them (John 11:23–27; John 14:6; John 8:12; John 9:5).¹²⁰ In fact, all the light we enjoy derives from the Word.¹²¹

The apostle’s statement, “And the light in the darkness shines” encompasses the past, when the *Logos* was shining in the primordial darkness (Gen 1:1–3); John’s era, when the glory of the Word made flesh dwelt among them (John 12:35–36); and the present time, through the work of the Spirit (John 16:7–14; Matt 5:14–16).¹²² In John’s vision of the new Jerusalem, he noted, “And the city has no need of the sun nor the moon, that it might shine, for the glory of the Lord lit it, and its lamp [is] the Lamb” (Rev 21:23).

The natural antithesis of light is darkness, which the presence of light dispels in both the physical and spiritual arenas.¹²³ In this instance, spiritual darkness refers to evil (1 John 2:8–11).¹²⁴ The verb John chose to describe what the darkness failed (*katalambanō*) to do has several meanings, including “to make something one’s own,” “to grasp or comprehend,” “to gain control by seizing,” and “to surprise by coming upon.”¹²⁵ Thus, he employed a double meaning: those in darkness do not accept the light. Yet—despite their efforts—they cannot overcome it.¹²⁶

The Essenes, a Jewish sect which thrived from the mid-second century BC until 70 AD,¹²⁷ also saw its adherents as “sons of the light” engaged in mortal combat with forces of darkness but destined to prevail.¹²⁸ They asserted:

“[God] has created man to govern the world and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness... But the God of Israel and His Angel of Truth will succor (help) all the sons of light.”¹²⁹

Throughout John’s writings, he imparts a sense of division between those experiencing authentic life with God and those existing without him.¹³⁰ Perpetual conflict between darkness and light emerges as a major theme of Jesus’s mission (John 12:46; 1 John 1:5–7).¹³¹ Although Christ experienced severe opposition—even causing his death—his crucifixion and resurrection enabled him to overcome the darkness (John 12:27–33; John 16:32–33; Col 2:13–15).¹³²

¹¹⁹Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 421.

¹²⁰Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 118–9.

¹²¹Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 75.

¹²²Beasley-Murray, *John*, 11.

¹²³Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 75.

¹²⁴Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 119.

¹²⁵Danker, et al., “καταλαμβάνω” (*katalambanō*), *BDAG*, 519–20.

¹²⁶Burge, *John*, 56.

¹²⁷John J. Collins, “Essenes,” *ABD* 2:619–26, 619.

¹²⁸Craig S. Keener, *InterVarsity Press Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVPBBCNT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), John 1:5.

¹²⁹Geza Vermes, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th Ed* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 1QS 3, 73, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n131/mode/2up.

¹³⁰Robert Kysar, “John, The Gospel of,” *ABD* 3:912–31, 926.

¹³¹Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 76.

¹³²Burge, *John*, 56.

Read John 1:3–5. What themes did John employ which were likely familiar to his original audience? How does this passage affect your understanding of Gen 1:1–3? Why can we have confidence as we go through the struggles of life?

God Separates the Waters

3) Gen 1:6–8: Moses wrote, “And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse (*raqia*) in the middle of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ Then God made the expanse, and he separated the waters which [were] below the expanse and the waters which [were] above the expanse. And so it happened.”

After creating time on “a first day” (Gen 1:1–5), the Lord formed space,¹³³ asserting his power over the primordial waters by dividing them.¹³⁴ He accomplished this by spreading out the vault of heaven (Isa 40:22; Isa 44:24).¹³⁵ Some translations call this “the firmament.”¹³⁶ The Hebrew prepositions indicate that the Lord separated one type of water from another, with one kind above and a different one below this vault.¹³⁷ Thus, the Lord isolated the vapor which formed rain from the waters upon the earth.¹³⁸ An intermediate expanse regulated humidity and sunlight.¹³⁹

In keeping with Egyptian and Babylonian ideas, Israelites viewed the sky as a solid dome (Job 37:18),¹⁴⁰ possibly of glass (Ezek 1:22; Dan 12:3).¹⁴¹ For example, in the Sumerian tale Enki and the Ordering of the World, the author described the sky as a “well-established roof [which] reaches like the rainbow to heaven.”¹⁴² Overall, people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) believed that the cosmos consisted of three tiers: the heavens; the earth; and the underworld.¹⁴³ One Egyptian creation text describes the moment, “when the sky was separated from the earth, and when the gods ascended to heaven.”¹⁴⁴

¹³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 120.

¹³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 19–20.

¹³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 122.

¹³⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רָקִיעַ” (*raqia*), *BDB*, 956,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/956/mode/2up>.

¹³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 122.

¹³⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

¹³⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:8.

¹⁴⁰Paul H. Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above, Part 1: The Meaning of ‘Raquia’ in Gen1:6–8,” *WTJ* 53, no. 2: 227–40, 235, https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/seely-firmament-wtj.pdf.

¹⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

¹⁴²W. Beyerlin, trans., “Enki and the Ordering of the World,” Pages 19–20 in *RANE* (ed. Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 20.

¹⁴³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:8.

¹⁴⁴Samuel A. B. Mercer, trans., *The Pyramid Texts* (London: Forgotten Books, 2008), 1208c, [Http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/pyt/pyt27.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/pyt/pyt27.htm).

However, Enuma Elish provides the greatest parallels with the “separation” in the Genesis account, though it promotes striking differences in theology. The god Marduk formed the vault from the corpse of a rebellious water goddess. Even then, he needed restraints to prevent her from unleashing her waters.¹⁴⁵ Using a word related to the Hebrew verb “separated,” (*barar*) it says, “Then the lord [Marduk] paused to view [Tiamat’s] dead body, that he might divide the monster and do artful works. He *split* her like a shellfish into two parts. Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky, pulled down the bar and posted guards. He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.”¹⁴⁶ People believed that rain consisted of fluid leaking from the upper half of Tiamat’s body.¹⁴⁷ Normally, the vault kept those waters in place (Cf. Job 26:6–14).¹⁴⁸

A Sumerian tale about Ishkur recounts a different origin of rain. There the god Enlil commissioned his son to make clouds and to harness the winds and lightning to go before him.¹⁴⁹ In another Sumerian myth, the god Enki “summoned the two winds and the water of the heaven, he made them approach like two clouds, made their life-giving breath go to the horizon, changed the barren hills into fields.”¹⁵⁰

Similarly, the waters above fall at the Lord’s command (Ps 77:16–20). Clouds come from his storehouses at the ends of the earth, originating at the gates of heaven (Job 38:22–23; Ps 135:7).¹⁵¹ Unlike those living in the ANE, we recognize that this “vault” is not a physical entity but the way our weather system operates.¹⁵²

Moses continued, “And God called the vault ‘the heavens.’ And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.” The Hebrew language connotes the close association between the two types of water, for “heavens” is *shamayim*,¹⁵³ while “waters” is *mayim* (Ps 148:4).¹⁵⁴ Once again, the lack of a definite article (the) before the number of the day indicates that this account does not necessarily follow a sequence in time.¹⁵⁵ Moses omitted the phrase “and God saw that it was good” only in the account of this day, perhaps because the creation of the vault comprised a preliminary stage prior to the creation of dry ground.¹⁵⁶

Read Gen 1:6–8. How did Moses’s view of “a second day” differ from other ANE creation texts concerning the separation of the waters? What encouragement does that give you?

¹⁴⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 123.

¹⁴⁶“Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” *ANET*, 4.135–40, 67. Italics mine.

¹⁴⁷Min Suc Kee, “A Study on the Dual Form of Mayim, Water,” *JBQ* 40, no. 3 (1 July 2012): 183–89, 186, http://jbnqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/403/jbq_403_mayim.pdf.

¹⁴⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 113.

¹⁴⁹S. N. Kramer, trans., “Ishkur and the Destruction of the Rebellious Land,” in *ANET*, 577–8, lines 14–9, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n607/mode/2up.

¹⁵⁰“Enki and the Ordering of the World,” *RANE*, 20.

¹⁵¹Walton, *Genesis*, 111.

¹⁵²Walton, *Genesis*, 112–3.

¹⁵³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמַיִם” (*shamay*), *BDB*, 1029, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1028/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁴Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מַיִם” (*may*), 565, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/564/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

¹⁵⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 124.

The Firstborn of All Creation

4) Col 1:15–18: Many New Testament (NT) scholars consider Col 1:15–20 a preexisting hymn which Paul inserted into his letter to the people of Colossae.¹⁵⁷ Structurally, it forms an A-B-C-B-A pattern called a chiasm, in which the focus lies upon the center. In this case, the emphasis falls on v. 17, which states, “And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”¹⁵⁸

This hymn begins by saying, “He is the image of the invisible God, [the] firstborn of all creation.” The term “firstborn” (*prōtotokos*) refers to the authority and preeminence of the oldest son.¹⁵⁹ It does not suggest that Christ did not always exist. Thus, he is “first in rank” (Gen 49:3; Ps 89:27),¹⁶⁰ a common situation in agrarian societies like Israel’s (Deut 21:15–17).¹⁶¹ In the context of this passage, “firstborn” signifies the supremacy of Christ over every creature, for he created everything.¹⁶² Furthermore, as the “firstborn from the dead,” he heralds the future resurrection of those belonging to him (1 Cor 15:20–22).

Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts apply similar terms to their deities, such as to Amon-Re in Egypt.¹⁶³ The Mesopotamian creation story Enuma Elish recounts that the first gods begotten by Apsu and Tiamat were named Lahmu and Lahamu.¹⁶⁴ Yet, after Marduk slew Tiamat, the other gods responded in this way:

“They erected for [Marduk] a princely throne. Facing his fathers, he sat down, presiding... ‘Thou, Marduk, art the most honored of the great gods, thy decree is unrivaled... From this day unchangeable shall be thy pronouncement. To raise or bring low—these shall be [in] thy hand. Thy utterance shall be true, thy command shall be unimpeachable. No one among the gods shall transgress thy bounds!

“...O Marduk, thou art indeed our avenger. We have granted thee kingship over the universe entire. When in Assembly thou sittest, thy word shall be supreme. Thy weapons shall not fail; they shall smash thy foes! O lord, spare the life of him who trusts thee, pour out the life of the god who seized evil.’

“Having placed in their midst the Images, they addressed themselves to Marduk, their *firstborn*, ‘Lord, truly thy decree is first among gods. Say but to wreck or create; it shall be. Open thy mouth: the Images will vanish! Speak again, and the Images shall be whole!’ At the word of his mouth the Images vanished. He spoke again, and the Images were restored. When the gods, his fathers, saw the fruit of his word, joyfully they did homage, ‘Marduk is king!’”¹⁶⁵

Although Marduk was not chronologically the firstborn, he received the supremacy and honor associated with the eldest son due to his mighty acts of valor.

¹⁵⁷David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 90.

¹⁵⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2001), 173.

¹⁵⁹Danker, et al., “πρωτοτοκος” (*prōtotokos*), *BDAG*, 894.

¹⁶⁰Wilhelm Michaelis, “πρωτοτοκος” (*prōtotokos*), *TDNT* 6:871–82, 871.

¹⁶¹Bill T. Arnold, “בְּכוֹרִי” (*bekhor*) in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, Willem VanGemeren, ed., 5 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997): 1:658–9, 658.

¹⁶²Michaelis, “πρωτοτοκος” (*prōtotokos*), *TDNT*, 6:879.

¹⁶³Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Col 1:15.

¹⁶⁴“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish) in *ANET*, lines 1:1–10, 61.

¹⁶⁵“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish) in *ANET*, lines 4:1–28, 66. Italics mine.

According to Greek mythology, one of the five major ethnic groups in Greece originated from the union of the great god Zeus with Protogeneia (“Firstborn” in Greek).¹⁶⁶ When the lineage of Lokros was about to die out, Zeus carried Protogeneia off, impregnated her, and gave her to Lokros as his wife.¹⁶⁷ Thus, she gave birth to the first ruler of Greece.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the Romans worshiped Fortuna Primigenia (“Firstborn” in Latin) because they viewed her as the origin of all things, the one who created the natural world which then fell into order by chance.¹⁶⁹

Concerning Jesus, Paul proclaimed, “For in him were created all things in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities. All things through him and for him were created. And he is before all things, and all things in him hold together. And he is the head of the body of the church. He is [the] beginning, [the] firstborn from the dead, that he might come to have first place in everything.”

Ingenuously, the author of this ode in Colossians focused upon the meanings which we can glean from the first word of Gen 1:1, “in the beginning of” (*bereshith*). Using four meanings of the Hebrew preposition *be* (“in,” “by,” “for,” and “through”),¹⁷⁰ the hymn writer amplified “in the beginning of” by the report that all things were created “in” Christ, “by” Christ, “for” Christ, and “through” Christ.

Furthermore, *reshith* has multiple meanings (“beginning,” “sum total,” “head,” and “first-fruits”).¹⁷¹ The author expounded upon these, saying Christ “is before all things” (beginning); “in him all things hold together” (sum total); “he is the head of the body” (“*kephalē*,” meaning the source which supplies life);¹⁷² and “the firstborn from among the dead.” As one part representing the whole of God’s people (first fruits),¹⁷³ Christ ensures our resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–23). Jesus fulfills every meaning of the first word in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁷⁴

Read Col 1:15–18. How is the NT concept of “firstborn” like the ANE and Jewish views? In what ways does it differ from the Greek and Roman perspectives? How does knowing that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation affect your life? Why does it matter that he is the firstborn of the dead?

¹⁶⁶Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (trans. W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1918), 5.1.3, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D5%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D3>.

¹⁶⁷Pindar, *The Olympian Odes* (trans. Diane Arson Svarlien; 1990), 9.44, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0162%3Abook%3DO.%3Apoem%3D9>.

¹⁶⁸Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.1.3, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D5%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D3>.

¹⁶⁹Plutarch, *Aetia Romana et Graeca (The Roman and Greek Questions)*, in *Moralia, Vol. 4* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 1.106, <http://sacred-texts.com/cla/plu/rgq/rgq12.htm>.

¹⁷⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בֵּ” (*be*), *BDB*, 88–91, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/88/mode/2up>.

¹⁷¹S. Rattray, and J. Milgrom, J. “רֵשִׁית” (*reshith*), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, 15 vols., G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, & H.-J. Fabry (Eds.), D. E. Green (Trans.), (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 13:268–72, 268–71.

¹⁷²F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 68.

¹⁷³C. J. H. Wright, “Family,” *ABD* 2:765–9, 765.

¹⁷⁴David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 85.

The Dry Ground Appears

5) Gen 1:9–13: On the third day, the Lord began organizing what he had created in Gen 1:1–8. Moses reported, “God said, ‘Let the waters below the heavens be collected to one place and let the dry ground appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry ground ‘land,’ and the collected waters, he called ‘seas.’ And God saw that it was good.”

This separation of dry land from the seas set the parameters necessary for terrestrial life.¹⁷⁵ A strong connection exists between the two commands, for the gathering of the waters enabled the land to emerge.¹⁷⁶ The Israelites had seen something similar during their escape from Egypt (Exod 14:21–22).¹⁷⁷ In contrast to our modern view of the earth as continents surrounded by oceans, people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) saw the world as land holding bodies of water.¹⁷⁸

Unlike on previous days, on the third day God performed two separate acts of creation. He also did this on the sixth day. This maintains the literary parallelism between days one and four, days two and five, and days three and six.¹⁷⁹ “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout grass, [and] plants scattering seeds, [and] fruit trees bearing fruit according to their kind, which have seeds in them on the earth.’ And it was so. Then the earth grew grass [and] seed-bearing plants according to their kind, and trees bearing fruit according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

In the second creative act of this day, the Lord produced various types of vegetation.¹⁸⁰ God desires to reign over an infinite variety of life.¹⁸¹ Thus, he created plants and trees which reproduce “according to [their] kind, which have seeds in them.” The Hebrew term for “kind” (*min*) allows for a broader range than “species.”¹⁸² In contrast, the word “seeds” (*zera*) implies a close resemblance to the parent.¹⁸³ Significantly, God commanded reproduction “according to its kind” for plants and animals but not for humans (Gen 1:24, 26).¹⁸⁴ This may indicate that God intended that vegetation and animals propagate more than the same species,¹⁸⁵ as the term “kind” does not correspond to a scientific species or genus.¹⁸⁶

The Greek translation of the Old Testament reflects this, employing the terms *homoios* (“respecting perfect agreement, resembling”) twenty times and *genos* (“race, family, direct descendant, animal class”) eleven times for the term “*min*.”¹⁸⁷ In Gen 1:11, the Greek translators opted for both terms, writing “according to kind (*genos*) and according to likeness (*homoios*).”¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

¹⁷⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 124–5.

¹⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

¹⁷⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

¹⁷⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 113.

¹⁸⁰Hamilton, *Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 125.

¹⁸¹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 57.

¹⁸²Swanson, “מין” (*min*), *DBLSHD*, 4786.

¹⁸³Desmond T. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 105.

¹⁸⁴P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:288–90, 289.

¹⁸⁵P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:289.

¹⁸⁶Mark D. Futato, “מין” (*min*), *NIDOTTE* 2:934–5, 934.

¹⁸⁷P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:289.

¹⁸⁸Randall K. Tan, David A. DeSilva, and Isaiah Hoogendyk, eds., *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear Septuagint: H. B. Swete Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012), Gen 1:11, electronic ed.

For the last time in this creation narrative, the Lord named what he created. Soon he would delegate that responsibility to people (Gen 2:19–20; Gen 4:1).¹⁸⁹ Once he completed the basic structure which supports life, God declared it “good.”¹⁹⁰

In contrast, Sumerians believed that the continued fertility of their land depended upon the ritual reenactment of the death and resurrection of Dumuzi, the goddess Inanna’s lover.¹⁹¹ The rite centered upon cultic prostitution, rather than upon human sacrifice. Inanna’s temples included bridal chambers where a priestess engaged in mystical marriage with the king to renew the land’s productivity.¹⁹²

However, God continually desired the production and creation of new life,¹⁹³ with what he made following his master design.¹⁹⁴ He began with a day of black and white, added the blue of ocean and sky on a second day, and now included green. Soon the earth would contain the full palette of colors.¹⁹⁵

The Mesopotamian creation account Enuma Elish follows a similar sequence of creating time, climate, and the ingredients necessary for agriculture.¹⁹⁶ Marduk, the son of the gods, appointed the days to the sun god Shamash and established night and day. Then he took saliva from the evil water goddess he had slain and used it to create clouds, winds, and fog. After that, Marduk formed mountains and the rest of the earth from Tiamat’s body before opening the deep waters and springs. “Thus, he covered [the heavens] and established the earth.”¹⁹⁷

Read Gen 1:9–13. Why did Moses record two acts of creation on the third day? How did God prepare the earth so that vegetation could grow? What is the significance of the command for plants and animals to reproduce “according to their kind”? How does the account in these verses differ from the one in Enuma Elish regarding the separation of dry ground from the waters?

¹⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 125.

¹⁹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

¹⁹¹Joseph P. Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:791–3, 792.

¹⁹²Joseph P. Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:791–3, 792.

¹⁹³Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 57.

¹⁹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

¹⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 126.

¹⁹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 114.

¹⁹⁷“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish) in *ANET*, lines 4.45–66, 501–2.

Chapter 2: God Creates Inhabitants for His Cosmic Temple (Gen 1:14–25)

Moses wrote, “In the beginning of God’s creating of the heavens and the earth, the earth had been formless and empty.” The cosmos arose from nothing, coming into being by the spoken word of God. Order emerged from disorder. Genesis 1 portrays no sense of forces of chaos being restrained, nor of any personified evil, unlike other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) depictions.¹⁹⁸ Even the deep waters obeyed the Lord’s commands, for the Spirit of God hovered over them, witnessing and participating in this creative activity (Gen 1:1–2).

During the first through third day, God created habitations and assigned their functions.¹⁹⁹ This demonstrated his power and authority over them.²⁰⁰ First, the Lord created light and separated it from darkness, establishing periods of time (Gen 1:3–5).²⁰¹ Then, God split the primordial waters into vapor in the heavens above and liquid in the seas below (Gen 1:6–8). He collected the waters below together so that dry land appeared and produced various types of vegetation (Gen 1:9–13). This set the framework necessary for living creatures to survive.²⁰²

Greater and Lesser Lights

1) Gen 1:14–19: Moses wrote, “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate day from night, and let them be for signs for appointed times, and days, and years. And let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to be light on the earth.’ And it was so.”

On “a fourth day,” God spoke to assign functions to the lights of the heavens.²⁰³ Here we see the first example of what the Lord formed in the second group of three days (Days 4–6). He made creatures and creations to rule over the spheres he created in the initial three days.²⁰⁴ The people of the ANE focused upon how the cosmos operated, not on its physical or chemical composition.²⁰⁵ This section of Gen 1 brilliantly employs passive argumentation—depicting what Israelites must believe—rather than directly attacking polytheistic views.²⁰⁶ In fact, Moses shocked his original audience far more by what he didn’t say than by what he proclaimed in this passage.

Most ANE peoples worshiped numerous astral gods, for they viewed the sun, the moon, and the stars as divine. Many of these deities had their own religious cults.²⁰⁷ Egyptians venerated the sun god Ra as the one who created everything. Meanwhile, they believed that the moon god Khonsu ruled over time and assisted Ra in forming the universe. In contrast, Gen 1 empties the cosmos of any personal traits. For example, the primordial waters in Gen 1:2 bore little resemblance to the goddess Tiamat.²⁰⁸ Moses avoided even terms like “sun” and “moon,”

¹⁹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 73.

¹⁹⁹Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” 2–15, <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>.

²⁰⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 71–2.

²⁰¹Walton, *Genesis*, 79.

²⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

²⁰³Walton, *Genesis*, 125.

²⁰⁴Walke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 63.

²⁰⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:19.

²⁰⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 123.

²⁰⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 127.

²⁰⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 123.

because people in the surrounding nations worshiped them.²⁰⁹

One inscription describes the duties of the Sumerian pantheon. It says, “The great [gods of heaven, the] Igigi who parade in the sky, whose brilliance, like fire, [light]s the evening and the black night.”²¹⁰ People worshiped the sun god Shamash as supreme among the gods, for they hailed him as the one who regulated the seasons and enabled divination of omens.²¹¹

Yet, they knew that even he did not reign as sovereign. Therefore, the author of Prayer to the Gods of the Night implored this:

“The gods of the land and the goddesses of the land, [the sun god] Shamash, [the moon god] Sin, [the storm god] Adad, and [the fertility/war goddess] Ishtar, have taken themselves to sleep in heaven. They are not pronouncing judgment; they are not deciding things. Veiled is the night; the temple and the most holy places are quiet and dark. The traveler calls on [his] god; and the litigant is tarrying in sleep. The judge of truth, the father of the fatherless, Shamash, has taken himself to his chamber. O great ones, gods of the night...O bow [star] and yoke [star], O Pleiades, Orion, and the dragon, O Ursa Major, goat [star], and the bison, stand by, and then, in the divination which I am making, in the lamb which I am offering, put truth for me.”²¹²

Although each of these gods could respond to the prayers of the people only when visible, inhabitants of the ANE still viewed their guidance as crucial in decision-making.

In addition to separating day from night, God created these lights to act as “signs for appointed seasons,²¹³ and for days and years” (Ps 104:19–20). This bears no resemblance to the astrology practiced by Israel’s neighbors.²¹⁴ “Appointed seasons” (*moedh*) in the Old Testament (OT) refer not to summer and winter but to the prescribed religious festivals and feast days on the Hebrew calendar (Lev 23:1–6, 23–26, 33–34). The same word occurs in combination with the term for “tent” to describe the tabernacle, literally the “Tent of Meeting” (*ohel moedh*), where Israel observed sacred rites.²¹⁵

Furthermore, the cycle of the moon separated each month. People tracked the movement of the stars to periodically synchronize the lunar and the solar calendars, akin to the function of our Leap Day. Otherwise, the timing of the agricultural feasts would become skewed,²¹⁶ as occurs each year with the Islamic observance of Ramadan.

God pronounced, “Let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth.” The Lord create these celestial luminaries to serve, not as objects of worship. He considered this concept so important that he repeated it in reverse order (Deut 4:19).²¹⁷ Moses sought to strip out any reference to autonomy of the sun and the moon. Therefore, he called them, “the two great lights (*maor*), the great light to rule over the day, and the smaller light to rule over the night.” They are not gods,²¹⁸ but the handiwork of the Lord which he designed to reign by separating day from night (Ps 96:4–6; Jer 10:10–13; Isa 40:26).²¹⁹

²⁰⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 1:19.

²¹⁰ S. N. Kramer, trans., “The Duties and Powers of the Gods: Inscription on the Statue of King Kurigalzu,” in *ANET*, line C9, 59.

²¹¹ Ferris J. Stephens, trans., “Hymn to the Sun-God (Great Hymn to Shamash),” in *ANET*, 387–9.

²¹² Ferris J. Stephens, trans., “Prayer to the Gods of the Night,” in *ANET*, lines 5–24, 391.

²¹³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מוֹעֵד” (*moedh*), *BDB*, 417,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/416/mode/2up>.

²¹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

²¹⁵ Richard E. Averbeck, “מוֹעֵד” (*moedh*), *NIDOTTE* 2:873–8, 873.

²¹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 122–3.

²¹⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 127.

²¹⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 123.

²¹⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 38.

The Hebrew word for “sun” is *shemesh*,²²⁰ a term nearly identical to Shamash, the Sumerian sun god. In fact, the Canaanite city named Beth-shemesh means “shrine of the sun,” and “Jericho” derives from the word for “moon.”²²¹ When Moses stood on Mount Sinai, God commanded, “The names of other gods you shall not mention [and] they shall not be heard from your mouth” (Exod 23:13). Years later, Moses’s successor explained the rationale for avoiding even speaking the names of foreign gods: to prevent the nation from slipping into idolatry (Josh 23:6–8). Even so, Israel failed to resist that temptation (2 Ki 23:4–5).

In the rest of the OT, “light” (*maor*) means a celestial luminary only in Ps 74:16 and in Ezek 32:8. Where the term occurs elsewhere in the Pentateuch, it always pertains to the gold lamps in the tabernacle (e.g. Exod 35:14; Num 4:9).²²² Here is our first hint that God fashioned the cosmos as his temple (Cf. Isa 66:1–2).²²³ In fact, the tabernacle resembled the four traditional cosmic elements of earth, air, water, and fire.²²⁴

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD), attested this:

“When Moses distinguished the tabernacle into three parts and allowed two of them to the priests, as a place accessible and common, he denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men. And when he ordered twelve loaves to be set on the table, he denoted the year, as distinguished into so many months. By branching out the candlestick into seventy parts, he secretly intimated the...seventy divisions of the planets; and as to the seven lamps upon the candlesticks, they referred to the course of the planets, of which that is the number.

“The veils, too, which were composed of four things, they declared the four elements; for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because that color is dyed by the blood of a sea shellfish; the blue is fit to signify the air; and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire.”²²⁵

Consequently, both the tabernacle and the temple represented the universe.²²⁶

Since people in the ANE believed that the stars controlled their destinies, Moses deliberately mentioned them as almost as an afterthought.²²⁷ In the Mesopotamian creation epic Enuma Elish, Marduk gave the stars priority, placing them into constellations to organize the calendar. He then turned his attention to the moon and sun:²²⁸

“He constructed stations for the great gods, fixing their astral likenesses as the Images. He determined the year by designating the zones: he set up three constellations for each of the twelve months...defining the days of the year by means of heavenly figures...The Moon he caused to shine, entrusting the night to him. He appointed him a creature of the night to signify the days: ‘Monthly, without cease, form designs with a crown’...He had appointed the days to

²²⁰ Holladay, “שֶׁמֶשׁ” (*shemesh*), *CHALOT*, 378.

²²¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יָרֵיֵךְ” (*yareakh*), *BDB*, 437, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/436/mode/2up>.

²²² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 22.

²²³ Walton, *Genesis*, 124.

²²⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 46.

²²⁵ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (trans. William Whiston; The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 3.181–4, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D3%3Awhiston+chapter%3D7%3Awhiston+section%3D7>.

²²⁶ Vern S. Polythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1991), 96.

²²⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 63.

²²⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 128.

Shamash and had established the precincts of night and day.²²⁹

Moses reported, “God saw that it was good” upon the completion of his handiwork.

Read Gen 1:14–19. How did Moses seek to prevent Israel from following their neighbors in worshiping the sun, moon, and stars? What function did the Lord assign to those celestial bodies? How does knowing that the universe serves as God’s temple affect the way you view the world?

Inhabitants of the Sea and Sky

b) Gen 1:20–23: Just as the creation of light on day one corresponds to the formation of the sun, moon, and stars on day four,²³⁰ so day two harmonizes with day five. On the second day, God separated the sky from the primordial waters. When the fifth day arrived, he created the inhabitants of those environments: aquatic creatures and birds.²³¹

This section follows the standard formula for Gen 1, except for the omission of “and it was so.”²³² The Lord commanded, “Let the waters swarm (*sharats*) [with] swarming living beings.” This verb usually connotes the swift chaotic movement of fish, insects, and mice (Lev 11:10, 20, 29–30). It also implies fertility. According to Exod 1:7, “the sons of Israel were fruitful and swarmed and became great and exceedingly numerous.”²³³

The term “living beings” (*nephesh*) appears for the first time in Gen 1:20. Moses repeated it in reference to land animals in Gen 1:24 and to humanity in Gen 2:7.²³⁴ Thus, it applies to all who receive the “breath of life” (Gen 1:30).

For the first time since Gen 1:1, Moses specifically wrote that “God created,”²³⁵ a matter of significance since the Lord made “the great sea monsters” (*tannin*).²³⁶ We think of animals such as sharks and whales. However, the Israelites associated them with the forces of anarchy whom people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) believed ruled over the primordial waters.²³⁷ These creatures included serpents, dragons, sea monsters, and river monsters (Exod 7:10; Neh 2:13; Ps 74:12–13; Isa 27:1).²³⁸

According to a Babylonian hymn to the sun god, “The monsters of the sea look upon your light... The monsters of the sea which are full of terror, the product of the sea [and] what belongs in the deep, the spawn of the river which it produces from itself, [all] O Shamash, are in

²²⁹ “The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), in *ANET*, lines 5.1–6, 12–4, 6:45–6, 67–8, 501–2.

²³⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 23.

²³¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 129.

²³² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 23.

²³³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 23–4.

²³⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

²³⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 126.

²³⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²³⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 126–7.

²³⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “תַּנִּינִם” (*tannin*), *BDB*, 1072,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1072/mode/2up>.

your presence.”²³⁹ People throughout the ANE viewed these monsters as living in submission to the sun god, just as in Genesis they obey the Lord.²⁴⁰ Ugaritic texts call the sea the enemy of the storm god Baal.²⁴¹ One poem claims that Baal crushed the sea and muzzled the dragon.²⁴²

In Genesis, these monsters are mere creatures whom the Lord made—not chaotic rivals—²⁴³ living under their creator’s command (Ps 148:7).²⁴⁴ No hint of battle exists.²⁴⁵ While Moses utilized polytheists’ imagery, he renounced their theology.²⁴⁶ Therefore, he inserted, “and God created” here. Moses needed to discuss cosmic monsters of chaos for an audience steeped in ANE culture.²⁴⁷ Biblical texts which refer to clashes between these forces and God point back to “the days of old” or more recent days, such as the exodus from Egypt, rather than to the time of creation (Isa 51:9–10; Ps 89:10).²⁴⁸

In addition to those great creatures, the Lord created “all of the living beings moving/creeping (*ramas*) about which swarm the waters.”²⁴⁹ This depicts fish and other animals which swim, wriggle, or walk along the bottom of bodies of water.²⁵⁰ God’s statement, “And let birds fly about over the land, over the surface of the expanse of the heavens,” also suggests swarming.²⁵¹ “And God saw that it was good” acknowledges the perfection of a good creator’s work.²⁵²

Moses reported, “Then God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and increase and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.’ There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.” This portrays the first time God spoke to someone else,²⁵³ giving a blessing rather than performing the act of creating and naming. Moses used wordplay between “created” (*bara*) and “blessed” (*barak*) to focus upon the theological relationship of these words. Creation typically precedes blessing (Gen 1:27–28; Gen 2:3; Gen 5:2).²⁵⁴ *Barak* occurs 327 times in the Old Testament, with eighty-eight of those occurrences in Genesis. This makes blessing a key theme of the book.²⁵⁵

Due to God’s empowering words, those whom the creator blesses can accomplish his will.²⁵⁶ By reproducing, the sea creatures and birds ruled over their realms.²⁵⁷ The Lord proliferated all these creatures as a blessing, not as a difficulty for humans to overcome.²⁵⁸

²³⁹ “Hymn to the Sun-God,” *ANET*, lines 1.38, 4.3–6, 388–9.

²⁴⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:20.

²⁴¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 130.

²⁴² H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, III ABA lines 7–30, 131, <https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n115/mode/2up>.

²⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 58.

²⁴⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 130.

²⁴⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 63.

²⁴⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

²⁴⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 130.

²⁴⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רָמַשׁ” (*ramas*), *BDB*, 942–3, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/942/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 129.

²⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²⁵² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 59.

²⁵³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 131.

²⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 23–4.

²⁵⁵ Michael L. Brown, “בָּרַךְ” (*barak*), *NIDOTTE* 1:757–67, 757.

²⁵⁶ J. Scharbert, “בָּרַךְ” (*barak*), *TDOT* 2:279–308, 294–5.

²⁵⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 63.

²⁵⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

Read Gen 1:20–23. Why did Moses specifically mention the great sea monsters? How is being blessed linked with being created? What impact does this have upon the way you view nature?

Living Things from the Earth

c) Gen 1:24–25: Moses wrote, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living things according to their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kind.’ And it was so.” “The sixth day” corresponds with “a third day,”²⁵⁹ as the inhabitants of dry land appeared (Cf. Gen 1:9–13).²⁶⁰ God produced living creatures from the earth. This parallels his creation of vegetation.²⁶¹

The Hebrew term for “kind” (*min*) allows for a broader range than a species.²⁶² Significantly, God commanded reproduction “according to its kind” for plants and animals but not for humans (Gen 1:11, 24, 26).²⁶³ This may indicate that God intended that vegetation and animals propagate more than the same species,²⁶⁴ as the term “kind” does not correspond to a scientific species or genus.²⁶⁵ The Greek translation of the Old Testament reflects this, employing the term *genos* (“race, family, direct descendant, animal class”) for the term “*min*.”²⁶⁶

Animals in these verses fall into three categories.²⁶⁷ The first type (*behemah*) usually refers to domestic animals. However, it occasionally depicts wild beasts, such as birds, fish, and carnivores.²⁶⁸ A second category (*remes*) means “creeping/ moving things,” although it can apply to all animals, including sea creatures.²⁶⁹ Carnivores often feed upon them.²⁷⁰ The third group (*hayyah*) can mean any “living thing,”²⁷¹ although it typically refers to predators.²⁷²

In Gen 1:28, God jointly described these three divisions as “every living thing which moves on the earth.” By constructing plants and creatures which he designed to self-propagate

²⁵⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 25.

²⁶⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

²⁶¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

²⁶² Swanson, “מין” (*min*), *DBLSHD*, 4786.

²⁶³ P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:288–90, 289.

²⁶⁴ P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:288–90, 289.

²⁶⁵ Mark D. Futato, “מין” (*min*), *NIDOTTE* 2:934–5, 934.

²⁶⁶ P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:289.

²⁶⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 25.

²⁶⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בְּהֵמָה” (*behemah*), *BDB*, 96–7,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/96/mode/2up>.

²⁶⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רֶמֶשׂ” (*remes*), *BDB*, 943,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/942/mode/2up>.

²⁷⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

²⁷¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “חַיָּה” (*hayyah*), *BDB*, 312,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/312/mode/2up>.

²⁷² Walton, *Genesis*, 127.

“according to their kind,” the creator produced creators.²⁷³ Since the Lord imbued them with his own generative ability, he enabled them to honor God as they used that gift. Yet, if the Lord withdrew from sustaining the world, all would perish (Ps 104:27–30).²⁷⁴

Commentators remain divided over the reason for the lack of a divine blessing in these verses. Most likely, God blessed sea creatures and fowl in Gen 1:22 because they inhabit different spheres from people and pose little threat to humanity.²⁷⁵ However, an abundance of predatory beasts could endanger survival (Exod 23:29; Lev 26:21–22). On the other hand, the blessing in Gen 1:28–30 might include the fertility of all those whom God created on the sixth day.²⁷⁶

Read Gen 1:24–25. What types of creatures were formed on the sixth day? Why do you think God did not speak words of blessing over the land animals?

²⁷³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

²⁷⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 58–9.

²⁷⁵ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 64.

²⁷⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 26.

Chapter 3: The Image of God (Gen 1:26–31)

In a second set of three days, God created the inhabitants of the cosmos which he had formed on the first triad of days. On the fourth day, God spoke to generate the lights of the heavens (Gen 1:14–19). This paralleled the creation of light on the first day (Gen 1:3–5). These lights enabled vision and set the secular and religious calendars. People tracked the movement of the stars to synchronize the lunar and the solar calendars. The Lord created them to serve, in contrast to the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) focus upon worshiping these lights as gods.

Day five harmonizes with day two. On the second day, God separated the sky from the waters (Gen 1:6–8). Then on the fifth day, he created the inhabitants of those environments: aquatic creatures and birds,²⁷⁷ including “*tannin*,” “the great sea monsters” (Gen 1:20–23).²⁷⁸ Moses’s original audience associated *tannin* with the chaotic forces of anarchy who ruled the cosmic waters in ANE creation epics.²⁷⁹ In Genesis, these monsters were merely creatures whom the Lord had made,²⁸⁰ living under their creator’s command.²⁸¹ He wrote, “And God saw that it was good” and the Lord blessed them.

On the sixth day, the Lord brought forth living creatures from the earth to live upon the dry ground which had appeared on the third day (Gen 1:9–13, 24–25). These animals separate into three categories: domestic animals, prey, and predators. Together, they comprise “every living thing which moves on the earth.” By constructing plants and creatures which self-propagate “according to their kind,” the creator produced creators.²⁸²

Let Us Make Humanity

1) Gen 1:26: Moses wrote, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the heavens, and the cattle, and all the earth, and all the creeping things which creep on the earth.’” A momentous event was about to take place on “the sixth day.” The cosmos had been created and organized in a serene process to provide for God’s masterpiece.²⁸³ Only here in Gen 1 did God announce his plan before creating. In addition, Moses replaced the usual closing formula (“and it was so”) with a blessing (Gen 1:28).²⁸⁴

By shifting from “Let there be” to “Let us make,” the Lord hinted that he was about to perform an act of great importance.²⁸⁵ According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, this represented “the significance and sublimity of the creator’s action.”²⁸⁶

Several major issues complicate these verses. First, we will examine what the Lord meant by using a plural in stating, “Let us make humanity in our image.”²⁸⁷ Our presuppositions and our method of interpretation affect how we understand this plural pronoun.²⁸⁸ Many Christian

²⁷⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 220.

²⁷⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²⁷⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 126–7.

²⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²⁸¹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 58.

²⁸²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

²⁸³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 1:31.

²⁸⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 64.

²⁸⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 134.

²⁸⁶Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 61.

²⁸⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27.

²⁸⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

readers assume that this verse proves that God exists in tri-unity.²⁸⁹ However, approaching the passage by asking, “How can I make this fit with what I already believe?” may make it harder for us to understand what the text teaches.²⁹⁰

During the time of Moses, Israelites questioned whether they should worship multiple gods who were self-serving and fickle, not whether God consisted of one or three persons. Thus, we should seek to understand how the original audience interpreted the word “us.” We will consider six possibilities.²⁹¹

The first of these involves the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cultural background.²⁹² For the scholars who view this text as borrowed mythology, the “us” remains as a reference the multiple gods of surrounding nations which the monotheistic editor overlooked and failed to remove.²⁹³ Thus a remnant of polytheism remains. This concept fails to convince most scholars,²⁹⁴ especially since the overall thrust of Genesis 1 rejects any polytheistic elements. In fact, modern commentators virtually unite in asserting that the author would not have permitted this.²⁹⁵ List the arguments for and against this view on p. 28.

Other scholars contend that God was speaking to his heavenly court of angels,²⁹⁶ also known as the “sons of God.”²⁹⁷ Jewish commentators have long held this view.²⁹⁸ According to the first century AD philosopher Philo:

“Man[kind] is almost the only one of all living things which...often chooses that which is worst...Very appropriately therefore has God attributed the creation of this being, man[kind], to his lieutenants, saying, ‘Let us make man[kind]’, in order that the successes of the intellect may be attributed to him alone, but the errors of the being thus created, to his subordinate power.”²⁹⁹

Philo believed that God created the best parts of humanity while the angels made the negative aspects. In addition to meshing with the ANE conception of a group of gods who confer to make decisions,³⁰⁰ this position has some biblical support. The Old Testament (OT) describes the Lord meeting with “the sons of God” (1 Ki 22:19–21; Job 2:1; Ps 89:5–7). Some scholars object that it debases God to consult with created beings like angels (Isa 40:13–14). However, the Lord chooses to operate in that fashion, rather than needing to do so (Gen 18:16–18).³⁰¹

For example, in Gen 11:5–8, the Lord discussed his plans with his heavenly court, but he carried out the decision himself (Cf. Job 38:4–7).³⁰² The divine image differentiates between animals and people, not between angels and people (Gen 1:24–26; Gen 5:3). Therefore, this interpretation could easily mesh with how Moses’s original audience understood the plural pronoun.³⁰³ Record the arguments for and against this position on p. 28.

²⁸⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

²⁹⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

²⁹¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132–3.

²⁹² Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

²⁹³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 133.

²⁹⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

²⁹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 28.

²⁹⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 133.

²⁹⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

²⁹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27.

²⁹⁹ Philo, “On the Confusion of Tongues,” in *The Works of Philo*, Vol. 2 (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1854), 35, 38, <https://archive.org/stream/workphilou02philuoft#page/38/mode/2up>.

³⁰⁰ “Enuma Elish” (The Creation Epic) in *ANET*, 3:130–9, 66.

³⁰¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

³⁰² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 64–5.

³⁰³ Walton, *Genesis*, 129–30.

God does not exist in isolation but as one in close community with others.³⁰⁴ Thus, the plural “us” may represent the creator and the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:1–2).³⁰⁵ Aside from the OT, the name *Elohim* (the plural form of “God”) always refers to multiple gods in the ANE, yet the singular “*El*” occurs as the name of one of the highest gods. Concerning the God of Israel, “*Elohim*” appears 2,372 times, while the singular “*El*” appears only fifty-seven times, mostly in the book of Job.³⁰⁶ This linguistic evidence points to the possibility of several persons within the creator.³⁰⁷

The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 80–120 AD), specifically identifies the Son as the one to whom the creator spoke in Gen 1:26.³⁰⁸ Although Christians have traditionally adopted this interpretation, scholars unite in agreement that the author of Genesis would never have intended to convey that to his original audience.³⁰⁹ The other cases where the OT refers to God with a plural pronoun do not seem to refer to various persons within the Godhead (Gen 3:22–24;³¹⁰ Gen 11:7; Isa 6:6–8).³¹¹

Even within the New Testament (NT), no text specifically states that the plural in Gen 1:26 refers to the Trinity.³¹² On the other hand, the NT does provide hints of plurality within God, such as John 1:1–3, 14; Col 1:15–19; and Heb 1:2.³¹³ List the positive and negative aspects of this view on p. 28.

Finally, there are grammatical and rhetorical issues to consider as our fourth, fifth, and sixth options.³¹⁴ Genesis 1:26; Gen 11:7; and Isa 6:8 could all be cases where the authors employed a majestic plural,³¹⁵ as if the Queen of England had stated, “We are not amused.” Yet, a prominent Hebrew scholar observed that plurals of majesty are never used with verbs.³¹⁶ Other possibilities include linguistic agreement with *Elohim*, the plural name of God,³¹⁷ or that the Lord was talking to himself for encouragement.³¹⁸ Since none of these occur regularly in the OT, most scholars easily dismiss the grammatical and rhetorical categories.³¹⁹ List the support for and against each of these possibilities on p. 28.

Consequently, two strong contenders remain. When viewed through the lens of the understanding of the original audience, the most likely candidate is that God was speaking to his heavenly court. In the OT, angels did occasionally appear as men (Gen 18:1–3; Gen 19:1). Note that when God created in Gen 1:27, the verb “created” is singular. From that vantage point, this comprises a divine proclamation to the heavenly court.³²⁰

³⁰⁴Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 12.

³⁰⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³⁰⁶Terence E. Fretheim, “אֱלֹהִים” (*elohim*), *NIDOTTE* 1:405.

³⁰⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³⁰⁸Kirsopp Lake, trans., *The Epistle of Barnabas*, in *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: MacMillan, 1912), 6.12, <https://archive.org/stream/theapostolicfath00unknuoft#page/360/mode/2up>.

³⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27.

³¹⁰The plural here may allude to the presence of the cherubim.

³¹¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 64.

³¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 64.

³¹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 133.

³¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 28.

³¹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 28.

³¹⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 128.

³²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 28.

On the other hand, Moses was likely capable of grasping the concept of plurality within unity. Although the OT never explicitly mentions the Trinity, one cannot dismiss the many clues within its pages (e.g. Ps 2; Dan 10:4–9; Rev 1:12–17). Certainly Gen 1:1–2 cites the Holy Spirit as present during the creation of the cosmos. These hints awaited the fullness of time to be revealed (Gal 4:4–6).³²¹

Read Gen 1:26. Cite the arguments for and against each of the options for “us” listed below:

- reflects Ancient Near Eastern gods (p. 26)

positives

negatives

- God’s heavenly court (p. 26)

positives

negatives

- more than one person within God (p. 27)

Positives

negatives

- plural of majesty (p. 27)

positives

negatives

- agrees with plural *Elohim* (p. 27)

positives

negatives

- God speaking to himself (p. 27)

positives

negatives

Which one of these best fits the ANE context of the passage? How does the NT affect the way we understand the plural pronoun?

³²¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 134.

Equality with God

2) **Phil 2:5–6:** Philippians 2:5–11 generates more discussion among scholars than virtually any other passage in the Bible.³²² These verses contain one of the most beloved and exalted descriptions of Christ in Paul’s letters.³²³ The apostle depicted the Son of God from his preexistence to his time on earth,³²⁴ shedding important light on the identity of “us” in Gen 1:26. Paul then detailed Christ’s status after the incarnation, including the future submission of all of creation to him.³²⁵

Verse 5 provides a critical transition, for it enables us to understand the frame of reference for interpreting the hymn which follows.³²⁶ After his charge to the church in Phil 2:2–4, Paul emphatically stated,³²⁷ “This think among yourselves which [was] also in Christ Jesus.”³²⁸ Christians must develop the same attitudes exhibited by our Lord in our dealings with each other,³²⁹ not “selfish ambition” and “conceit.”³³⁰

Most modern scholars view Phil 2:6–11 as a preexistent hymn which Paul inserted into his letter.³³¹ However, even those who consider this Paul’s own composition recognize its poetic rhythm and highly unusual vocabulary. Three of the words here occur nowhere else in the New Testament (NT).³³² The absence of the apostle’s usual emphasis upon the resurrection,³³³ as well as the omission of the name Jesus or Christ until Phil 2:10–11 also suggest this represents existing material used by Paul.³³⁴ This ode provides us with a glimpse of the earliest form of Christian worship, revealing what followers of Jesus believed about him even before the four gospels were written.³³⁵

Verse 6 begins with “Who being in the form of God,” pointing to the Son’s preeminence before he took on “the form of a slave.”³³⁶ Although “form” (*morphē*) appears only twice in the NT, here and in Phil 2:7,³³⁷ it is well-attested in ancient literature.³³⁸

For example, the Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) described Moses’s encounter with the burning bush (Exod 3:1–3). He wrote, “And in the middle of the flame there was seen a certain very beautiful form (*morphē*), not resembling any visible thing, a most godlike image, emitting a light more brilliant than fire, which any one might have imagined to be the image of the living God.”³³⁹

³²²Frank Thielman, *Philippians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 113.

³²³Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 192.

³²⁴Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 136.

³²⁵Thielman, *Philippians*, 109.

³²⁶Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 137.

³²⁷Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 199.

³²⁸Although this says, “This think in you” (plural), *en humin* is an idiom for “among yourselves” (*BDAG*, p. 1066).

³²⁹Thielman, *Philippians*, 113.

³³⁰Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 196.

³³¹John T. Fitzgerald, “Philippians, Epistle to the,” *ABD* 5:318–26, 323–4.

³³²Thielman, *Philippians*, 110.

³³³Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132.

³³⁴Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2004), 110.

³³⁵Thielman, *Philippians*, 109–10.

³³⁶Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 202–3.

³³⁷Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 110.

³³⁸Danker, et al., “μορφή” (*morphē*), *BDAG*, 659.

³³⁹Philo, *On the Life of Moses I* (vol. 3 of *The Works of Philo Judaeus*; trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 16, <https://archive.org/stream/workspphilouft#page/16/mode/2up>.

No English word has precisely the same meaning as *morphē*.³⁴⁰ Typically, it connotes “an outward form which completely expresses the underlying reality of the person or thing’s essential nature.”³⁴¹ Thus, one’s “form” consists of what is objectively there, rather than a subjective appearance.³⁴² Consequently, before he put on flesh, the Son of God possessed all the characteristics of God,³⁴³ including his sovereign divine majesty.³⁴⁴ Christ was equal to the Father in cosmic authority while in his pre-incarnate state. Such parity was always his. Paul did not convey that “equality with God” was something Jesus desired which he did not have.³⁴⁵

The Greek term *perichoresis* best captures the essence of the Trinity. As in a perfectly choreographed dance, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so interpenetrate one another that they possess a unified will.³⁴⁶ Dance scenes like those from a Jane Austen movie illustrate this well. A group of people moves in perfect time and placement in relation to each other, with no one member of the unit more important than another. Even so, in the Trinity, where there is one, so are the other two, without any one being greater than the others.³⁴⁷

As Augustine (354–430 AD) stated, “Believe then that the Son is equal with the Father... For if he be not equal, he is not a true Son.”³⁴⁸

A review of Philip Schaff’s massive work *The Creeds of Christendom* indicates that the currently popular notion that Jesus was subordinate to the Father by obeying him prior to his birth does not occur within orthodox Christianity. In fact, the few creeds which mentioned such submission by Christ vigorously condemned the concept:

CREED	DATE	PAGE(S)	EQUALITY/SUBORDINATION
<u>Volume II: The Greek and Latin Creeds:</u>			
Gregorius Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea	ca AD 270	24–7	“nothing created or subservient”
Lucian of Antioch	AD 300	25–8	“in personality three, but in harmony one”
First Creed of Epiphanius/Nicene Creed 1 st Formula	AD 374	33–4	“only begotten Son of God”
The Athanasian Creed	5 th Century AD	66–70	“none is greater or less than another... three persons coeternal and coequal... Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity”
<u>Volume III: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds:</u>			
The Augsburg Confession	1530	7–9	“unity of the divine essence and persons”

³⁴⁰ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 204.

³⁴¹ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 140.

³⁴² Johannes Behm, “μορφή” (*morphē*), *TNDT* 4:742–52, 743.

³⁴³ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 114.

³⁴⁴ Behm, “μορφή” (*morphē*), *TNDT* 4:751.

³⁴⁵ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 207–8.

³⁴⁶ Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113.

³⁴⁷ William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Ed.* (ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 250.

³⁴⁸ Augustine, “Sermon 140,” in *Sermons (131–140) on Selected Lessons of the New Testament (NPNF2)* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. R. G. MacMullen; Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 1867), 5, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/PATRISTC/PNI6-13.TXT>.

CREED	DATE	PAGE(S)	EQUALITY/SUBORDINATION
The Formula of Concord	1576	179	“heresy that Father and Son have distinct essences, equal or unequal, we condemn.”
French Confession of Faith (Calvin)	1559	359–63	“same essence, equal in eternity and power”
The Belgic Confession	1561	389–95	“there is neither first nor last... the Son is equal to the Father in all things.”
Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England	1562	487–9	“of one substance, power, and eternity”
The Irish Articles of Religion	1615	528	“in unity... substance, power, and eternity”
The Westminster Confession of Faith	1647	606	“one substance, power, and eternity”
The Westminster Shorter Catechism	1647	677	“same substance, equal in power and glory”
Methodist Articles of Religion	1784	807	“in unity of this Godhead, there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity”
Evangelical Free Church of Geneva	1848	781–2	“born from a virgin... has been able to obey God in a perfect way”
Articles of Religion of the Reformed Episcopal Church	1875	814–5	“in unity of this Godhead, there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity”
The Second Helvetic Confession	1566	835	“in order, one going before another, yet without any inequality”
Presbyterian Church of England Articles of Faith	1890	916	“[Christ] at the right hand of God... clothed with authority and power as Lord over all”
American Congregational Statement of Doctrine	1883	914	“of one substance with the Father... worshiped and glorified”
Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith	1902	922	“one in substance, equal in power and glory”
The Basis of Union of the United Church of Canada	1925	935–6	“same substance, equal in power and glory... express image of the Father’s person” ³⁴⁹
Orthodox-Reformed Statement on the Holy Trinity	1992		“conjoined in all their distinctiveness, for the entire and undivided Godhead resides in each Person, and each Person dwells in or inheres in the Other; so that the whole of one Person is imaged in the whole of the Other”

Equally difficult to grapple with is the meaning of the phrase “He did not consider being equal with God *harpagmon*.” Only here in the NT does this word appear.³⁵⁰ In Greco-Roman literature, where it rarely occurs, it means “robbery,” which does not fit the context of the passage.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, 3 Vols.* (rev David S. Schaff; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1931), <https://archive.org/details/bibliothecasymb020scha>.

³⁵⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 115.

³⁵¹Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 205.

However, this word is synonymous with *harpagma*, which occurs much more frequently.³⁵² That term refers to “taking advantage of a thing which one already possesses,” instead of meaning “grasping at something which one does not have.”³⁵³ Contrary to what one would expect of a sovereign Lord, Jesus did not regard his equality with God as a right to utilize while he lived on earth.³⁵⁴

The 4th century bishop Eusebius employed *harpagmon* and *harpagma* synonymously.³⁵⁵ According to him, when it came to the prospect of suffering torture for their faith, “Some, shrinking from the trial, rather than be taken and fall into the hands of their enemies, threw themselves from lofty houses, considering death [by suicide] advantageous (*harpagma*) to the cruelty of the impious.”³⁵⁶

Eusebius noted that the Apostle Peter considered death on a cross to his advantage (*harpagmon*) because of the hope of salvation.³⁵⁷ These martyrs considered death a beneficial opportunity.³⁵⁸ In addition, Eusebius recounted a proclamation made by Constantine to those who had been exiled, permitting them to return if they considered it to their benefit (*harpagma*).³⁵⁹

Philippians 2:6 uses the same sense of *harpagmon* as “an advantage to be seized.”³⁶⁰ Despite his equality with the Father, Jesus chose not to exploit his position but to unselfishly give himself.³⁶¹ Consequently, the best translation of this phrase is, “He did not regard being equal with God as something to use for his own advantage.” The issue is not whether Christ possessed equality with God, but whether he used it for his own benefit (Rom 15:3).³⁶²

People living in the Roman colony of Philippi would have expected grasping and seizing by a lordly power.³⁶³ This city was comprised largely of military veterans after the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC. Paul did not command the recipients of this letter to give up the Roman citizenship they had earned to embrace their heavenly allegiance (Phil 3:20).³⁶⁴ Christ did not lose his heavenly identity when he became human.³⁶⁵ Yet, he chose not to pursue his right to satisfy his own desires ahead of tending to the needs of others (Phil 2:4).³⁶⁶

a) Read Phil 2:5–6. What was Jesus’s status before he became human? What evidence supports that view? How can you emulate Christ?

³⁵² Thielman, *Philippians*, 116.

³⁵³ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 134.

³⁵⁴ W. Foerster, “ἡρπαγμός” (*harpagmos*), *TDNT* 1:473–4, 474.

³⁵⁵ Thielman, *Philippians*, 116.

³⁵⁶ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; vol. 1 of *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine (NPNF2)*; Edinburgh; London; New York: T & T Clark, 1890), 8.12.2, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.xiii.xiii.html>.

³⁵⁷ Eusebius, *Commentary on Luke*, 6. Cited by Thielman.

³⁵⁸ Thielman, *Philippians*, 116.

³⁵⁹ Eusebius, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; vol. 1 of *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine (NPNF2)*; trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 31.2, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iv.vi.ii.xxxi.html>.

³⁶⁰ Roy W. Hoover, “*Harpagmos* Enigma: A Philological Solution,” *HTR* 64, no. 1 (January 1971): 95–119, 109, 117, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/Harpagmos8.jpg>, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/Harpagmos13.jpg>.

³⁶¹ Thielman, *Philippians*, 116.

³⁶² Thielman, *Philippians*, 118.

³⁶³ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

³⁶⁴ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 143.

³⁶⁵ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 143.

³⁶⁶ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

Taking the Form of a Slave

b) Phil 2:7: The Son’s greatest declaration of his fundamental equality with the Father came when “himself he emptied.”³⁶⁷ By placing “himself” first for emphasis and using an active verb, the hymn writer strongly suggested the voluntary nature of this deed accomplished by the preexistent Son. This was not something the Father ordered Christ to do.³⁶⁸ Every other New Testament occurrence of “empty” (*kenoō*) as a verb involves nullifying a thing to make it of no account (Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 1 Cor 9:15; 2 Cor 9:3).³⁶⁹ Jesus “emptied himself” of what would have prevented him from becoming fully human.³⁷⁰ This involved divesting himself of his sacred privileges and prestige.³⁷¹

However, the metaphor does not convey a loss of divine attributes. That he “emptied himself” poetically states that Christ poured himself out completely for the benefit of others, becoming poor that he might make many rich (2 Cor 8:9). The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses this verb to describe Rebekah “pouring out” water into a trough for the benefit of thirsty camels (Gen 24:20).³⁷²

The Son accomplished this metaphorical emptying of himself by “taking the form (*morphē*) of a slave” and “becoming in human (*anthrōpos*) likeness” (Cf. Gen 1:26–27).³⁷³ Note that the term *doulos*, which some Bible versions translate as “servant,” instead means “slave” (e.g. Rom 1:1, where Paul describes himself as “a slave of Christ Jesus”).³⁷⁴ Unlike other synonyms for “slave” in Greek, *doulos* stresses the total dependency of a slave upon his master. No term provides greater contrast to “God” or “Lord.”³⁷⁵

In a status-conscious city like Philippi,³⁷⁶ the notion that Christ chose to strip off his divine privileges to put on the qualities of a man in subjugation would evoke shock.³⁷⁷ As living property, slaves received no rights.³⁷⁸ For example, the first century AD author Martial admonished a slave-owner with these words, “You say the hare is not sufficiently cooked, and call for a whip. You would rather cut up your cook, Rufus, than your hare.”³⁷⁹

In some respects, Greco-Roman slavery differed substantially from that practiced in the United States and the United Kingdom. Roman slaves worked as physicians, teachers, authors, bailiffs, and sea captains, in addition to performing manual labor. Legislation provided for most slaves to be set free by age 30, making enslavement a temporary condition.³⁸⁰ Nevertheless, by “taking the form of a slave” the Son adopted the essential quality of a slave.³⁸¹ He temporarily

³⁶⁷ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

³⁶⁸ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 116–7.

³⁶⁹ Thielman, *Philippians*, 117.

³⁷⁰ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 145.

³⁷¹ Danker, et al., “κενόω” (*kenoō*), *BDAG*, 539.

³⁷² Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 117.

³⁷³ *Anthrōpos* can refer to a person of either gender, as in *BDAG* p. 81.

³⁷⁴ Danker, et al., “δοῦλος” (*doulos*), *BDAG*, 259–60.

³⁷⁵ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “δοῦλος” (*doulos*), *TDNT*, 2:261–80, 261, 278.

³⁷⁶ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 143.

³⁷⁷ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 204.

³⁷⁸ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 143.

³⁷⁹ Martial, *Epigrams* (revised by Roger Pearse; London: Bohn, 2008), 3.94,

<https://archive.org/stream/epigramsofmarti00mart#page/174/mode/2up>.

³⁸⁰ S. Scott Bartchy, “Slavery: New Testament,” *ABD* 6:65–73, 69–70.

³⁸¹ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 211.

put himself completely at the will of another.³⁸² This position of extreme abasement diametrically contrasted with Christ's preexistent condition.³⁸³

Greco-Roman gentiles accepted the concept of a god putting on human form, for Zeus and Hermes cavorted as people. Yet, their gods would never choose enslavement. That would upend their hierarchical society and demolish their code of honor and shame.³⁸⁴

A second aspect of the Son's "emptying himself" is that "in the likeness of human beings he was born."³⁸⁵ By renouncing the "form of God" and taking on the "form of a slave," Christ became a man in appearance, thought, and emotion. Only in his consistent obedience to the will of God did he differ from other people (Luke 2:51–52; Heb 4:15).³⁸⁶

The 12th century theologian Bernard of Clairvaux noted, "We behold Light withholding its rays, the Word an infant, the Living Water athirst, him who is the Bread of Heaven suffering hunger. Attend and see how Omnipotence is ruled, Wisdom instructed, Power sustained; the God who rejoices the angels is become a babe at the breast; he who consoles the afflicted lies weeping in a manger."³⁸⁷

Various heresies arose to try to explain this mystery, which tended to emphasize either Jesus's humanity or his deity while understating the other. Consequently, the emperor called church leaders to the Council of Chalcedon in 451. They wrote this confession: "We all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, at once complete in Godhood and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man...acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, or without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person."³⁸⁸

Since that church council, the church universal has affirmed that the eternal Son of God took on our humanity, resulting in both a human and a divine nature within one body.³⁸⁹

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote:

"If Christ had remained only in the divine nature, he would not have been in a capacity to have purchased our salvation, not from any imperfection of the divine nature, but by reason of its absolute and infinite perfection. For Christ, merely as God, was not capable of that obedience or suffering that was needful.

"The divine nature is not capable of suffering, for it is infinitely above suffering. Neither is it capable of obedience to that law which was given to man. It is as impossible that one who is only God should obey the law that was given to man, as it is that he should suffer man's punishment."³⁹⁰

Although in every way equal to the Father and the Spirit, while Jesus lived on earth, he voluntarily divested himself of those rights (John 17:1–5, 20–26).³⁹¹ The world's fastest sprinter

³⁸² Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 119.

³⁸³ J. Behm, "μορφή" (*morphē*), *TDNT* 4:750.

³⁸⁴ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 148.

³⁸⁵ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 120.

³⁸⁶ Johannes Schneider, "ομοιωμα" (*homoiōma*), *TNDT* 5:191–8, 197.

³⁸⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons of Saint Bernard on Advent and Christmas Including the Famous Treatise on the Incarnation Called "Missus Est"* (Translated by St. Mary's Convent; London: R & T Washbourne, 1909), 39, <https://archive.org/stream/sermonsofstberna00bernuoft#page/38/mode/2up>.

³⁸⁸ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language, 3rd Ed.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 111–5.

³⁸⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 321.

³⁹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption; Comprising an Outline of Church History* (New York: American Tract Society, 1816), 207–8, <https://archive.org/stream/historyofworkofr00edwa#page/208/mode/2up>.

³⁹¹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 115.

joining you in a three-legged race provides a good analogy of the incarnation: Jesus remained fully God but became functionally limited in his abilities while in his earthly body.³⁹² In Christ we see God living a fully human life,³⁹³ in addition to a person living in complete reliance upon the Father and the Spirit (John 11:40–44; Luke 4:1).³⁹⁴

Read Phil 2:7. What was the effect of Jesus’s “emptying himself?” Why was it necessary for him to be both human and divine to secure our salvation? How does reflecting upon the change in his status which Christ willingly accepted impact your relationship with him?

Obedient to the Point of Death

c) **Phil 2:8:** Concerning Christ, Paul recorded that while “in the form of God, himself he emptied” (Phil 2:5–7). Then, when “in appearance he was found as a human, he humbled himself.” In contrast to the word “likeness” (*homoioōma*), which focuses upon an essential quality of something,³⁹⁵ “appearance” (*schēma*) refers to the recognized shape or outward form in which something occurs.³⁹⁶ Christ both was and looked human (1 John 1:1–4).³⁹⁷

The King of kings came to earth and deliberately chose to abase himself,³⁹⁸ taking the lowest place.³⁹⁹ He accomplished this by “becoming obedient (*hypēkoos*) to the point of death.”⁴⁰⁰ Jesus had to learn submission by choosing to conform his will. Such an attitude did not come naturally to him (Luke 2:48–52; Heb 5:7–8). Even his death occurred due to an act of obedience, not an accident of history.⁴⁰¹ He offered himself both to the Father and to the service of humanity (Heb 10:5–7; Luke 19:10).⁴⁰²

Unlike the Greek word *doulos*, the Hebrew word translated as “slave” (*evedh*) can also mean “servant.”⁴⁰³ By becoming a slave, Christ fulfilled the role of the suffering servant of the Lord, the one whose coming Isaiah predicted seven hundred years earlier (Isa 52:13–53:12).⁴⁰⁴ In describing his impending death, Jesus spoke to his disciples in language reminiscent of Isaiah’s Servant Songs (Luke 18:31–33; Luke 22:37; Mark 10:42–45).⁴⁰⁵

³⁹²Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd Ed., 670–1.

³⁹³ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 213.

³⁹⁴ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 658.

³⁹⁵ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 215.

³⁹⁶Danker, et al., “σχῆμα” (*schēma*), *BDAG*, 981.

³⁹⁷ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 120.

³⁹⁸ Danker et al., “ταπεινω” (*tapeinoō*), *BDAG*, 990.

³⁹⁹ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 216.

⁴⁰⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

⁴⁰¹ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 148–9.

⁴⁰² Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

⁴⁰³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֶבֶד” (*evedh*), *BDB*, 713–4.

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/712/mode/2up>.

⁴⁰⁴ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 119.

⁴⁰⁵ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 212.

Furthermore, Christ took the role of a slave in washing his disciples' feet (John 13:3–17).⁴⁰⁶ Paul had previously used Isa 53:4–12 as the background for 2 Cor 5:21,⁴⁰⁷ so his gentile readers likely knew these verses from the book of Isaiah.⁴⁰⁸ Since Christ renounced his privileges and served as a slave to the point of death, surely we as his followers can regard no task as beneath our dignity.⁴⁰⁹

“Death on a cross” was the cruelest form of execution officially practiced in the Roman Empire. Government officials generally reserved it for those guilty of treason and for slaves.⁴¹⁰ Christ rejected the culturally honorable options of dying in resistance to oppression or by suicide. Instead, he allowed himself to be executed in what people considered the most shameful way to die (Matt 26:51–54).⁴¹¹ In Jewish thought, God's curse resulted in death on a cross (Deut 21:22–23).⁴¹² That their messiah would die by crucifixion was unthinkable (John 12:31–34). Gentiles considered the notion that a god would willingly perish that way absurd (1 Cor 1:23). In Greco-Roman society, those engaging in polite discourse forbade even speaking the word “cross.”⁴¹³

According to the 1st century BC philosopher Cicero:

“Even if death be threatened, we may die free men; but the executioner, and the veiling of the head, and the mere name of the gibbet, should be far removed, not only from the persons of Roman citizens—from their thoughts, and eyes, and ears. For not only the actual fact and endurance of all these things, but the bare possibility of being exposed to them—the expectation, the mere mention of them even—is unworthy of a Roman citizen and of a free man. Does not the kindness of their masters at one touch deliver our slaves from the fear of all these punishments?”⁴¹⁴

Christ's execution created a divine scandal.⁴¹⁵ The one who was equal with God surrendered to a death reserved for criminals,⁴¹⁶ a fate so terrible that honorable people refused to even mention crucifixion. However, the cross reveals God's true character and his outrageous love which he has lavished upon us (John 15:12–13).⁴¹⁷ Where such love exists, rivalry, selfishness, and arguments cannot persist (1 Cor 1:10; Phil 4:2).⁴¹⁸

Instead, God calls us to accept suffering for Jesus's sake (Phil 1:29).⁴¹⁹ The Holy Spirit transforms those experiencing genuine life in Christ into his likeness.⁴²⁰ Paul rejected a triumphal demeanor, for that contradicts Christ's attitude (1 Cor 1:25–31).⁴²¹

⁴⁰⁶ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 119.

⁴⁰⁷ J. V. Fesko, “N.T. Wright on Imputation.” *RTR* 66, no.1 Apr 2007: 2–22, 12.

⁴⁰⁸ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 212.

⁴⁰⁹ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 140.

⁴¹⁰ Thielman, *Philippians*, 119.

⁴¹¹ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 150.

⁴¹² Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122–3.

⁴¹³ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 150.

⁴¹⁴ M. Tullius Cicero, *For Rabirius on a Charge of Treason* (The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero; trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Covent Garden: Henry G. Bohn, 1856), 16,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0019%3Atext%3DRab.%20Perd.%3Achapter%3D5>.

⁴¹⁵ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 217.

⁴¹⁶ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 123.

⁴¹⁷ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

⁴¹⁸ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 149.

⁴¹⁹ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 218.

⁴²⁰ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 227.

⁴²¹ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 197.

Read Phil 2:8. Why would both Jews and gentiles be scandalized by the notion that people would worship someone who had been crucified? How can we follow Christ's example?

The Name Above Every Name

d) Phil 2:9–11: The Trinity exemplifies self-giving. Thus, both the cross and the sacrificed lamb best reveal God's character (John 8:28–29; John 12:27–33; John 1:28–29).⁴²² Since crucifixion had such negative connotations in the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures (Phil 2:8; 1 Cor 1:23–25), the only plausible explanation for the rise of Christianity is that something extraordinary happened to Jesus after his death.⁴²³

This hymn cited by Paul concludes by celebrating the unrivaled honor bestowed upon the one who abased himself and now reigns in supreme glory.⁴²⁴ For those in Philippi, where people worshiped Caesar as Lord, this passage elicited shock.⁴²⁵ While followers of Christ worship Jesus as king, all things have not yet come under his subjection.⁴²⁶ Consequently, this Scripture concerns the time in which we live. Many bible scholars call this era “the now and not yet.”

A radical shift occurs in Phil 2:9, a great reversal on several levels.⁴²⁷ To this point, Jesus has performed the action (Phil 2:5–8). From here until the end of the hymn, Christ behaves as the recipient,⁴²⁸ as he sits enthroned in the heavenly court (Ps 110:1; Matt 16:24–27; Matt 18:4).⁴²⁹ Although this hymn cites neither the resurrection nor the ascension of Jesus, the author assumes both.⁴³⁰

Paul quoted, “Therefore God super-exalted him.”⁴³¹ This action by the Father serves as the proof of Jesus's righteousness, rather than as a reward for Christ's self-abasement.⁴³² Unlike the gradual descent into humiliation, God raised his son in one dramatic act from the depths of degradation to the loftiest heights.⁴³³ As a result, Christ reigns over the universe (Acts 2:32–36; Eph 1:18–23; Heb 1:3; Heb 7:26).⁴³⁴

Consequently, he must receive the highest honor, praise, obedience, and submission from everyone (Ps 97:9). In addition, Paul gave Christians a model to follow. By being obedient even to the point of death, God shall vindicate and glorify us (Matt 10:16–39; Phil 3:20–21).⁴³⁵

⁴²² Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 156.

⁴²³ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 150.

⁴²⁴ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 107.

⁴²⁵ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 197.

⁴²⁶ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 219.

⁴²⁷ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 123.

⁴²⁸ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 151.

⁴²⁹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 123.

⁴³⁰ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 220.

⁴³¹ Danker, et al., “ὑπερυψῶω” (*hyperupsoō*), *BDAG*, 1034. This term appears nowhere else in the New Testament.

⁴³² Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 220.

⁴³³ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 125.

⁴³⁴ Georg Bertram, “ὑψῶω” (*hypsōō*) *TNDT* 8:602–14, 609.

⁴³⁵ Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 151–2.

Since he was equal with God prior to the incarnation, Christ has returned to his previous eminence (John 17:4–5).⁴³⁶ No higher place exists than that occupied by the Lord.⁴³⁷ That God “bestowed on him a name which [is] above every name” comprises one aspect of Christ’s super-exaltation.⁴³⁸ This literary repetition reinforces the extent of Jesus’s supremacy.

In the ancient world, a name not only revealed one’s inner character but also emphasized status (1 Sam 25:25; John 1:40–42; Matt 16:16–18).⁴³⁹ By receiving the name above all others, the Father gave Christ his own power and authority.⁴⁴⁰ Once again, the Son enjoys equality with the Father.⁴⁴¹ Although Paul did not overtly specify that name,⁴⁴² the Greek Old Testament translates the name Yahweh as Lord (*kyrios*), such as in Exod 3:4.⁴⁴³ Observant Jewish people regarded the divine name as too holy to speak; therefore, they substituted “Lord” for “Yahweh.”⁴⁴⁴

“Jesus is Lord” serves as the earliest Christian confession, with the term “Lord” appearing 717 times in the New Testament (Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9–10).⁴⁴⁵ Paul alluded to Isa 45:21–25 here, confirming that the name Yahweh belongs to Jesus.⁴⁴⁶ In particular, note the statement, “For I am God and there is not another” (Isa 45:22). As a result, the apostle made an astonishing pronouncement, for he asserted that we owe homage directly to the Son, rather than to the Father through the Son.⁴⁴⁷

God made this bestowal “in order that before the name of Jesus every knee might bow.”⁴⁴⁸ This refers to the historical man who came from Nazareth, instead of a cosmic nonentity.⁴⁴⁹ “To bend the knee” is an idiom meaning “to acknowledge and submit to the authority of another.”⁴⁵⁰ The one who previously obeyed fully must now be fully obeyed (Cf. Phil 2:7–8).⁴⁵¹

By citing the passage in Isaiah, Paul implied that at Christ’s return, all—those willing and unwilling—will bend the knee to him. No one shall escape from the reality of Jesus’s supremacy.⁴⁵² Some people will experience great joy, while others face shameful disgrace for resisting his rule.⁴⁵³ Everyone shall acknowledge his sovereignty at the end of time, even if they now refuse to yield their wills to his.⁴⁵⁴

This shall be true of “[those] of heaven and of earth and under the earth.” Ancient people believed in a three-part universe (Rev 5:3).⁴⁵⁵ For example, Homer wrote, “Now therefore let

⁴³⁶ Thielman, *Philippians*, 120.

⁴³⁷ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 152.

⁴³⁸ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 220–1.

⁴³⁹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 126.

⁴⁴⁰ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 225–6.

⁴⁴¹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 126.

⁴⁴² Thielman, *Philippians*, 120.

⁴⁴³ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 152.

⁴⁴⁴ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 225.

⁴⁴⁵ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 153.

⁴⁴⁶ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 222.

⁴⁴⁷ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 127.

⁴⁴⁸ Thielman, *Philippians*, 121.

⁴⁴⁹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 127.

⁴⁵⁰ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 153.

⁴⁵¹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 127.

⁴⁵² Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 153–4.

⁴⁵³ Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 188.

⁴⁵⁴ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 224.

⁴⁵⁵ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 128.

earth be witness to this, and the broad heaven above, and the down-flowing water of the Styx (the entrance to the underworld).”⁴⁵⁶ “Those of heaven” refers to angels, even those who have rebelled against the Lord’s authority (Job 1:6; Mark 1:21–26; James 2:19).⁴⁵⁷ Among those “on the earth” were the people who persecuted the church in Philippi, even Paul’s captors (Phil 1:12–13).⁴⁵⁸ The ones “under the earth” consist of those who have died (Ps 16:9–11).⁴⁵⁹ Worship will be universal (Rev 5:11–14),⁴⁶⁰ extending to all of creation (Ps 148).⁴⁶¹

“And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord.” Here the hymn reaches its apex, for everyone shall recognize “the name that is above every name” as authoritative. Christ will be installed as head of the universe, not only of the church,⁴⁶² for everyone shall see that Jesus has been resurrected. However, for those who persist in unbelief, this confession will not result in conversion (Heb 9:27–28; Rev 20:12–15).⁴⁶³ Instead, Jesus shall triumph over his foes.⁴⁶⁴ Similarly, an individual who dislikes the president still swears an oath of allegiance to the commander-in-chief when joining the military. One may not like the person but cannot deny the office belongs to him.⁴⁶⁵

All of this shall be “to the glory of God the Father.” Paradoxically, Christ’s exaltation does not displace the Father,⁴⁶⁶ who handed over his name and rule but suffered no reduction in his glory (1 Cor 8:6).⁴⁶⁷ Thus, the Incarnation redefines monotheism to include more than one person within the Godhead (Cf. Deut 6:4–5).⁴⁶⁸ Just as the Son took the role of a servant, here we see the Father doing likewise.⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, when we confess “Jesus is Lord,” we do not dishonor the Father, for this fulfills his divine plan.⁴⁷⁰

In keeping with the perfect unity of the Father and the Son, in this era of the “now and not yet,” Christ rules over all authorities, powers, and dominions. However, when all of creation has been subjected to him, Jesus shall place everything under the Father. This includes himself, “in order that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:24–28; John 13:31–32; Rev 3:21).

According to Augustine (354–430), due to the unity within the Godhead, whenever one of them is magnified, so is the other. Therefore, “When [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to...the Father, Jesus does not take the kingdom from himself; since, when he shall bring believers to the contemplation of God, even the Father, doubtless he will bring them to the

⁴⁵⁶Homer, *The Odyssey* (trans. A. T. Murray; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1919), 5.184–6,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0136%3Abook%3D5%3Acard%3D145>.

⁴⁵⁷ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Phil 2:10–1.

⁴⁵⁸ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 224–5.

⁴⁵⁹ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 155.

⁴⁶⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 128.

⁴⁶¹ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 154–5.

⁴⁶² Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 128.

⁴⁶³ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 225.

⁴⁶⁴ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 128.

⁴⁶⁵ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 154.

⁴⁶⁶ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 130.

⁴⁶⁷ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 153.

⁴⁶⁸ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 155.

⁴⁶⁹ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 153.

⁴⁷⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 130.

contemplation of Himself.”⁴⁷¹ The perfect unity within the Trinity shall remain throughout eternity.

In Roman colonial cities, public inscriptions glorified Caesar Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) as the savior of the world. The Priene calendar inscription gives the rationale for setting the emperor’s birthday as the first day of the year:⁴⁷²

“Since Providence...has set [the world] in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, and sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things...surpassing all previous benefactors and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings (*euangelion*) for the world...”⁴⁷³ In addition to denoting “good tidings,” *euangelion* also means “gospel.”⁴⁷⁴

This hymn in Phil 2 undercuts all imperial claims,⁴⁷⁵ despite Paul’s confinement in Nero’s prison when he wrote this letter (Phil 1:12–14).⁴⁷⁶ The apostle turned the notion of how one achieves honor and power on its head: the one worthy to rule over all is the one who serves all (Mark 10:42–45).⁴⁷⁷ Thus, no sacrifice we make for the cause of the gospel can be too great.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, if the Son humbled himself to the lowest place, how can those who claim to follow him quarrel and fight for social status?⁴⁷⁹

As Augustine wrote:

“What mercy could be greater, so far as we poor wretches are concerned, than that which drew the Creator of the heavens down from heaven, clothed the Maker of the earth with earthly vesture, made Him, who in eternity remains equal to His Father, equal to us in mortality, and imposed on the Lord of the universe the form of a servant, so that He, our Bread, might hunger; that He, our Fulfillment, might thirst; that He, our Strength, might be weakened; that He, our Health, might be injured; that He, our Life, might die? And all this [He did] to satisfy our hunger, to moisten our dryness, to soothe our infirmity, to wipe out our iniquity, to enkindle our charity. What greater mercy could there be than that the Creator be created, the Ruler be served, the Redeemer be sold, the Exalted be humbled and the Reviver be killed?”⁴⁸⁰

Read Phil 2:9–11. How shall Jesus be glorified? What characterizes the relationship between the Son and the Father? How does reading Phil 2:3–11 affect the way we understand the word “us” in Gen 1:26? Why would this passage have given hope to Paul’s readers in Philippi? What are the implications of this hymn for how we live?

⁴⁷¹Augustine, “On the Trinity,” in *NPNF1-03* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. Arthur West Haddan, revised by William G. T. Shedd; Edinburgh; Grand Rapids: T & T Clark; Eerdmans, 1887), 1.9, 27, <https://archive.org/stream/aselectlibrary03unknuoft#page/26/mode/2up>.

⁴⁷²Craig A. Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” *JGRChJ*, no. 1 (1 January 2000): 70, http://www.jgrchj.net/volume1/JGRChJ1-5_Evans.pdf.

⁴⁷³Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” 69, http://www.jgrchj.net/volume1/JGRChJ1-5_Evans.pdf.

⁴⁷⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “εὐαγγέλιον” (*euangelion*), *BDAG*, 402–3.

⁴⁷⁵Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 156.

⁴⁷⁶Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 222–3.

⁴⁷⁷Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 156.

⁴⁷⁸Thielman, *Philippians*, 128.

⁴⁷⁹Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 156.

⁴⁸⁰Augustine, “Sermon 207,” in *Saint Augustine: Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons* (trans. Sister Mary Sarch Muldowney; FC; New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959), 89–92, <https://archive.org/stream/fathersofthechur009512mbp#page/n111/mode/2up>.

Made in the Image of God

3) Gen 1:26 continued: A second major issue in this verse concerns the nature of the image (*tselem*) of God, and how that term relates to the “likeness” (*demuth*) of God.⁴⁸¹ Unlike other creatures, which God created “according to their kind” (*min*) (Gen 1:21, 24–25), he made humanity (*adam*) in his own image. Although this concept forms the basis for understanding Genesis and the rest of Scripture,⁴⁸² the phrase “image of God” appears in only two other verses in the Old Testament (OT) (Gen 1:27 (2x); Gen 9:6).⁴⁸³

Complicating matters, this Hebrew word for “image” occurs only seventeen times in the entire OT. Ten of those refer to physical models or idols (e.g. 1 Sam 6:4–5; Ezek 16:17; Num 33:51–52).⁴⁸⁴ Of these, only the images in 1 Samuel remain free from condemnation as illicit representations.⁴⁸⁵ Two uses of “image” in the Psalms compare human existence to a fleeting shadow (Ps 39:6; Ps 73:20).⁴⁸⁶

In the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) perspective, the gods created the world for their own enjoyment. They made humanity as an afterthought to relieve them from the drudgery of doing their own labor.⁴⁸⁷ According to Enuma Elish, the gods tired of working to obtain food, so they came up with a plan to create others to feed them. The hero Marduk announced, “Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage. ‘Man’ shall be his name. Truly, savage man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!” Then Marduk slew the god who had incited the cosmic sea monster to rebel. The god Ea mixed clay with Kingu’s blood to fashion people to work as their slaves.⁴⁸⁸

Throughout the ANE, only a king or high-ranking official could be designated as “the image of God.”⁴⁸⁹ For example, Egyptians revered pharaohs as both kings and the incarnation of a god. A Pyramid Text states, “For the King is a great power who has power over the other powers; the king is a sacred image, the most sacred of the sacred images of the Great One. And whomsoever he finds in his way, him he devours piecemeal...Thousands serve him, hundreds make offerings for him.”⁴⁹⁰

One man wrote, “To the king, my lord, and my sun god say, ‘Thus Biridiya, the true servant of the king. At the feet of the king, my lord, and my sun god, seven times and seven times I fall.’”⁴⁹¹ According to an Akkadian proverb, “[Humanity] is the shadow of a god, a slave is the shadow of a man; but the king is like the (very) image of a god.”⁴⁹²

While in Egypt, Israel’s overlords taught Moses’s original readers that they existed solely to work for the pharaoh. In contrast, Gen 1:26 uses royal language to describe all humanity, from the greatest king to the lowliest slave.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1–17, 134.

⁴⁸²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 65.

⁴⁸³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1–17, 134.

⁴⁸⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

⁴⁸⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1–17, 135.

⁴⁸⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

⁴⁸⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 1:31.

⁴⁸⁸“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 6.1–36, 68.

⁴⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1–17, 135.

⁴⁹⁰Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), lines 407–8, 82.

⁴⁹¹W. F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, trans., “The Amarna Letters, RA XIX,” in *ANET*, lines 1–10, 485.

⁴⁹²Robert F. Pfeiffer, trans., “Akkadian Proverbs and Counsels,” in *ANET*, 5.3, 426.

⁴⁹³Phyllis A. Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *HTR* 74, no. 2: 129–59, 144,

People living in the ANE believed that an image carried the essential nature of what it personified. An Egyptian stele states:

“[Ptah, the Creator-god,] fashioned the gods...He installed the gods in their holy places, he made their offerings to flourish, he equipped their holy places. He made likenesses of their bodies to the satisfaction of their hearts. Then the gods entered into their bodies of every wood and every stone and every metal.”⁴⁹⁴

Consequently, those worshiping an idol considered their activity equivalent to adoration of the god whom the idol portrayed. While a statue may not have looked exactly like the god, it could accomplish the deity’s work.⁴⁹⁵ Similarly, the Hebrew concept of “image” (*tselem*) does not necessarily specify an exact physical likeness.⁴⁹⁶

In Mesopotamia, a son could be born in the image of his father, but only a god could be created in the image of the gods.⁴⁹⁷ As a result, ancient rulers set up images of themselves in distant parts of their realms to represent their authority. That explains why Nebuchadnezzar II expressed such outrage when three Hebrew men refused to bow in worship before the statue he erected after his dream (Dan 2:31–45; Dan 3:1, 8–15).⁴⁹⁸

The Assyrian emperor Shalmaneser III recorded his victories on a black obelisk, noting that after defeating the people of Hattina and installing a new ruler, “I fashioned a heroic image of my royal personage; I had it set up in...his royal city, in the house of his gods.”⁴⁹⁹ A new god ruled over the temple and the city.

A phenomenal example of this concept appears in Abu Simbel, Egypt. Rameses II had this temple complex carved out of a cliff side along his border with Nubia to display his power. It depicts his victory over the Hittites at Kadesh. Four images of gods—including Rameses the Great himself—sit at the back of the largest temple. On his birthday and coronation day, which are conveniently six months apart, a ray of light shines to the back of the temple, illuminating three of the four idols. Ptah, the god of darkness, remains unlit.⁵⁰⁰

“According to our likeness (*demuth*)” more precisely defines the meaning of “the image of God.”⁵⁰¹ Most scholars assert that this phrase affirms that some distinctions exist between the creator and humanity,⁵⁰² just as Seth could not have been completely identical to his father (Gen 5:3).⁵⁰³ The word “likeness” occurs three times in Ezek 1:26.⁵⁰⁴ Notably, the prophet did not say

<http://www.bhporter.com/Porter%20PDF%20Files/male%20and%20female%20he%20created%20them%20Gne%201%2027%20in%20the%20context%20of%20the%20priestly%20account%20of%20creation.pdf>.

⁴⁹⁴James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 46, <https://archive.org/stream/developmentofrel100brea#page/46/mode/2up>.

⁴⁹⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

⁴⁹⁶Swanson, “*צֶלֶם*” (*tselem*), *DBLSDH*, 7512.

⁴⁹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

⁴⁹⁸Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 67.

⁴⁹⁹Daniel David Luckenbill, ed., *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia (ARAB): Historical Records of Assyria from the Earliest Times to Sargon, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1926), 1:208–9, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria01/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria01#page/n223/mode/2up.

⁵⁰⁰History Channel, “Rameses’ Temple at Abu Simbel,” <http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/ancient-egypt/videos/ramses-temple-at-abu-simbel>. This link is for a three-minute video.

⁵⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

⁵⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 135–6.

⁵⁰³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–30.

⁵⁰⁴Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*דְּמוּת*” (*demuth*), *BDB*, 198, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/198/mode/2up>.

that he saw a throne or a man,⁵⁰⁵ but “something like” them.⁵⁰⁶ Thus, humanity bears great resemblance to God but does not comprise God himself.⁵⁰⁷

What makes sin so serious is that we use our God-given capacities to do things which offend the one who endows us with them.⁵⁰⁸ Yet, Moses did not define what constitutes the image or the likeness of God.⁵⁰⁹ Some commentators suspect that we read what we most value about being human into the text, leading them to abandon any attempt to explain the term.⁵¹⁰

Other theologians have been more obliging. They suggest several major categories. The first involves mental and spiritual capacities, such as the ability to reason and to determine a proper course of action, personality, intelligence, self-awareness,⁵¹¹ moral sensitivity, a sense of beauty, creativity,⁵¹² original righteousness, the ability to enjoy fellowship with God,⁵¹³ and the potential to love others sacrificially (Eph 4:32–5:2).⁵¹⁴

Some scholars contend that the image of God consists of a physical resemblance. This interpretation comes primarily from Gen 5:3, for Adam “fathered [Seth] in his likeness, according to his image.” As noted previously, the most common meaning of “image” involves physical appearance. Since the OT stresses that God does not possess a body and is invisible, this interpretation remains problematic (Deut 4:15–16).⁵¹⁵ On the other hand, the Lord describes himself as having eyes and ears to communicate his awareness of the plight of the afflicted (Ps 94:9).⁵¹⁶

To focus upon any one aspect of humanity when seeking to define God’s image is inadequate. Since people function as a unity of body and soul, we cannot elevate one aspect of the Lord’s likeness over the others.⁵¹⁷ As Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted, “If the creator wishes to create the creator’s own image, then the creator must create it free. And only such an image, in its freedom, would fully praise God, would fully proclaim God’s glory as creator.”⁵¹⁸

As redeemed people, we seek to become more fully conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:4–11).⁵¹⁹ Nevertheless, even those without Christ continue to bear God’s image (James 3:8–9). According to the 13th century theologian Thomas Aquinas, “The image of God abides ever in the soul; ‘whether this image of God be so obsolete,’ as it were clouded, ‘as almost to amount to nothing,’ as in those who have not the use of reason; ‘or obscured and disfigured,’ as in sinners; or ‘clear and beautiful,’ as in the just.”⁵²⁰

Even John Calvin, who emphasized the frightful deformity of humanity,⁵²¹ wrote this:

⁵⁰⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 136.

⁵⁰⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

⁵⁰⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 66.

⁵⁰⁸ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 70–2.

⁵⁰⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 137.

⁵¹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

⁵¹¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–30.

⁵¹² Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 70–2.

⁵¹³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 137.

⁵¹⁴ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 29.

⁵¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 30.

⁵¹⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 65.

⁵¹⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 137.

⁵¹⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 61.

⁵¹⁹ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 24.

⁵²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; New York: Benziger, 1947), 1.93.8, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP093.html#FPQ93OUTP1>.

⁵²¹ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 43.

“Scripture...tells us that we are not to look to what men in themselves deserve, but to attend to the image of God, which exists in all, and to which we owe all honor and love. But in those who are of the household of faith, the same rule is to be more carefully observed...as that image is renewed and restored in them by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, whoever be the man that is presented to you as needing your assistance, you have no ground for declining to give it to him.”⁵²²

Thus, the image of God remains inseparable from humanity regardless of the way one lives. We do not merely bear the likeness of our creator; we are the image of God.⁵²³ Every person—no matter how marred that image may be—must be treated with respect. Each human life is sacred. Murder is an affront to our creator, for it destroys God’s image (Gen 9:5–6).⁵²⁴

That the Son of God came to us in flesh enables us to comprehend more fully what it means to be the image of God: it is to be like Jesus.⁵²⁵ Furthermore, as those in whom the Spirit of God resides, we can grow more fully into Christ’s image (Eph 4:11–16, 22–24; Col 3:12–15). As we develop character like Jesus’s, we better reflect God’s image (Col 1:15).⁵²⁶

In the ANE, the image of God applied to the king primarily in terms of his function and his presence.⁵²⁷ Consequently, in recent years the dominant view among scholars understands the “image of God” in Genesis 1 in terms of exercising dominion over the world, ruling as God’s representatives on earth.⁵²⁸ Even as emperors placed statues of themselves in the temples of their under-lords, so God made Adam and Eve in his image and placed them on earth to signify that the Lord rules the planet.⁵²⁹ Given the ANE context, this view has the greatest merit for defining the divine image.

For example, one pharaoh wrote this to his son:⁵³⁰
“Well directed are *men, the cattle of the god*. He made heaven and earth according to their desire, and he repelled the water monster. He made the breath of life [for] their nostrils. *They who have issued from his body are his images*. He arises in heaven according to their desire. He made for them plants, animals, fowl, and fish to feed them. He slew his enemies and injured [even] his [own] children because they thought of making rebellion. He makes the light of day according to their desire, and he sails by in order to see them. He has erected a shrine around about them, and when they weep, he hears.⁵³¹

Note the depiction of commoners as the cattle of the sun god. Only the rulers who issued from the sun god’s body were made in the god’s image, not in physical appearance but in their privileges and power.⁵³² In contrast, the OT view is highly democratic, for God created all people in his image.⁵³³

⁵²²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 3.7.6, 624–5, <https://archive.org/stream/institutesofchr01calv#page/624/mode/2up>.

⁵²³Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 65.

⁵²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 31–2.

⁵²⁵Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 22.

⁵²⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 131.

⁵²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 30.

⁵²⁸Ian Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis.” *TynBul* 46, no. 2 (November 1995): 315–36, 317–19, http://tyndalehouse.com/tyndbul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

⁵²⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 82.

⁵³⁰James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, 3rd Ed. (ANET)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 414.

⁵³¹John A. Wilson, trans., “The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re,” in *ANET*, lines 131–5, 417, Italics mine.

⁵³²Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

⁵³³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 66.

a) **Read Gen 1:26.** In what way did the Hebrew view of humanity differ from that of the nations around them? Taking the ANE context into account, how would you define “the image of God”? How does recognizing the image of God in other people affect the way you treat them?

Stewards of the Earth

b) **Gen 1:26 cont.:** Concerning humanity—the ones made in his image—God said, “And let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over the beasts of all the earth and over all of the creeping things which creep about on the earth.” In Akkadian, a related Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) language, the word “rule” means to guide or drive animals. Thus, this term connotes exercising dominion by caring for creation.⁵³⁴

Typically, the Hebrew verb “rule” (*radhah*) applies to human relationships (Lev 25:43; 1 Ki 4:24) or nations (Ps 72:8–14).⁵³⁵ It implies protection and care for those under one’s dominion.⁵³⁶ Within Israel, the Lord condemned rulers whom he compared to shepherds abusing their flocks (Ezek 34:1–4, 10).⁵³⁷

Regarding just dominion, an Egyptian pharaoh wrote this to his son: “Foster thy younger generation, that the residence city may love thee, and increase thy adherents with *recruits*. Behold, thy citizenry is full of new growing (boys). It is twenty years that the younger generation is happy following its heart, (and then) *recruits* [*come*] *forth anew*... Make thy officials great, advance thy [*soldiers*], increase the younger generation of thy [follow]ing, provided with *property*, endowed with fields, and rewarded with cattle.”⁵³⁸

Our commission and empowerment to govern creation comprises a significant aspect of our likeness to God.⁵³⁹ Far greater than the ANE view of humanity as slaves of the gods, the Lord made us to serve as creators and laborers with him to promote the flourishing of the world.⁵⁴⁰ Compassion must characterize our dominion, not exploitation (Prov 12:10). Even in Eden, the ones created as lords of all served the garden (Gen 2:15).⁵⁴¹

As representatives of the Lord,⁵⁴² he calls us to manage the earth for its true owner (Ps 24:1–2).⁵⁴³ Freedom to rule involves being bound to those over whom we exercise dominion, for

⁵³⁴ Philip J. Nel, “הָרָדָה” (*radhah*), *NIDOTTE*, 1056.

⁵³⁵ H.-J. Zobel, “הָרָדָה” (*radhah*), *TDOT* 13:331–6, 331.

⁵³⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 137–8.

⁵³⁷ Zobel, “הָרָדָה” (*radhah*), *TDOT* 13:333.

⁵³⁸ Wilson, trans., “The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re,” in *ANET*, 59–61, 415. Italics original.

⁵³⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 66.

⁵⁴⁰ Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture After Genetic Science*, loc. 2945 of 5792.

⁵⁴¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138.

⁵⁴² Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis,” 317–9,

http://tyndalehouse.com/tyndul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

⁵⁴³ Douglas J. Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” *JETS* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 449–88, 478, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

when we care for creation, it cares for us.⁵⁴⁴ Therefore, believers must seek the redemption of not only people but of our environment and all who dwell within it.⁵⁴⁵

Read Gen 1:26. How do you fulfill God’s mandate to rule over all the creatures of the earth? What steps can you take to improve the way you care for our planet?

Male and Female He Created Them

c) **Gen 1:27:** Three brief sentences define the most compelling aspects of human existence.⁵⁴⁶ In a shift from poetic narrative, here we read the first true poetry in the Bible. This verse highlights the unique standing of humanity in God’s creation.⁵⁴⁷

“And God created humanity (*adam*) in his image. In the image of God, he created it.⁵⁴⁸ Male and female, he created them.” The verb “created” (*bara*) is singular, contrary to the “us” of Gen 1:26. This supports the view that the Lord had been speaking to his heavenly council regarding his plans to fabricate people.⁵⁴⁹ Here *adam* refers to all of humanity,⁵⁵⁰ in contrast to a male person (*zakhar*).⁵⁵¹ It appears that the first usage of “Adam” as a personal name does not occur until Gen 3:17.⁵⁵²

Moses wrote, “Male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 characterizes humanity by sexual differentiation. Unlike the animals, which God created in various species and kinds (*min*), he described people in terms of gender. Not until the flood narrative did the Lord portray creatures as male and female (Gen 6:19).⁵⁵³

Therefore, this verse affirms that God created both men and women in his image to rule over creation, even though sexual identity and function remain foreign to the Trinity. Our sexuality comes from God as a gift, rather than an accident of nature or a mere biological phenomenon. Indeed, the Lord’s next words blessed human fertility (Gen 1:28).⁵⁵⁴ Since neither gender comprises all of humanity, men and women need interactions with each other.⁵⁵⁵ God created us as men and women. Therefore, he designed us to experience community across gender

⁵⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 66.

⁵⁴⁵ Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 474, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁵⁴⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 32.

⁵⁴⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁵⁴⁸ The pronoun here is third person masculine singular, which can mean either “it” or “him.”

⁵⁴⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138.

⁵⁵⁰ Gesenius, *GKC*, 402, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/402/mode/2up>.

⁵⁵¹ Holladay, “זָכָר” (*zakhar*), *CHALOT*, 89, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/270/mode/2up>.

⁵⁵² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אָדָם” (*adam*), *BDB*, 9, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/8/mode/2up>.

⁵⁵³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138.

⁵⁵⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138–9.

⁵⁵⁵ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 97.

lines (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:11–12). Only then can we express all that it means to be fully human,⁵⁵⁶ whether we marry or remain single.

Read Gen 1:26–27. Why is it significant that God created all of humanity to rule over his creation? If your family had been enslaved for generations, believing that the sole reason for your existence was to serve the god Pharaoh, how would learning that you had been created in the image of the creator of the universe affect your view of yourself? How do you interact across gender lines?

The Blessing of Fruitfulness

d) Gen 1:28: This text sits at the heart of western religious tradition concerning humanity’s place in our world.⁵⁵⁷ It states, “And God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and become numerous and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the heavens, and over all the living things which move about on the land.’” People who do not follow Christ remain in the image of God (Gen 1:26). This enables them to retain some glimmers of truth in their conception of God and of humanity.⁵⁵⁸

An Akkadian text asserts that the formation of the earth and of people were divine processes:

“When the god Anu created heaven, [when] the god [of waters] created the...ocean, his dwelling, the god Ea pinched off a piece of clay in the...ocean, created the [brick god] for the restoration of [temples], created the reed marsh and the forest for the work of their construction, created the gods...to be the completers of their construction work, created mountains and oceans for everything...[created] the abundant products [of mountain and ocean] to be offerings... created the deities...to be presenters of offerings, created the god Kusug, high priest of the great gods, to be the one who completes their rites and ceremonies, created the king to be the provider ...*created men to be the makers.*⁵⁵⁹

However, Gen 1 differs from the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) conception of the world by asserting that only one God ultimately wields power in the universe. Furthermore, he granted jurisdiction to people made in his image, rather than to lesser gods.⁵⁶⁰ The Lord commissioned Adam and Eve to expand Eden until paradise covers the whole earth, so that everyone could see that the Lord rules through the work of his images (Eph 3:8–10).⁵⁶¹ By procreating, they would create additional images of God to fill the earth, God’s temple (Isa 66:1).⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83

⁵⁵⁷ Theodore Hiebert, “Rethinking Dominion Theology” *Direction* 25, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 16–25, 17, <http://www.directionjournal.org/25/2/rethinking-dominion-theology.html>.

⁵⁵⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 88.

⁵⁵⁹ A. Sachs, trans., “Ritual for the Repair of a Temple,” in *ANET*, text c, lines 24–37, 341–2. Italics mine.

⁵⁶⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 136.

⁵⁶¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 81–2.

⁵⁶² Dennis R. Venema and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture After Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017), electronic version, loc. 3035 of 5792.

Yet humans do not possess absolute dominion. Our rule must align with God’s intentions for the earth and its creatures. He intended for us to fill the earth and rule as benevolent kings and queens (Ps 8:3–9).⁵⁶³

In the same way that God blessed the animals in Gen 1:22, he immediately granted the first humans with the ability to reproduce.⁵⁶⁴ Genesis often repeats this blessing of fruitfulness (Gen 9:1; Gen 17:2, 20; Gen 28:3; Gen 35:11; Gen 48:4). Its genealogies bear witness that it came to pass (Gen 5, Gen 9, Gen 11, Gen 25, Gen 36, Gen 46).⁵⁶⁵ Since God directly endows humanity with the means to propagate life, this undercuts all rationale for fertility cults in which people engaged in ritual sex to entreat the gods to create and sustain life.⁵⁶⁶

Given that God described reproduction as a blessing in Gen 1:28, we should understand it as a privilege, rather than a command to obey. Those who choose not to have children do not violate Scriptural obligations. The Lord gave this blessing so humanity might fill the earth. How wonderful it would be if we succeeded in utilizing our spiritual privileges as well as we have this physical one (Matt 28:18–20).⁵⁶⁷

The Lord also blessed humanity with the ability to “subdue the earth” and “have dominion” over the animals. Typically, the term “to subdue” (*kavash*) refers to subjecting someone to slavery, physically assaulting a person, treading underfoot, or subjugating people with military power (Jer 34:11; Esth 7:7–8; Mic 7:19; Num 32:29). However, in this context, the word likely described creating civilizations and fostering agriculture and animal husbandry (Gen 2:5–6, 15).⁵⁶⁸

Other cultures within the ANE viewed these tasks as the prerogative of the gods and their offspring, the kings.⁵⁶⁹ For example, Sennacherib, who ruled from 705/704–681 BC, claimed: “I greatly befriended the gods of Assyria, who exalt the great gods in their shrines...[I am the] maker of Assyria, who completes its metropolis; [I am the] *subduer*...[who makes obedient] the enemies’ land, destroyer of their towns; who digs canals, opens wells, runs irrigation ditches, who brings plenty and abundance to the wide acres of Assyria, who furnishes water for irrigation to Assyria’s meadows—engineering and construction such as none had seen in Assyria in the days of old.”⁵⁷⁰ People in the ANE viewed enabling agricultural use of previously unfruitful land as one facet of subduing it.

The word translated as “have dominion” or “rule over” (*radhah*) contains the nuance of using authority which one has been granted by another (1 Ki 4:24; Ps 110:1–2). It refers to priests and administrators fulfilling their duties, kings and tribes ruling over other people, and even shepherds with their sheep.⁵⁷¹ God expected Israelite kings to uphold the welfare of their

⁵⁶³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁵⁶⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 139.

⁵⁶⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁶⁶ Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” 147, <http://www.bhporter.com/Porter%20PDF%20Files/male%20and%20female%20he%20created%20them%20Gne%201%2027%20in%20the%20context%20of%20the%20priestly%20account%20of%20creation.pdf>.

⁵⁶⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 143–4.

⁵⁶⁸ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 139–40.

⁵⁶⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 135.

⁵⁷⁰ Sennacherib, “The Temple of the New Year’s Feast,” in *ARAB*: 2:183–9, 184, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria02/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria02#page/n191/mode/2up. Italics mine.

⁵⁷¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 132.

subjects, especially the poor and weak (Ps 72:12–14; Prov 31:4–9).⁵⁷² He prohibited abuse and neglect (Ezek 34:1–10).⁵⁷³ Similarly, he calls us to rule over nature benevolently.⁵⁷⁴

Just as the Lord brought structure to the cosmos, our subduing and having dominion should bring order to the world.⁵⁷⁵ God intended Adam and Eve to expand Eden into habitable places for his glory.⁵⁷⁶

Consider the annals of Sargon II (722–705 BC):

“The site of this [new city] none among the 350 ancient princes who lived before me, who *exercised dominion* over Assyria and ruled the subjects of [the great god] Enlil, had thought of nor did they know how to settle it, nor did they think of digging its canal or setting out its orchards: to settle that city, to build its great shrines, the abodes of the great gods, and the palace for my royal abode, day and night I planned it. I gave the order and I commanded that it be built.⁵⁷⁷ Ancient Assyrians associated the exercise of dominion with bringing order to the land. As God’s image-bearers, we must fulfill the privileges of subduing and wielding dominion as the Lord did when he formed the cosmos,⁵⁷⁸ creating order from chaos and caring for the creatures he made.⁵⁷⁹ This includes domesticating and managing the animals which populate the earth.⁵⁸⁰ As the Lord’s representatives, we rule over them on God’s behalf.⁵⁸¹

Since we are made in God’s image, he has conferred upon us his dignity, entrusted us with his authority, and endowed us with the capacity to imitate him. While all of humanity bears the image of God, the presence of the Spirit greatly enhances those capabilities within those whom the Lord has redeemed.⁵⁸² As Christians, we tend to think of bringing healing to the world spiritually by extending God’s offer of salvation to others (Luke 7:44–50). However, the Lord also calls us to pursue physical healing, social justice, and environmental restoration (Luke 7:20–23; Luke 4:14–19; Rom 8:19–23).

While we wait expectantly for the ushering in of the new age, we must fully engage ourselves in the advancement of the cause of Christ. This involves pursuing the righteousness, equity, and eternal life which God intended from the beginning.⁵⁸³ If the Lord cares for creation enough to restore it in the age to come, then, surely, we who seek to align ourselves with him should nurture it as well. Nevertheless, we must remain cognizant that, although they are not in vain, our own efforts cannot bring a complete end to the groaning around us. God himself will accomplish that transformation (Ps 96).⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁷³ Walton, *Genesis*, 132.

⁵⁷⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁷⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 136.

⁵⁷⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 82.

⁵⁷⁷ Sargon II, “The Display Inscription of Salon XIV,” *ARAB* 2:39–45, Section 83, 42, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria02/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria02#page/n49/mode/2up. Italics mine.

⁵⁷⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁷⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 83.

⁵⁸⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 135.

⁵⁸¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁸² Walton, *Genesis*, 37.

⁵⁸³ Roy E. Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 115.

⁵⁸⁴ Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 460–1, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

In the meantime, we function as stewards of the cosmos which God has created for himself. We manage it for the glory of the earth's true owner.⁵⁸⁵ A key focus of biblical ethics consists of loving our neighbors as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Mark 12:28–34). The harsh realities of the ecological crises around the world force us to consider whether we can truly love our neighbors without caring for the environments in which they live.⁵⁸⁶ For example, Noah, a uniquely righteous man among his neighbors, ensured the preservation of nonhuman life (Gen 6:9; Gen 7:1–5; Prov 12:10).⁵⁸⁷

People placed an image of a god in a temple to carry out the deity's will and work.⁵⁸⁸ In keeping with this, Assurbanipal (668–626 BC) wrote, "The great gods, whose name I called upon, extolling their glory...commanded that I should exercise sovereignty [and] assigned me the task of adorning their sanctuaries."⁵⁸⁹ Similarly, Moses's original readers understood that God created Adam and Eve to serve as his ambassadors. He authorized them to fulfill his purposes by faithfully tending, guarding, and governing the earth (Gen 2:15) while displaying the Lord's glory and extending God's kingdom.⁵⁹⁰

To accomplish this cultural mandate,⁵⁹¹ God endowed Adam and Eve with his own gifts and abilities. He enabled them to function perfectly in full relationships with God and with each other as they carried out his purposes:⁵⁹² expanding the paradise in which they lived throughout the earth,⁵⁹³ until the whole world serves as God's temple.⁵⁹⁴

Read Gen 1:28. What blessing and mandate did the Lord give to Adam and Eve? How can you fulfill it today?

The Lord Provides Food

e) **Gen 1:29–30:** Here we find another contrast between Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) belief and biblical teaching. In *Enuma Elish*, the gods tired of working to obtain their own food. Then Marduk announced, "Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage, 'man' shall be his name...He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!"⁵⁹⁵

The Lord grants food to needy people. God did not create humanity to feed him (Ps 50:7–15; Amos 5:21–24).⁵⁹⁶ He preserves the ones he creates. However, humanity's dominion would

⁵⁸⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 141.

⁵⁸⁶ Moo, "Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," 461, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁵⁸⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33.

⁵⁸⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 83.

⁵⁸⁹ Assurbanipal II, "The Rassam Cylinder," *ARAB* 2:290–323, Section 768, 292, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria02/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria02#page/n299/mode/2up.

⁵⁹⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

⁵⁹¹ Per Beale, this promise of fruitful multiplying recurs in the OT fifteen times (*The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 265).

⁵⁹² Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73.

⁵⁹³ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 70.

⁵⁹⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 97–8.

⁵⁹⁵ "Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic)," in *ANET*, lines 6:5–8, 68.

⁵⁹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 136.

not include the right to eat animals until after the flood (Gen 9:3).⁵⁹⁷ At this point in Genesis, animals ate only plants, foreshadowing the day when “The cow and the bear shall graze together... and a lion with cattle shall eat straw (Isa 11:7; Isa 65:25; Hos 2:18).⁵⁹⁸

Several ANE creation myths report that people were initially allotted only vegetation for their food.⁵⁹⁹ For example, the Egyptian Hymn to Amon-Re says, “You are the sole one who made [all] that is...who made what exists, from whose eyes mankind came forth, and upon whose mouth the gods came into being. He who made herbage [for] the cattle and the fruit tree for mankind. Who made that [on which] the fish in the river may live.”⁶⁰⁰

Even after the flood, diets in the ANE were primarily vegetarian. People kept animals mainly for milk and cheese production.⁶⁰¹ Only a few centuries before Christ, if a Jewish man journeyed away from home, he was required to provide his wife with wheat or barley, legumes, olive oil, and figs or some other fruit. Grain constituted about half of one’s diet, and meat was a rare luxury (*m. Ketubbot* 5.8).

Read Gen 1:29–30. Why does this passage contradict the prevailing ANE view of humanity? How did God’s decree regarding what Adam and Eve were permitted to eat indicate that he limited their dominion of nature? What does this suggest regarding our right to exploit the natural world?

God Evaluates His Creation

f) Gen 1:31: This verse provides us with God’s evaluation of all that he created.⁶⁰² Moses wrote, “And God saw all which he had made, and behold, it was very good.” The Lord’s assessment differs from his previous statements in three ways. First, he proclaimed it “very good,” rather than “good.” While difficult to articulate in English, the expression of goodness here is a superlative.⁶⁰³ all was the very best it could be.

Moses continued, “And it was evening and morning, the sixth day.” A definite article (“the”) appears only here and on the seventh day.⁶⁰⁴ On each of the first five days, no definite article occurs before the number of each day (e.g. “a second day”). In Hebrew grammar, authors employed the word “the” (*ha*) to denote a specific person or thing.⁶⁰⁵ This likely signifies that the events of the sixth day represented the apex of the Lord’s creative acts.⁶⁰⁶

⁵⁹⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 139–40.

⁵⁹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 33–4.

⁵⁹⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 162–3.

⁶⁰⁰ John A. Wilson, trans., “A Hymn to Amon-Re,” in *ANET*, 4:3–4, 366.

⁶⁰¹ Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” *ABD* 6:1109–67, 1120.

⁶⁰² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁶⁰³ Gesenius, *GKC*, 426, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/426/mode/2up>.

⁶⁰⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 141.

⁶⁰⁵ Gesenius, *GKC*, 407, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/406/mode/2up>.

⁶⁰⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 141.

God’s character shines forth from the harmony and perfection of the heavens and the earth.⁶⁰⁷ The Egyptian Theology of Memphis makes a similar statement about the god Ptah: “Thus, all the gods were formed and his [nine major deities were] completed. Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded... And so *Ptah was satisfied*, after he had made everything, as well as all the divine order. He had formed the gods, he had made cities...he had put the gods in their shrines.”⁶⁰⁸

In contrast with biblical thought, only after creating the gods “Ptah was satisfied.” This fits with the subservient view of humanity which applied to all but the king.

Read Gen 1:31. Why would the addition of people cause God to pronounce his work the very best it could be? How does this affect the way you view yourself and others?

Blessings from the Father

3) Eph 1:3–4: Ephesians, a book which dates to Paul’s last imprisonment in 62 AD,⁶⁰⁹ reflects the height of his theological reflection. In the first chapter of this letter, the apostle gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of God concerning his plan of redemption. Paul also enumerated some of the many blessings we enjoy as God’s people.

During the Greco-Roman era, this type of introductory prayer occurs only in the New Testament (NT),⁶¹⁰ yet Paul regularly employed them in his epistles.⁶¹¹ Here the apostle praised God in a torrential list of his blessings.⁶¹² In fact, the Greek text of Eph 1:3–14 comprises one long sentence.⁶¹³ Reactions by scholars range from, “The most monstrous sentence conglomeration...that I have encountered in Greek” (Norden) to, “One is struck by the fullness of the language, its liturgical majesty, its perceptible rhythm from beginning to end” (Masson).⁶¹⁴

Ephesians explores the wonder of our salvation with a complex summary of God’s work in Christ. Indeed, the term “in Christ” appears eleven times. Nevertheless, this passage features the entire Trinity, with vv. 3–12 focusing upon the Father and the Son and vv. 13–14 upon the Spirit. Since we endeavor to explore God’s activity in eternity past, we shall end with v. 11.⁶¹⁵

Verses 3–4 provide the theme of the entire letter,⁶¹⁶ for Paul expressed adoration for Jesus as the main figure in God’s plan for all of history.⁶¹⁷ He wrote, “Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ, even as he chose us in him even before the foundation to the world to be holy and blameless before him.”

⁶⁰⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 34.

⁶⁰⁸ John A. Wilson, trans., “Theology of Memphis,” in *ANET*, lines 57–9, 5. Italics mine.

⁶⁰⁹ Victor P. Furnish, “Ephesians, Epistle to the.” *ABD* 2:535–42, 541.

⁶¹⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), 11.

⁶¹¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 43.

⁶¹² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 12.

⁶¹³ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 45.

⁶¹⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 11.

⁶¹⁵ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 44–5.

⁶¹⁶ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 45.

⁶¹⁷ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 78.

We can currently appropriate God’s blessing through the gift of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives (Ezek 36:25–27; Eph 5:18–21).⁶¹⁸ The NT focuses upon our present lives “in Christ,” rather than emphasizing getting into heaven.⁶¹⁹ Those who have been united with Christ by faith are already “seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6).⁶²⁰ This new existence transforms every aspect of our lives, affecting our behavior as individuals, our interactions with other people of faith, and even our relationships with those outside the church.⁶²¹

The age to come began with the resurrection of Christ and his enthronement at the right hand of the Father (Eph 1:19–23). Yet, powers hostile to God still lurk in the heavenly places (Eph 3:8–11; Eph 6:10–12).⁶²² We participate in this unseen reality.⁶²³

That God chooses people for himself is nothing new. He did this with Abraham and then with Israel. In both cases, he desired to bless people-groups in all the world through them (Gen 12:1–3; Deut 4:5–8; Deut 7:6–8; Isa 2:1–3; Acts 17:26–30). As those made in the Lord’s image, being chosen by God constitutes a call to reach out to and serve others.⁶²⁴

God’s character, plan, and activity make us into the people of God. Our redemption has nothing to do with any of our own qualities (Eph 2:8–10). Sending Christ for our salvation was neither an afterthought, nor a response to an unforeseen tragedy (2 Tim 1:9–10). The Lord has always purposed to draw people to himself,⁶²⁵ calling individuals to form a corporate body.⁶²⁶ Due to his nature placed within us, we are “holy” (*hagios*) and set apart, the saints of God.⁶²⁷ The life we now experience in Christ fulfills the plan which he determined in eternity past (Eph 1:7–8; Rev 13:8).⁶²⁸ While this concept of being chosen by God before birth does not occur in the Old Testament (OT), we do find it in intertestamental writings.

In this first century BC–first century AD fictional account, the patriarch Joseph meets his Egyptian wife and prays this:

“Lord God of my father Israel, the Most High and the mighty God, who quickenedst (brought to life) all things and calledst from the darkness to the light and from error to truth and from death to life, bless thou this virgin also, and quicken her, and renew her with thy holy spirit, and let her eat the bread of thy life and drink the cup of thy blessing, and number her with *thy people whom thou chocest before all things were made*, and let her enter into thy rest which thou preparedst for thine elect, and let her live in thine eternal life forever.”⁶²⁹ Joseph implored the Lord to include his wife among those chosen before birth to receive salvation.

God chose us before time—as we know it—began. Therefore, we can remain confident that our salvation depends upon his grace.⁶³⁰ Our eternal fate does not rest upon anything that we do ourselves (1 Thess 1:2–5; 1 Thess 2:13). Since this passage consists of an outburst of praise,

⁶¹⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 19–20.

⁶¹⁹ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 46.

⁶²⁰ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 254.

⁶²¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 79.

⁶²² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 21.

⁶²³ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 47.

⁶²⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 23.

⁶²⁵ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 48–9.

⁶²⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 80.

⁶²⁷ Danker, et al., “*ἅγιος*” (*hagios*), *BDAG*, 10–1. Note that all three translations fit this word.

⁶²⁸ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 254.

⁶²⁹ E. W. Brooks, trans., *Joseph and Asenath: The Confession and Prayer of Asenath, Daughter of Pentephres the Priest* (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; MacMillan, 1918), 8.9, 33, <https://archive.org/stream/josephasenathcon00broo#page/32/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

⁶³⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 81.

Paul did not attempt to answer questions concerning those whom the Lord does not include among the elect.⁶³¹

Although our salvation does not depend upon our actions, God’s people do have ethical responsibilities. We must maintain lives characterized by holiness (Rom 6:1–2; 1 Pet 1:13–16).⁶³² In the OT, the Lord required that whatever had been separated for him must have no defect (Num 6:14–16). God also demanded moral purity (Ps 17:1–5, 15).⁶³³

When we stand before the Lord, we must be blameless before him (Col 1:21–23; 2 Cor 5:9–10).⁶³⁴ However, Jesus achieved this standing on our behalf (Eph 5:25–27; 1 Cor 1:30–31). In Ephesians alone, Paul called his readers “holy ones” nine times (Eph 1:1, 15, 18; Eph 2:19; Eph 3:8, 18; Eph 4:12; Eph 5:3; and Eph 6:18), despite their obvious sin (Eph 4:25–32).⁶³⁵

a) Read Eph 1:3–4. How do we know that Christ’s sacrifice of himself to redeem humanity was not God’s “Plan B”? On what does our salvation depend? How must we live as a result?

Adopted as Sons

b) Eph 1:5-6: Scribes copied Greek manuscripts without punctuation, and no one supplied verse numbers until the 16th century. Therefore, scholars disagree whether the words “in love” refer to what precedes them in Eph 1:4 or to what follows them in v. 5. Since Paul focused upon the Lord’s action, the phrase fits best with v. 5.⁶³⁶ This results in the translation, “In love he predestined us into adoption as sons through Jesus Christ into him, according to his good pleasure and will.” All that God has done for us results from his great love (John 3:16–18).⁶³⁷

Apart from Eph 1, the verb “to predestine” (*proorizō*) occurs in the New Testament only four times (Rom 8:29–30; Acts 4:27–28; 1 Cor 2:7). It carries the sense of “decide beforehand.”⁶³⁸ God has already determined how people will respond to the events of salvation history (Jer 24:7).⁶³⁹ However, there is nothing cold and calculating about God’s election. He chose us because of his great love to be adopted as sons into the family of God (Rom 8:15–17, 23),⁶⁴⁰ even though we were once “sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:1–3).

In Greco-Roman society, a wealthy man without children could choose to adopt an heir, usually an adult male.⁶⁴¹ This person could also be a slave, a woman, an orphan, or an illegitimate child.⁶⁴² Roman law released an adopted man from the oversight of his birth father

⁶³¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 24.

⁶³² Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 255.

⁶³³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 24.

⁶³⁴ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 255.

⁶³⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 81.

⁶³⁶ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 50.

⁶³⁷ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 82.

⁶³⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 82.

⁶³⁹ Karl L. Schmidt, “προορίζω” (*proorizō*), *TNDT* 5:456.

⁶⁴⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 82.

⁶⁴¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 25.

⁶⁴² Frederick W. Knobloch, “Adoption,” *ABD* 1:76–9, 79.

and granted him all the rights of a son born into the new family.⁶⁴³ This included a new name and status.⁶⁴⁴ Women could also inherit wealth. However, civil laws placed greater restrictions upon them regarding how they could use their inheritance.⁶⁴⁵ This is likely why Paul designates Christians of both genders as “sons” (*huios*) (Gal 3:28–29).

Emperors often employed adoption to ensure a smooth succession. For example, Julius Caesar adopted Augustus, the ruler at the time of Christ’s birth. Four of the five Roman emperors in the second century AD, ascended by adoption.⁶⁴⁶

Adoption comprised an important theme in the Old Testament (OT). After God promised to make Abraham into a great nation (Gen 12:1–2), Abraham complained that one of his servants would become his heir (Gen 15:2–3).⁶⁴⁷ The people of Israel also enjoyed the status of adopted sons (Deut 7:6; Rom 9:4). In addition, the Lord vowed that he would treat David’s heir as his own son (2 Sam 7:12–16).⁶⁴⁸

According to Jubilees, a second century BC Jewish apocryphal book, this would occur: “Their souls will cleave to me and to all my commandments, and they will fulfill my commandments, and I shall be their Father and they will be my children. And they will all be called children of the living God, and every angel and every spirit will know...that these are my children, and that I am their Father in uprightness and righteousness, and that I love them.”⁶⁴⁹

Thus, election is relational. The Lord is forming for himself a family of sons and daughters in whom he takes great delight (Eph 1:18). This teaching provided great hope for those in Ephesus who had formerly relied upon astrology, magic, and the worship of Artemis to determine their fate (Acts 19:17–20, 27). Even before the world began, the God who created the universe chose them for himself and planned their future (Acts 13:48–49).⁶⁵⁰

Paul wrote that this is, “according to his good pleasure and will.” Our redemption results from the Lord’s delight in bringing people into relationship with him.⁶⁵¹ God has done this “to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he has bestowed upon us in his beloved one.” This grace consists of the Lord’s unconditional acceptance of us as his people. Due to what God has accomplished on our behalf, we respond by giving him glory.⁶⁵² By his grace, we receive salvation (2 Cor 6:1–2).⁶⁵³

“The one being loved” is how the Greek translation of the OT translates God’s nickname for Israel, Jeshurun (Deut 33:26).⁶⁵⁴ That nation initially formed the Lord’s beloved people (Isa 44:1–5).⁶⁵⁵ In the NT, the Father used this term for Jesus (Matt 3:17; Matt 17:1–5). Due to Christ

⁶⁴³Trevor Burke, “Pauline Adoption: A Sociological Approach,” *EvQ* 73, no. 2 (04/01/2001): 124, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/2001-2_119.pdf.

⁶⁴⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 82.

⁶⁴⁵Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 43.

⁶⁴⁶ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 104.

⁶⁴⁷ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 25.

⁶⁴⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 82.

⁶⁴⁹Robert Henry Charles, trans., “The Book of Jubilees, or The Little Genesis” (Edinburgh; London: Black, 1902), 1:24–5, 6–7, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofjubileesor00char#page/6/mode/2up>.

⁶⁵⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 83.

⁶⁵¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 26.

⁶⁵² Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 50.

⁶⁵³ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 257–8.

⁶⁵⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 26–7.

⁶⁵⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 84.

being God’s especially chosen beloved one, those adopted by the Lord are also his beloved ones (Rom 1:6–7).⁶⁵⁶

Read Eph 1:4–6. How did adoption in Greco-Roman society differ from that of our culture? Why did Paul describe all Christians, both men and women, as “adopted sons”? What are the implications of your adoption as a son into God’s family?

Redemption through Christ’s Blood

c) **Eph 1:7–8:** Paralleling Col 1:13–14, Paul elaborated upon our present benefits of salvation in God’s beloved one,⁶⁵⁷ writing, “In whom *we have* redemption through his blood.”⁶⁵⁸ The word he used for “redemption” (*apolutrōsis*) rarely occurs in Greco-Roman literature, except in the New Testament.⁶⁵⁹ Elsewhere in this letter, Paul described our redemption as something which shall take place in the future (Eph 1:13–14; Eph 4:30). Here he emphasized that believers currently enjoy that benefit.⁶⁶⁰ Once again, we encounter the “now and not yet” aspect of the Christian life.⁶⁶¹

Scholars continue to debate various aspects of the five major theories of our redemption, which they call the atonement.⁶⁶² Nevertheless, we can affirm some truths based upon Scripture. Redeeming love and divine justice converged at the cross. No analogy can fully express what Jesus has accomplished through his crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, we can best describe the atonement with several complementary metaphors.⁶⁶³

The first of these refers to images of combat and commerce. By the power of Christ’s blood, he ransomed us from the oppression and penalty of sin (Col 2:15; Mark 10:45; 1 Pet 1:18–19). This idea of a ransom has strong roots in the Old Testament (OT) concept of paying to deliver someone from slavery, captivity, or death (Exod 6:6; Isa 43:1–4; Job 5:20).⁶⁶⁴

A different metaphor utilizes the concept of OT religious rituals. Here the emphasis falls upon Christ’s sacrifice as a just restitution to mitigate our violations against God’s holiness (1 John 2:2). Scripture describes Jesus as our Passover lamb (Exod 12:3–13; 1 Cor 5:7), as a burnt offering (Eph 5:2), and as both our high priest and the sacrificial victim (Heb 7:27; Heb 8:3; Heb 9:11–14; Heb 10:12). Thus, Jesus absolved our sins with his blood (Heb 9:18–28; Heb 10:22). In addition, our legal status has changed. God now declares us righteous based upon Christ’s atoning sacrifice; a term called justification (Isa 53:11–12; Rom 4:25; Rom 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21).

⁶⁵⁶ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 51.

⁶⁵⁷ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 27.

⁶⁵⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 85. Italics mine.

⁶⁵⁹ Friedrich Büchsel, “ἀπολύτρωσις” (*apolutrōsis*), *TDNT* 4:351–6, 352.

⁶⁶⁰ Büchsel, “ἀπολύτρωσις” (*apolutrōsis*), *TDNT* 4:351–6, 352.

⁶⁶¹ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 51.

⁶⁶² Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 714–29, 744–52.

⁶⁶³ John Jefferson Davis, *Handbook of Basic Bible Texts: Every Key Passage for the Study of Doctrine and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 79–81.

⁶⁶⁴ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 51.

Penal substitution comprises another aspect of our salvation. Before Christ came, God required the annual sacrifice of a scapegoat which imperfectly atoned for the sins of the people (Lev 16:20–22; 1 John 4:9–10). In his love, mercy, and grace, the Father sent his only Son to die in our place (John 1:29; Gal 3:13). As a result, Jesus appeased the wrath which we deserved (Rom 1:18; Rom 2:5–6; 1 Thess 1:10).

Reconciliation provides an additional metaphor. Due to Christ’s atoning work, he has restored our broken fellowship with God (Rom 5:8–11; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22–23; 1 Tim 2:5). As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we can also experience right relationships with one another (Matt 5:23–24; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:14–22). Indeed, God is reconciling all creation to himself, a process which he shall complete on the day of Christ’s return (Col 1:19–22; Rom 8:16–23).

To summarize, Jesus came to earth to give himself as a ransom (Matt 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20). Consequently, he liberates those enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Rom 6:11, 17–19, 22; Col 2:13–14). Christ accomplished this by offering himself as a sacrificial substitute for us to appease God’s wrath (Isa 53:6; 1 Pet 2:24; Rom 3:24–26). Thus, he removed our guilt and defilement (Rom 5:18; Tit 2:14), enabling us to enter the presence of our holy God (Heb 10:11–25).

The Lord did all this “according to the riches of his grace which he abundantly lavished upon us.” Paul emphasized the concept of God’s wealth in this letter (Eph 1:18; Eph 2:7; Eph 3:8, 16). That he applied the term to grace implies that we enjoy God’s favor in overflowing measure (Eph 2:4–5).⁶⁶⁵

Years ago, my daughters and I were standing in our front yard. A group of teens came by, introduced themselves as from a local church, and asked if they could speak with us. Curious about what my eight-year-old would say, I asked them to direct their questions to her. One of them said, “If God were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into My Heaven?’ what would you say?”⁶⁶⁶ She responded, “Jesus died for me.” Speechless, after about a minute, they wished us a good evening and headed next door.⁶⁶⁷

Due to the atonement, Christ confers an inexhaustible resource upon those belonging to him.⁶⁶⁸ His sacrifice can cover the transgressions of the worst sinners (Rom 5:20; 1 Tim 1:15).⁶⁶⁹

Read Eph 1:7–8. How do these metaphors explain different aspects of our redemption?

Combat –

Commerce –

OT Religious Rituals –

Penal Substitution –

Reconciliation –

⁶⁶⁵ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 259–60.

⁶⁶⁶ “Step One. Do You Know?” Evangelism Explosion, Accessed October 3, 2014, <http://evangelismexplosion.org/resources/steps-to-life/step-1-do-you-know/>.

⁶⁶⁷ I’m grateful for my daughter’s permission to share this anecdote.

⁶⁶⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 29.

⁶⁶⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 86.

How do you experience redemption in your life?

The Summing up of All Things

d) Eph 1:8–11: The last phrase of verse 8 fits best with this section of Paul’s prayer.⁶⁷⁰ Placed together, it says, “In all wisdom and understanding he made known to us the mystery of his will.” Paul used two words with similar meanings to emphasize his point. Even our ability to comprehend what God has planned for us consists of God’s grace, a gift of the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:2).⁶⁷¹ Nevertheless, the Lord commands us to cultivate our wisdom and understanding in order to more effectively build God’s kingdom (Col 1:9–12).⁶⁷²

The “mystery of God’s will” refers to the unfolding of the plan of salvation (1 Cor 2:6–12). This contrasts with the rites of the mystery religions, such as those of the cult of Artemis or of Isis. Those rituals promised to yield greater spiritual insight and power,⁶⁷³ resulting in the initiate sharing in the fate of the god.⁶⁷⁴

However, in the Old Testament (OT), a mystery consists of a formerly hidden secret of God’s activity which is now being disclosed.⁶⁷⁵ For example, after King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him, he threatened to kill any of his advisors who could not tell him both the content of the dream and its interpretation. Daniel requested extra time and asked his associates to pray for him.

The biblical author noted, “Then to Daniel in a night vision, [the] mystery was revealed.” The Aramaic word translated as “mystery” occurs seven times in Dan 2:19–30, 44–47.⁶⁷⁶ For Jewish people and early Christians, the term means a once-hidden plan now revealed by God, rather than our contemporary understanding of a mystery as something unknown (Eph 3:3–6; Eph 6:19; Col 1:25–27).⁶⁷⁷

Paul asserted that this was “according to his good pleasure which he planned beforehand in him (Christ) toward the administration of the fullness of the times.” In other words, not only the Father devised the arrangement for our salvation. The preexistent Son participated in determining how to overcome the obstacle which sin would thrust into the human-divine relationship. God began to unfold this plan when the messiah came (Gal 4:4–5; Mark 1:14–15). However, it shall not be completely fulfilled until the final day of our redemption (Eph 4:30; 1 Tim 6:13–16).⁶⁷⁸

This final state shall be “the summing up of all things into Christ, things in heaven and things on the earth in him.” Paul referred to the culmination of history when the entire cosmos

⁶⁷⁰ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 52.

⁶⁷¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 29–30.

⁶⁷² Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 260.

⁶⁷³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 86.

⁶⁷⁴ Günther Bornkamm, “μυστήριον” (*mystērion*), *TDNT* 4:802–27, 803.

⁶⁷⁵ H. H. D. William III, “Mystery,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology (NDBT)* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 674–5.

⁶⁷⁶ Arthur G. Patzia, “Mystery,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments (DLNT)* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 782–4, 782–3.

⁶⁷⁷ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 53.

⁶⁷⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 87–8.

shall once again come together under Jesus’s rule. Then the universe shall again experience its original harmony,⁶⁷⁹ when all shall be the very best it can be (Gen 1:31; Eph 1:18–23; Rom 8:18–23).

And that is not all: “In him also we were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything according to the purpose of his will.” The word “chosen” (*klēroō*) appears as a verb only here in the New Testament.⁶⁸⁰ Fortunately, it occurs regularly in the Greek translation of the OT, where it refers to the division of the promised land by casting lots (Num 26:55–56).⁶⁸¹ “Chosen” also applies to the people of Israel, such as in Deut 9:29, where the Greek translation says, “and these [are] your people and your inheritance.”⁶⁸²

The Essenes in Qumran employed the same term to describe themselves as God’s people, while outsiders were “the lot of Belial” (the devil) (DSS 1QS 2:2).⁶⁸³ Thus, Paul applied language previously reserved for the Jewish people to all those who form the new family of God, both Jew and gentile.⁶⁸⁴

Read Eph 1:8–11. What is God’s ultimate plan? Why is Paul’s inclusion of gentiles significant? How has Chapter 3 affected your understanding of the image of God?

⁶⁷⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 33.

⁶⁸⁰ Danker, et al., “κληροώ” (*klēroō*), *BDAG*, 548–9.

⁶⁸¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 35–6.

⁶⁸² Danker, et al., “κληρος” (*klēros*), *BDAG*, 548.

⁶⁸³ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th Ed., 1 QS 2:2, 71, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n129/mode/2up.

⁶⁸⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 89–90.

Chapter 4: The Sabbath Rest of God (Genesis 2:1–3)

An Israelite View of Genesis 1

Imagine that slavery is all that you, your parents, and your grandparents remember. While living in the New Kingdom of Egypt, you learned that the sun god Re spoke the god Ptah—his Word—into being as the firstborn of all creation. Then Ptah created the rest of the gods and the entire universe out of nothing.⁶⁸⁵

You have heard the Babylonians tell another part of the story. They say that a problem arose: the gods got tired of having to work to provide food for themselves. At that time, the god Kingu chose to align himself with Tiamat, the cosmic sea monster. The hero Marduk split her in two, separating the vapors in the sky from the waters of the seas. Then he executed Kingu and mixed his blood with dirt to create the first people to do the gods' work.⁶⁸⁶

Since the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II is also worshiped as a god (the Son of Re),⁶⁸⁷ you had always known that your sole reason for existence was to labor as his slave. About a year ago, a man named Moses emerged from the desert to confront the pharaoh. He claimed that the God of your ancestors had sent him to deliver you from the horrors of Egyptian servitude (Exod 3:79, 4:29–31). You watched in awe as the one who called himself “I AM” (Exod 3:14) used Moses to bring judgment upon the gods and goddesses of Egypt: those of the Nile (Exod 7:20–21), the sun (Exod 10:21–23), agriculture (Exod 9:22–26, 31–32), and cattle (Exod 9:17).

I AM did not spare even the future god of Egypt, the son of Ramses the Great (Exod 12:21–30). Amazingly, the region where your people lived remained untouched by most of these plagues. After Rameses freed you from slavery, he changed his mind, sending chariots to prevent your escape. I AM split the Sea of Reeds so that you could walk through and then destroyed Pharaoh's army as it followed you (Exod 14).

Soon after that, when I AM made a covenant with your nation on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:38), Moses called everyone together to learn the history of God's dealings with your ancestors. While much of what you heard sounded like what you had been taught in Egypt, there were shocking differences. Most importantly, you discovered that the gods did not make your ancestors from the blood of a rebellious god.⁶⁸⁸ Instead, the one who spoke the entire universe—his temple—into being made you in his image (Gen 1:26–27).

An image in a temple does the work of a god and has his authority.⁶⁸⁹ Therefore, God's intention for you, as his image-bearer, is to serve as his representative.⁶⁹⁰ You can fulfill his purposes through your faithful stewardship in tending, guarding, and governing the earth while displaying the Lord's glory to other people and extending his kingdom among them (Gen 1:28).⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁵John A. Wilson, trans., “Theology of Memphis,” in *ANET*, lines 53–4, 4–6.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n29/mode/2up.

⁶⁸⁶E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 4.135–40, 67.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

⁶⁸⁷W. F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, trans., “The Amarna Letters, RA XIX,” in *ANET*, lines 1–10, 485.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n509/mode/2up.

⁶⁸⁸“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 6.1–36, 68.

⁶⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 129.

⁶⁹⁰Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis,” 315–36, 317–19,

http://tyndalehouse.com/tyndbul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

⁶⁹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

God Completes the Heavens and the Earth

1) **Gen 2:1–2:** In a summation of Genesis 1,⁶⁹² Moses wrote, “And the heavens and the earth were completed.” This depiction of “the seventh day” differs in tone from the earlier six. However, since it functions as the epilogue of creation, it belongs thematically with Genesis 1.⁶⁹³ Marking the significance of this day, Moses mentioned the number seven—which represents perfect completion—three times.⁶⁹⁴ God had ceased his creative activity,⁶⁹⁵ for “the heavens and the earth and all their inhabitants were finished.”⁶⁹⁶ During the process of creation, the Lord subdued space. On the seventh day, he blessed time.⁶⁹⁷ Thus the Sabbath is when we observe and celebrate the significance of time.⁶⁹⁸

Moses continued, “And God had finished on the seventh day his work which he had done.”⁶⁹⁹ Contrary to what some translations imply, by the onset of this day, God had already completed his activity.⁷⁰⁰ Moses employed an ordinary term for “work” (*melacah*) the same word to describe what people do.⁷⁰¹ Unlike the other designation used in the Old Testament specifically for manual labor, the one written here can describe any work. This includes the activity of a fine craftsman (Exod 36:8).⁷⁰²

“And he ceased from labor on the seventh day, from all the work which he had done.” The verb translated as “ceased” also appears in Josh 5:12.⁷⁰³ Even though the noun “Sabbath” never appears in this verse, the verb *shabbath* implies the concept, which means “cease” or “rest.”⁷⁰⁴ God had been working not only to prepare the cosmos for humanity,⁷⁰⁵ but also to achieve for himself a place of rest.⁷⁰⁶ The biblical term “rest” refers to a state of peace which one enters after completing tasks.⁷⁰⁷

Silence and stillness entered the atmosphere. All that God had planned for the universe was now in place.⁷⁰⁸ He settled into the stable ambiance he had created and experienced refreshment.⁷⁰⁹

Likewise, the Egyptian Theology of Memphis states that the god Ptah created everything

⁶⁹² Gesenius, *GKC*, 328, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/328/mode/2up>.

⁶⁹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 34–5.

⁶⁹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁶⁹⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 146.

⁶⁹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 35.

⁶⁹⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁶⁹⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 73.

⁶⁹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 35.

⁷⁰⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 142.

⁷⁰¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 35.

⁷⁰² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 142.

⁷⁰³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁבַת” (*shabbath*) *BDB*, 991–2.

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/990/mode/2up>. Note the similarity with the word for “seventh” (*shabiyith*).

⁷⁰⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 142.

⁷⁰⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 53.

⁷⁰⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 148.

⁷⁰⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 69.

⁷⁰⁸ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 141.

⁷⁰⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 147.

by thinking and speaking it into being. He then rested after making shrines and images for the lesser gods he had generated.⁷¹⁰

In contrast, in Enuma Elish, the boisterous antics of some lesser gods disturbed the rest of the chief god Apsu. He complained to the water goddess Tiamat, “Their ways are truly loathsome unto me. By day I find no relief, nor repose by night. I will destroy, I will wreck their ways that quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!”⁷¹¹ Tiamat reacted to his desire to kill the other gods by rebelling. Thus, the absence of rest led to that primordial conflict.⁷¹² After the battle, Marduk said to the other gods that people “shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!”⁷¹³ Freed from the menial tasks of managing the earth and providing food for themselves, the gods could finally rest.⁷¹⁴

Similarly, an Akkadian creation myth states, “That which is slight he shall raise to abundance, the work of god man shall bear!...Create, then...and let him bear the yoke! The yoke he shall bear...the work of god man shall bear!”⁷¹⁵ Thus, in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) thought, people labored so the gods could rest.⁷¹⁶

According to Enuma Elish, Marduk received control of the other gods and the entire cosmos after defeating Tiamat. In gratitude to him, the other gods built the sacred city of Babylon so that Marduk could rest.⁷¹⁷

“The [gods] opened their mouths and said to Marduk, their lord, ‘Now, O lord, you who have caused our deliverance, what shall be our homage to you? Let us build a shrine whose name shall be called “Lo, a chamber for our nightly rest”; let us repose in it! Let us build a throne, a recess for his abode! On the day that we arrive we shall repose in it.’ When Marduk heard this, brightly glowed his features, like the day, ‘Construct Babylon, whose building you have requested, let its brickwork be fashioned. You shall name it “The Sanctuary.”’ The [gods] applied the implement; for one whole year they molded bricks. When the second year arrived, they...set up in it an abode for Marduk, Enlil, (and) Ea. In their presence he was seated in grandeur.”⁷¹⁸

Therefore, striking differences exist between scriptural and ANE concepts of divine respite.⁷¹⁹ Not only does he not require food, the Lord never needs recovery from any kind of disturbance.⁷²⁰ Nevertheless, God sought a dwelling place of rest (Ps 132:7–8, 13–14; Num 10:33–36).⁷²¹ Both the tabernacle and the temple were constructed as replicas of the cosmos (Ps 78:68–69). Indeed, nearly identical language describes the creation of the cosmos, the tabernacle,

⁷¹⁰ “Theology of Memphis,” *ANET*, line 59, 5,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n29/mode/2up. Another translation for “Ptah was satisfied” is “Ptah rested.”

⁷¹¹ “The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, tablet 1:35–40, 61,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n85/mode/2up.

⁷¹² Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

⁷¹³ “The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, 6:8, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

⁷¹⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

⁷¹⁵ E. A. Speiser, trans., “Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess,” in *ANET*, obv. 1–9, 99,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n123/mode/2up.

⁷¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 53.

⁷¹⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

⁷¹⁸ “The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), in *ANET*, tablet 6:47–65, 68–9. Italics mine.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

⁷¹⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

⁷²⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 2:3.

⁷²¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 2:3.

and the temple (cf. Gen 1:31 with Exod 39:43; Gen 2:1 with Exod 39:32; Gen 2:2 with Exod 40:33; and Gen 2:3 with Exod 39:43).

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, the temple, and all the earth (Exod 40:34–35; 1 Ki 8:8–13; Isa 6:1–3). Echoing Gen 1, the description of the construction of the tabernacle centers upon seven distinct commands (Exod 25:1; Exod 30:11, 17, 22, 34; Exod 31:1, 12). Solomon’s temple was built in seven years and dedicated in the seventh month during a seven-day festival (1 Ki 6:38; 1 Ki 8:1–2, 65).⁷²²

In ANE literature, taking seven days to build or dedicate a temple occurs often. According to poetry about Baal and Anath, “On the seventh d[ay], the fire dies down in the house, the f[la]me in the palace. The silver turns into blocks, the gold is turned into bricks...Baal exults, ‘My h[ouse] have I built of silver. My palace, indeed, of gold.’”⁷²³

Similarly, when Gudea built a Sumerian temple, the construction lasted seven days: “It took one year to bring the great stones in slabs and it took another year to fashion them, although not even two or three days did he let pass idly. Then it needed a day's work to set up each one but by the seventh day he had set them all up around the house.”⁷²⁴

In the ANE, temples are places for divine rest, sanctuaries of sacred space (Lev 19:30; 2 Chron 6:41–7:1).⁷²⁵ For God to inhabit his place of rest signifies his enthronement, taking his rightful place as the sovereign ruler of the universe (Ps 93; Ps 104:1–4).⁷²⁶ Thus the Lord’s seventh day continues even now, for he still inhabits his temple (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Pet 2:5).⁷²⁷ In this epilogue of creation, the phrase “evening and morning” does not occur,⁷²⁸ affirming that the Lord remains in his state of Sabbath rest.

a) Read Gen 2:1–2. How are the biblical concepts of God resting like and different from the ANE texts? What evidence do we have that the whole cosmos is God’s temple?

The Lord Blesses the Seventh Day

b) Gen 2:3: Moses wrote, “Then God blessed the seventh day and set it apart (*qadash*) because on it he ceased from labor, from all of his work which God created in order to make [the cosmos].” The apex of creation occurred on the seventh day, rather than taking place on the sixth. Prior to this, the Lord called all the days “good” (*tov*) or “very (*meod*) good.” In contrast,

⁷²² Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 60–1.

⁷²³ “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 6:131–8, 134,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n159/mode/2up.

⁷²⁴ Oxford University Faculty of Oriental Studies, “The Building of Ningirsu’s Temple (Gudea, Cylinders A and B),” in *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, 617–22 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr217.htm>.

⁷²⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 151.

⁷²⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 148–9.

⁷²⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol. 1* (trans. James Anderson; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 157.

⁷²⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 68.

God designated the seventh day as “holy” (qadosh).⁷²⁹ The verb form also means⁷³⁰ “set apart,” “observed as holy,” “consecrated,” “honored as sacred,” and “dedicated.”⁷³¹

Interestingly, “the seventh day” is one of only two days of creation which features a definite article (“the”). A review of the fifty-nine occurrences of the word “seventh” in the five books written by Moses indicates this number always appears with a definite article. All but three of these references concern the Sabbath, release from servitude, or some aspect of priestly service.⁷³² Therefore, a definite article most likely appears in association with this day because God meant for us to follow his pattern of Sabbath rest on every seventh day. Although the cosmos does not center around people, the Lord instituted the Sabbath for the benefit of humanity.⁷³³

This participation of humans in God’s rest is a unique concept within the Ancient Near East (ANE).⁷³⁴ Israel appears to have first observed the Sabbath during their time in the wilderness (Exod 16:22–30).⁷³⁵ By consecrating the Sabbath, the Lord divided days into ordinary time and holy time, creating a dichotomy between days of work and of rest (Exod 20:8–11).⁷³⁶ Those who observe it shall enjoy God’s blessing.⁷³⁷

The number seven was important throughout the ANE. Mesopotamians restricted what could be done on the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th days of each month. However, unlike in Israel, the day with the greatest prohibitions was the nineteenth. Ugaritic Tablet 3, which dates from Moses’s era, specifies certain rituals and sacrifices for each day, with special emphasis upon the seventh.⁷³⁸

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the protagonist met an ancient man who survived the flood. He recalled:

“Six days and [six] nights blows the flood wind, as the south-storm sweeps the land. When the seventh day arrived, the flood[-carrying] south-storm subsided... The sea grew quiet, the tempest was still, the flood ceased.” After the ship ran aground, “When the seventh day arrived... Then I let out [all the people and animals] to the four winds and offered a sacrifice... Seven and seven cult-vessels I set up.”⁷³⁹

According to the Ugaritic Legend of King Keret, the monarch marched for six days and arrived at his enemy’s city at dawn on the seventh. After six days of battle, the besieged king made a pact with Keret in exchange for plunder. Keret fell asleep and awoke on the seventh day to sacrifice a lamb and a dove to El, the god who helped him.⁷⁴⁰

⁷²⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

⁷³⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol. 1*, 157.

⁷³¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁדֹשׁ” (*qadhosh*), *BDB*, 872, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/872/mode/2up>.

⁷³² Result of a word search of “שִׁבְעִי” (*shibiyi*) in Logos 6.

⁷³³ Walton, *Genesis*, 152.

⁷³⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

⁷³⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

⁷³⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

⁷³⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

⁷³⁸ Cyrus Herzyl Gordon, “The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient Near East,” *Judaism* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 12–6, 13–4, <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/4879351/biblical-sabbath-origin-observance-ancient-near-east>.

⁷³⁹ E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:127–9, 145, 155–7, 94, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

⁷⁴⁰ H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “The Legend of King Keret,” in *ANET*, tablet 3, 144, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n169/mode/2up.

However, within the ANE, only Israel set the seventh day apart for rest.⁷⁴¹ Ceasing from daily activities on the Sabbath is a sign of God’s covenant with his people (Exod 31:12–17).⁷⁴² In fact, God’s pattern of work in Gen 1:1–2:3 forms the basis of the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11).⁷⁴³ Since God ceased from his work, so should those he created in his image.⁷⁴⁴ When we keep the Sabbath, we assert that God reigns over the cosmos and we do not. Taking a day off from working to provide for our needs enables us to regain the Lord’s perspective of life (Isa 58:13–14).⁷⁴⁵ Furthermore, by ceasing to subdue the earth on every seventh day, we confess our allegiance to God.⁷⁴⁶

Although the Bible stipulates which sacrifices the Lord commanded Israel to offer on the Sabbath (Num 28:9–10; Ezek 46:4–5), we have little information concerning what one was to do on that day of the week. Most of what we know centers upon what we should not do. In ancient Israel, worship does not appear to be the Sabbath’s most important aspect.⁷⁴⁷

By the time of Christ, Sabbath observance on the seventh day of the week included the reading and discussion of the Old Testament (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:14–21; Acts 13:13–15; Acts 15:21; Acts 17:1–3).⁷⁴⁸ First Corinthians, a letter written during 54–55 AD,⁷⁴⁹ indicates that gentile congregations met together for worship, not on the Sabbath, but on Sunday. This practice originated in recognition that Jesus had risen “on the first day of the week,” making it the Lord’s Day (Matt 28:1; 1 Cor 16:1–2; Acts 20:7).⁷⁵⁰

b) Read Gen 2:3. Why did God cease from work on the seventh day? What are the implications of the Lord’s blessing of the Sabbath and making it holy for our lives? Why did gentile congregations meet on the first day of the week, rather than on the seventh?

Lord of the Sabbath

2) Matt 12:1–8: By setting apart a holy day every week, God provides us with rest from our normal daily activities.⁷⁵¹ When we observe the Sabbath, we not only obey the Lord’s command, we behave as he did. In this passage, Jesus described God’s motive in mandating a day of rest.⁷⁵²

⁷⁴¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 71.

⁷⁴² Walton, *Genesis*, 153.

⁷⁴³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 71.

⁷⁴⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

⁷⁴⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 152–4.

⁷⁴⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

⁷⁴⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 153–4.

⁷⁴⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 71.

⁷⁴⁹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 3.

⁷⁵⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 899–900.

⁷⁵¹ John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 289.

⁷⁵² Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 438.

The Lord never intended the Sabbath to become a burden but a day of delighting in his provision and blessing (Exod 20:8–11; Isa 56:4–7).

Religious Jews recognized that the exile had occurred due to their failure to observe the Mosaic law faithfully (Deut 30:1–10; Neh 9:26–31). By the time of Christ, Sabbath observance separated the Jewish people from other religious groups. However, various sects within Judaism debated over what constituted work. Therefore, the Pharisees developed an extensive set of stipulations as a guide for people to follow.⁷⁵³

Two major sections of the Mishnah (*m. Shabbat* and *m. Erubin*) spell out these guidelines in thirty-four chapters of excruciating detail. By putting “a fence around the law” (*m. Avot* 1:1), the Pharisees sought to prevent people from violating the actual command. They left nothing to private interpretation,⁷⁵⁴ banning these thirty-nine categories of work on the Sabbath:

“To sow, to plough, to mow, to gather into sheaves, to thrash, to winnow, to sift [corn], to grind, to sieve, to knead, to bake, to shear wool, to wash wool, to card, to dye, to spin, to warp, to shoot two threads, to weave two threads, to cut and tie two threads, to tie, to untie, to sew two stitches, to tear thread with intent to sew two stitches, to catch a stag [game], to slaughter it, to skin, to salt [cure] a hide, to singe a hide, to tan, to cut up a skin, to write two letters, to erase with intent to write two letters, to build, to demolish, to extinguish fire, to kindle fire, to hammer, to carry [or convey] from one [place] into another (*m. Shabbat* 7.2).⁷⁵⁵

Christ disparaged these types of onerous regulations in Matt 12 and elsewhere in the gospels, not the Sabbath itself. He focused upon the intent of God’s commandment to observe a day of rest.⁷⁵⁶ In fact, shortly before this confrontation Christ invited people to come to him to receive true rest (Matt 11:28–30).⁷⁵⁷ The rabbinic additions to the law made the Sabbath a burden, not a blessing.⁷⁵⁸ When religious practices become rigid codes of conduct, they often contradict the purpose of God by failing to express love and concern for the needs of others.⁷⁵⁹ Since Jesus censured the Pharisees’ entire industry of making new rules, and thereby drew away their followers, the leaders of that Jewish sect wanted to dispose of him.⁷⁶⁰

This passage begins with Jesus and his disciples taking a Sabbath’s day stroll along a path through a field. The law permitted those who were hungry to eat from other people’s crops. It even stated that farmers should not reap the edges of a field to provide food for the poor (Deut. 23:24–25; Deut 24:19–22).⁷⁶¹

However, the Pharisees considered picking grain equivalent to harvesting (Exod 34:21). To make the grain edible, the disciples rubbed it between their hands. That constituted threshing, according to these opponents of Christ (Luke 6:1–2).⁷⁶² One Pharisee wrote, “Whoever carries out [any article of] food equal to [the size of] a dried fig is guilty. And victuals may be computed

⁷⁵³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 438.

⁷⁵⁴R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 455–6.

⁷⁵⁵D. A. Sola and M. J. Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna* (London: Sherwood, Golbert, and Piper, 1843), *m. Shabbat* 7.2, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/index.htm>.

⁷⁵⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 456.

⁷⁵⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 438.

⁷⁵⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 454–5.

⁷⁵⁹Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 331.

⁷⁶⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 456.

⁷⁶¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 439.

⁷⁶²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 457.

together, as the legal quantity is the same for all; excepting peels, [shells], kernels, and stalks; [likewise] bran, fine or coarse” (*m. Shabbat* 7.4).⁷⁶³

That Pharisees loitered around a Galilean wheat field on the Sabbath seems quite unusual.⁷⁶⁴ Due to increasing tensions over Jesus’s ministry, they were almost certainly waiting for an opportunity to accuse him of violating the law. “When the Pharisees saw [this], they said ‘Behold! Your disciples are doing what is not authorized to do on the Sabbath.’” In their view, “what is authorized” applied to both explicit Old Testament (OT) commands and the Mishnah.⁷⁶⁵

Although it appears that Jesus was not participating in this activity,⁷⁶⁶ the Pharisees addressed him because a teacher was responsible for the behavior of his disciples.⁷⁶⁷ They regarded this as Jesus’s failure to train his devotees.⁷⁶⁸ Instead of discussing the dietary requirements of his followers, Christ replied based upon his authority to interpret the law.⁷⁶⁹

Jesus did not chide his disciples. In fact, he used two analogies to defend them against the charge of lawlessness.⁷⁷⁰ “But he said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he hungered and those with him, how he entered into the house of God, and the bread of presentation they ate, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but only for the priests?’” (1 Sam 21:1–6). In that culture—which focused upon maintaining honor and avoiding shame—Jesus highly insulted the experts by asking whether they had read the OT.⁷⁷¹

Initially, it seems that David’s actions had no relation to the seventh day of the week.⁷⁷² However, the priests ate and replaced the twelve loaves of consecrated bread on every Sabbath (Lev 24:5–9).⁷⁷³ Jesus also noted that David entered the sanctuary, a location strictly forbidden to anyone but a Levite (Num 3:5–10).⁷⁷⁴ Although they both acted unlawfully, the OT condemned neither David nor the priest.⁷⁷⁵ Abimelech recognized David as a man anointed by God who needed his help.⁷⁷⁶ Therefore, Christ asserted that the law exists to serve God’s people, not for God’s people to serve the law.⁷⁷⁷

Jesus then delivered another analogy, “Or have you not read in the law that, ‘On the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and are innocent?’” Butchering animals and replacing ceremonial loaves of bread both constitute “work” (Num 28:1–2, 9–10). The Babylonian Talmud asserts that sacrificial service supersedes the Sabbath (*b. Shabbat*, 132b). Since the law requires the priests’ activity, they remain guiltless, just as with circumcision (John 7:23–24).⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁶³Sola and Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna*, Shabbat 7.4. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/index.htm>.

⁷⁶⁴Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 351.

⁷⁶⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 439.

⁷⁶⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 328.

⁷⁶⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 457–8.

⁷⁶⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 355.

⁷⁶⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 457.

⁷⁷⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 439.

⁷⁷¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 355.

⁷⁷²Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 329.

⁷⁷³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 439–40.

⁷⁷⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 458.

⁷⁷⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 440.

⁷⁷⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 459.

⁷⁷⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 440.

⁷⁷⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 459–60.

At this point, Jesus employed a traditional form of Jewish debate known as a “how much more” argument.⁷⁷⁹ “But I say to you” drew attention to his imminent declaration and asserted his authority.⁷⁸⁰ Overstating how shocking Christ’s words were to his original audience would be difficult.⁷⁸¹ He proclaimed, “But I say to you, than the temple, something greater is here.”⁷⁸²

For Israel, the temple was much more than a place of worship. God met with his people there, and it was a powerful symbol of their national identity. Under Roman rule, its priestly administration was the only form of self-government the Jewish people possessed. They considered threatening the temple treason (Matt 26:59–62).⁷⁸³

Although the word “something” could refer to Jesus himself, Christ was likely speaking of his presence and ministry with his disciples. They were ushering in a new era in the kingdom of God (Matt 1:23; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 1 Pet 2:5–6). Since the Lord permitted David and his men to do what was unlawful, he allowed the actions of the Son of David and his disciples as well (Matt 22:41–46).⁷⁸⁴

Jesus then quoted the Greek translation of Hosea 6:6 in a way which implied that the Pharisees knew the verse. He said, “But if you had known what this means, ‘Mercy I desire and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.” By declaring his disciples “innocent,” Jesus asserted that the Pharisees erroneously interpreted the law. They found fault where God saw none (Matt 9:10–13), for mercy takes precedence over conformity to external regulations (Mark 2:27; Matt 23:23).⁷⁸⁵ Indeed, God’s mercy prevented him from striking dead the priests who served on the Sabbath.⁷⁸⁶

Christ concluded with another startling announcement which conveyed his authority and his identity.⁷⁸⁷ He asserted, “For Lord of the Sabbath is the Son of Man.” The title “Son of Man” alludes to Dan 7:13–14. Therefore, Jesus affirmed that the Father had given him authority over all people. Since he was already Lord,⁷⁸⁸ he determined how to adhere to the Sabbath (Matt 5:17). God intended the seventh day to bring rest and rejoicing. Thus, his disciples did not violate it by satisfying their hunger.⁷⁸⁹

So, do we as people living under the new covenant of freedom from the law have to observe the Sabbath (Rom 7:4–6)?⁷⁹⁰ Paul clarified that whether and how one keeps the Sabbath depends upon individual conscience (Col 2:16; Rom 14:5–6).⁷⁹¹ The time which God set apart as holy serves as his gift to his representatives on earth, not as a burden.⁷⁹² Just as he designed the rest of creation for humanity’s sake, so he made the Sabbath.⁷⁹³ Despite the many benefits of

⁷⁷⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 356.

⁷⁸⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 299.

⁷⁸¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 460.

⁷⁸² Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 329–30.

⁷⁸³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 460.

⁷⁸⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 329–30.

⁷⁸⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 461–2.

⁷⁸⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 441.

⁷⁸⁷ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 441.

⁷⁸⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 462.

⁷⁸⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 330–1.

⁷⁹⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 158.

⁷⁹¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 72.

⁷⁹² Walton, *Genesis*, 158.

⁷⁹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 38.

Sabbath observance, no one should be coerced into keeping it.⁷⁹⁴

Even in rest, the Lord continues to create (John 5:15–17).⁷⁹⁵ Since creation naturally flows from him, he never intended for us to do absolutely nothing on one day of the week. While gathering for worship is a great idea, we can do even more to express our appreciation for all that God has done for us (Heb 10:23–25; Heb 13:15–16). This enables us to creatively observe the Sabbath, reflecting our love and reverence for the Lord, and extending his kingdom throughout the earth.⁷⁹⁶

For Christians, the Sabbath comprises many things. It is a day of rest; a day of victory; a day of worship; and a day of hope, as we anticipate our ultimate rest in the Lord's presence. In a sense, God created all the other days of the week to usher in the seventh day.⁷⁹⁷

Read Matt 12:1–8. Why were the Pharisees' interpretation of Sabbath regulations in error? What made Christ's statements so provocative? Why did God institute the Sabbath? How do you think we should observe it?

Entering God's Rest

3) Heb 4:1–13: This passage provides a stunning example of repetition yielding thematic unity. By repeating the word "rest" with slight alterations, the author of Hebrews emphasized the importance of entry into God's rest.⁷⁹⁸ These two paragraphs occur after a description of the Israelites in Moses's day. They had failed to enter the promised land due to their unbelief that God would safely lead them there (Num 14:28–35).

The Lord has prepared his place of eternal "rest" since the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:2).⁷⁹⁹ Those who received the book of Hebrews suffered from persecution (Heb 13:3, 13). Therefore, knowledge of God's place of rest gave them the hope they needed to endure.⁸⁰⁰

a) Read Heb 4:1–13. What promise still stands? Why did the promise given to those who were delivered from Egypt do them no good? How can you avoid their fate?

⁷⁹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 72.

⁷⁹⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 69.

⁷⁹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 159.

⁷⁹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 70.

⁷⁹⁸ David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 153.

⁷⁹⁹ Gareth L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 197.

⁸⁰⁰ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 245.

Obtaining Eternal Redemption

b) Heb 9:11–14: The second half of verse 12 says, “By his own blood he entered once for all the Most Holy Place, obtaining eternal redemption.” The true, spiritual rest of the Lord, in which he cleanses us from sin, cannot be entered by our effort but by applying the work of Christ (2 Cor 5:17–21).⁸⁰¹

Read Heb 9:11–14. How does a person apply the work of Christ to enter God’s rest? Is that something which you have experienced? What difference has it made in your life

⁸⁰¹George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 155.

Chapter 5: A View from the Ground (Genesis 2:4–25)

After creating men and women in his own image, God rested from his work of creating the cosmos as his temple. Therefore, he provided us with an example to follow by ceasing from his labor on the Sabbath. Even better, we can trust that Jesus’s sacrifice on our behalf is sufficient for us to enter God’s eternal place of rest.

What Became of the Heavens and the Earth

1) Gen 2:4–6: Here the focus shifts from a cosmic view of creation in which God formed the world for his glory alone, with humanity as his final creative act of self-glorification, to an account of creation in which the Lord is near, living together with Adam in paradise.⁸⁰² In each of the ten instances in Genesis where the phrase “These are the generations of” occurs, Moses switched to a new topic describing what or who came forth (eg. Gen 4:25–5:3; Gen 6:7–10; Gen 9:28–10:1). Consequently, this section does not describe the process of creating the heavens and the earth, but rather what they propagated.⁸⁰³ Therefore, a good translation of v. 4a is, “Here is what became of the heavens and the earth.”⁸⁰⁴

Much as in v. 6, the Sumerian myth Enki and Ninhursag says of the patron goddess of paradise’s father, “From the mouth whence issues the water of the earth, [he] brought her sweet water from the earth...makes her city drink from it the waters of abundance.”⁸⁰⁵ People were not yet working the ground to create irrigation canals,⁸⁰⁶ which were like the ones used in Egypt even today.⁸⁰⁷

a) Read Gen 2:4–6. What clue do we have that Gen 2 depicts what the heavens and the earth propagated, rather than how God created them? Why wasn’t agriculture taking place?

The Lord Breathes Life

b) Gen 2:7: Moses wrote, “And the Lord God formed the human (*adam*) from the dust of the ground (*adamah*). Then he breathed into his nostril the breath (*nephesh*) of life, and the human became a living person (*nephesh*).”⁸⁰⁸ The name *adam* means “man” in a generic sense, without reference to gender. Given current language usage, the best translations are “human” or

⁸⁰² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 71–2.

⁸⁰³ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 152.

⁸⁰⁴ Dr. Sarah Hall, personal communication (18 March 2015).

⁸⁰⁵ S. N. Kramer, trans., “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” in *ANET*, lines 55–7, 38.

⁸⁰⁶ E. A. Zaghoul, et al., “Detection of Ancient Irrigation Canals of Deir El-Hagar Playa, Dakhla Oasis, Egypt, Using Egyptsat-1 Data,” *The Egyptian Journal of Remote Sensing and Space Science* 16, no. 2 (December 2013): 153–61, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1110982313000227>.

⁸⁰⁷ Tour Egypt, “Egypt Picture - Water Buffalo Assists with Irrigation,”

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/picture03312005.htm>.

⁸⁰⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*), *BDB*, 659,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/658/mode/2up>.

“humanity.” Note the close linguistic relationship with *adamah*, the word for “ground,”⁸⁰⁹ the material from which God created him. In Hebrew, *nephesh* means “breath,” “life,” “soul,” and “person.” Therefore, this word appears twice in one sentence.⁸¹⁰

Similar to the account of the animation of Adam, an Egyptian text says, “Well directed are men, the cattle of the god. He made heaven and earth according to their desire, and he repelled the water-monster. He made the breath of life (for) their nostrils. They who have issued from his body are his images.”⁸¹¹

Read Gen 2:7. How did Moses use word play to describe how God formed Adam and then imparted life to him? What similarities and differences occur between the view of humanity in Genesis and in the Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re? How does the Lord’s perspective on the value of people affect the way you see yourself and others?

A Well-Watered Garden

c) **Gen 2:8–14:** The word “Eden” signifies a well-watered, luxuriant park. Meanwhile “garden” (*gan*) typically refers an orchard or park containing trees, rather than plots of vegetables.⁸¹² Therefore, Eden likely resembled a botanic garden, much like those in the palace complexes of the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) kings.⁸¹³

For example, Tiglath-Pileser I, who ruled the Assyrian Empire from 1114–1046 BC,⁸¹⁴ wrote in his annals, “I brought cedars, boxwood, and allakanish-trees from the countries which I have subdued, trees the like of which none of the kings, my ancient fathers, had ever planted, and I planted them in the gardens of my land. I took rare garden plants, which were not found in my own land, and caused them to flourish in the gardens of Assyria.”⁸¹⁵

⁸⁰⁹Leland Ryken, James Douglas Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, Colin Duriez, Douglas Penney, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., “Adam,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 9–14, 9.

⁸¹⁰D. C. Frederichs, “נֶפֶשׁ” (*nephesh*), *NIDOTTE*, 3:133–4, 133.

⁸¹¹John A. Wilson, trans., “The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re,” in *ANET*, line 131, 417, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n441/mode/2up.

⁸¹²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 2:14.

⁸¹³Walton, *Genesis*, 166.

⁸¹⁴Parks and Gardens UK: Knowledge, Inspiration, Conservation, “Tiglath-Pileser I and the Passion He Shared with William Robinson,” <https://parksandgardensuk.wordpress.com/2014/10/11/tiglath-pileser-i-the-passion-he-shared-with-william-robinson/>. This site has some good photos of Assyrian reliefs.

⁸¹⁵Tiglath-Pileser I, “Prism Inscription (History of First Five Years of Reign)” in *ARAB*, 1:72–91, section 254, 87, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria01/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria01#page/n101/mode/2up.

God “caused to grow...the tree of life in the very heart (*tawek*) of the garden.”⁸¹⁶ This made Eden a sacred space,⁸¹⁷ indicating that God stands at the center of human existence in all its fullness.⁸¹⁸ Pharaoh Ramses III (1187-1151 BC) also situated beautiful gardens around Egyptian centers of worship,⁸¹⁹ another sign that Eden itself comprised a temple.⁸²⁰

As in Ezek 47:1–12, a great river symbolized the Lord’s life-giving presence (cf. Ps 36:7–9). Its branching into four streams suggests completeness and universality, for the text mentions not only the Tigris and Euphrates Mesopotamia,⁸²¹ but also the Nile of North Africa and the Indus of Asia.⁸²² Furthermore, that these rivers flow in different directions from one spot suggests that Eden was set upon a mountain top.⁸²³ Scholars debate the exact location of these headwaters, with some favoring the mountains of Armenia and others the Persian Gulf.⁸²⁴ Since the portrayal in Genesis conforms to the ANE view of land sitting upon subterranean waters (Ps 24:1–2),⁸²⁵

Moses applied a cosmic motif—with the rivers flowing from Eden bringing life-giving water to the world—rather than a scientific description.⁸²⁶ In ANE literature, creator gods such as Enki and El dwelt at the source of rivers.⁸²⁷ One of the Poems about Baal and Anath describes a god as “El of the Sources of the Two Floods in the midst of the headwaters of the Two Oceans.”⁸²⁸ Furthermore, the 18th century BC palace of Zimri-Lim in modern day Syria depicts the concept of four streams flowing from a temple to water the four corners of the earth.⁸²⁹ A fresco shows two goddesses holding jars with four streams of water flowing from each of them in different directions.⁸³⁰

Read Gen 2:8-14. What did God provide for Adam? How did Eden resemble a temple? What effect should living with God as the center of our existence have upon us?

⁸¹⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*tāwek*,” *BDB*, 1063,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1062/mode/2up>.

⁸¹⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 193.

⁸¹⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83–4.

⁸¹⁹ James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt (ARE)*, 5 Vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), Sections 215–20, 4:121–3, <https://archive.org/details/BreastedJ.H.AncientRecordsEgyptAll5Vols1906>.

⁸²⁰ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 76.

⁸²¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 64–5.

⁸²² Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 168.

⁸²³ Lifsa Schachter, “The Garden of Eden as God’s First Sanctuary,” *JBQ* 41, no. 2 (2013): 73–7, 74.

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+garden+of+Eden+as+god's+first+sanctuary.-a0323259066>.

⁸²⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66.

⁸²⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 126.

⁸²⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66.

⁸²⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 167–8.

⁸²⁸ “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 4:20–2, 133.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n157/mode/2up.

⁸²⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 169.

⁸³⁰ Wikimedia Commons, “File: Investiture Zimri Lim Louvre Diagram TT.JPG”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Investiture_Zimri_Lim_Louvre_diagram_TT.JPG You can view the photo from which this diagram was created at

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mari_fresco_Investiture_Zimri_Lim_0209.jpg.

The Holy Mountain of God

2) **Read Rev 21:18–22:3:** Ezekiel 28:14 also describes Eden as “the holy mountain of God.”

The following sections contain information pertinent to answering these questions:

Chapter 2: Greater and Lesser Lights (Gen 1:14–19)

Chapter 3: Made in the Image of God (Gen 1:26)

Chapter 4: God Completes the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 2:1–2)

Chapter 5: A Well-Watered Garden (Gen 2:8–14)

Chapter 10: A Return to Paradise (Rev 22:1–5, 20)

In addition to what we have read in Genesis 1–2, what hints do you see from the description of the new Jerusalem that the garden of Eden was designed as the first temple, a place where God would dwell with his people? How does this passage in Revelation encourage you?

Serving and Keeping

3) **Gen 2:15:** The first word (*avadh*) describing why God placed Adam in Eden means to “work,” “serve,” and “cultivate.”⁸³¹ Meanwhile, the second term (*shamar*) has the nuances of “keep,” “watch,” “preserve,”⁸³² and “guard.”⁸³³ Whenever these verbs appear together elsewhere in the Old Testament, they pertain to people serving the Lord and keeping God’s word (Deut 13:14; Josh 22:5), or they refer to priests who provide for the service of the tabernacle (Num 3:7–8; Num 8:25–26; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14).⁸³⁴

Once again, Moses alluded to Eden as a sacred space akin to the tabernacle.⁸³⁵ Consequently, Adam engaged in a far greater task than mere landscaping.⁸³⁶ According to Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) thinking, those who maintained order in sacred places participated with God in maintaining the stability of the cosmos.⁸³⁷

⁸³¹ Holladay, *CHALOT*, “עָבַד” (*avadh*), 261.

⁸³² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *BDB*, 1036, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1036/mode/2up>.

⁸³³ F. García-López, “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *TDOT*, 15:279–305, 286.

⁸³⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 66–7.

⁸³⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

⁸³⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 174.

⁸³⁷ Frank H. Gorman Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2009), 39–40.

In some respects, the Mesopotamian accounts of people being created to serve the gods align with the reality of Genesis 2. However, in those ANE traditions the gods had deficiencies that had to be met.⁸³⁸ For example, one of the gods in Enuma Elish stated this concerning the god Marduk:

“Most exalted be the Son, our avenger; Let his sovereignty be surpassing, having no rival. May he shepherd the black-headed ones (humanity), his creatures. To the end of days, without forgetting, let them acclaim his ways. May he establish for his fathers the great food offerings; their support they shall furnish, shall tend their sanctuaries. May he cause incense to be smelled ...A likeness on earth of what he has wrought in heaven. May he order the black-headed to re[vere him]. May the subjects ever bear in mind their god. And may they at his word pay heed to the goddess. May food-offerings be borne for their gods and goddesses. Without fail, let them support their gods! Their lands let them improve, build their shrines, let the black-headed wait on their gods.”⁸³⁹

In contrast to other ANE gods, the Lord has no needs (Ps 50:7–15; Amos 5:21–24; Acts 17:22–26). Therefore, Moses agreed with the Babylonians that a deity created people to serve him, but not because God tired of laboring to provide for himself (Ps 69:30–31).⁸⁴⁰ Paradise with absolutely no demands placed upon humanity never existed. Therefore, we cannot consider work itself a consequence of sin.⁸⁴¹

a) Read Gen 2:15. How did the Lord intend for Adam to fulfill his purposes in Eden? What hints do you see indicating that this was priestly service? How does this knowledge affect the way you view your labor?

Forbidden Fruit

b) Gen 2:16–17: The Book of Proverbs states that one of the highest goals of godly people consists of acquiring wisdom (Prov 4:5–9). However, some types of wisdom belong solely to God, which people should not seek to attain. Ultimately, a full understanding of the Lord, the universe, and humanity’s role remains beyond our comprehension (Job 38:1–7). To pursue such wisdom without dependence upon God asserts human autonomy, neglecting the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1:7).

In effect, sin consists of seeking to determine morality apart from the Lord. Therefore, God forbade humanity from eating of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”⁸⁴² We see the consequences of this type of arrogance in Ezek 28:1–2, 11–19, a passage which describes the king of Tyre’s expulsion from Eden for claiming to be “wise as a god.”

The Lord warned, “On the day you eat from it, you shall surely die” (*moth tamuth*). He underscored the inevitability of death,⁸⁴³ not an immediate loss of life. Spiritual separation from

⁸³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

⁸³⁹E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines 106–21, 69.

⁸⁴⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 186.

⁸⁴¹Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 171.

⁸⁴²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 63–64.

⁸⁴³Gesenius, *GKC*, 342.

the Lord, estrangement in our relationships with other people, and eventually physical death result from our disobedience (Gen 20:7; Exod 31:14; Deut 24:16).⁸⁴⁴

According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Death means standing before God as an outlaw, as one who is lost and damned, but not as one who no longer exists.”⁸⁴⁵ Since Moses did not mention the tree of life here, it appears that Adam was permitted to eat from it but for some reason chose to abstain.⁸⁴⁶

Read Gen 2:16–17. Why do you think God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of Eden and declared it off limits? What made it necessary for God to give Adam the warning not to eat from that tree immediately after placing him in the garden? How does arrogance affect our relationship with God and with other people?

Not Good!

c) Gen 2:18: Coming after a pattern of God declaring his work “good” (*tov*) and “very (*meod*) good,” (Gen 1:4; Gen 1:10; Gen 1:12; Gen 1:16–18; Gen 1:21; Gen 1:25; and Gen 1:31) the phrase “not (*lo*)” is emphatic, abruptly halting the flow of the narrative. What made Adam’s isolation unacceptable? The Lord in whose image he was created exists in a trinity in the middle of a heavenly court.⁸⁴⁷ Even God—who has no needs—exists in community, not alone.

Since Adam’s strength remained inadequate,⁸⁴⁸ the Lord created Eve. She was neither superior nor inferior to him. Instead, she performed an essential contribution for him.⁸⁴⁹ Corresponding to the Hebrew verb, the noun translated as helper” (*ezer*) describes someone who works to “provide support,” “save from danger,” or “deliver from death” (Ps 54:4; Job 29:12).⁸⁵⁰ Eve rescued or saved Adam from his isolation,⁸⁵¹ providing him with emotional and physical support.

Contrary to English usage of the word “helper,” *ezer* tells us nothing about the relative status of the helper to the one being helped.⁸⁵² It implies that one being helped does not possess enough strength for the task at hand (Josh 1:14; 1 Chron 12:21–22; Ecc 4:9–12).⁸⁵³ Indeed, the

⁸⁴⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 87–88.

⁸⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 90.

⁸⁴⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

⁸⁴⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁸⁴⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

⁸⁴⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁸⁵⁰ E. Lipiński and H.-J. Fabry, “עָזַר” (*azar*), *TDOT*, 11:13–18, 13, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/740/mode/2up>.

⁸⁵¹ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 176.

⁸⁵² Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

⁸⁵³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

term “ezer” applies to God in sixteen of the nineteen times it appears in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 49:25; Ps 27:9).⁸⁵⁴ In the Hebrew context, a “helper” serves above or beside another person, not under a leader.⁸⁵⁵

Likewise, “suitable” (*kenegdo*) means “equal and adequate.”⁸⁵⁶ The combination of “helper” with “equal and adequate” suggests reciprocal assistance between two people who correspond to each other.⁸⁵⁷ Perhaps the best translation to capture these nuances would describe Eve as Adam’s “partner” or “counterpart.”⁸⁵⁸ She shared Adam’s mandate (Gen 1:27–28), assisted him in his vocation (Gen 2:15), participated in his delight (Gen 2:8–10), and was to respect the prohibition placed upon him (Gen 2:16–17).⁸⁵⁹

God’s concern for mutual support and marital companionship has no parallel in Ancient Near Eastern literature.⁸⁶⁰ For example, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu was born and lived in the wild, content to commune with only animals. Finally, Gilgamesh sent a prostitute to seduce him. Only then did Enkidu seek human companionship.⁸⁶¹

Read Gen 2:18. Why did God recognize that Adam should not be alone? What kind of person was best for him? How can you live as an adequate and equal helper?

A Parade of Animals

d) Gen 2:19–20: God first formed the animals from the same ground which he later used to create Adam (Gen 1:20–26; Gen 2:7). Then, Adam began to fulfill God’s directive to exercise authority over the creatures which preceded him (Gen 1:28). He did so by naming them, an activity previously reserved for the Lord (Gen 1:26).⁸⁶² In the ancient world, to confer a name indicated that a person spoke from a position of authority and sovereignty.⁸⁶³ Emperors frequently employed this tactic over their under-lords (2 Chron 36:4; 2 Ki 24:15–17).

In the process of identifying each of the animals, Adam recognized that none could serve as his equal and adequate partner (*ezer kenegdo*). He would have to look elsewhere for assistance with his God-given functions of subduing and ruling to extend the garden-temple (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 2:8–10), serving and keeping it (Gen 2:15), and being fruitful and multiplying (Gen 1:28).⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁵⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁸⁵⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

⁸⁵⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גִּבּוֹר” (*negdo*), *BDB*, 617, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/616/mode/2up>.

⁸⁵⁷ Allan M. Harman, “גִּבּוֹר” (*ezer*), *NIDOTTE*, 3:379.

⁸⁵⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 177.

⁸⁵⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁸⁶⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁸⁶¹ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, 2:1–26, 77, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n101/mode/2up.

⁸⁶² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 75.

⁸⁶³ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 176.

⁸⁶⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 187.

Read Gen 2:19–20. How did the parade of the animals increase Adam’s longing? Why do you think God chose to do that to him? How can you encourage someone who lives in isolation?

An Equal and Adequate Partner

e) Gen 2:21–23: In the process of naming the animals, Adam recognized that he lacked his own perfect counterpart (Gen 2:19–20). Moses wrote, “Then the Lord God caused a supernatural stupor (*tardema*) to fall upon the man.”⁸⁶⁵ God put Adam into a coma, unable to perceive the Lord’s creative work.⁸⁶⁶ The raw material for Eve came from Adam’s side. However, just as the ground did not spontaneously form a man, so a woman did not materialize until Yahweh performed a creative divine act.⁸⁶⁷ He took her from Adam’s side to stand at his side.⁸⁶⁸

Upon awakening, Adam responded with a rapturous poetic outburst, turning all focus to her:

This, this time,
[is] bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called woman,
for from man was taken this!⁸⁶⁹

In Hebrew, the word translated as “flesh” (*basar*) also means “weakness” (Isa 31:3), while we can render the term for “bone” (*etsen*) as “strength” (Gen 26:16).⁸⁷⁰ By combining these antithetical terms into a word-pair, Adam employed merism, a literary device which employs a pair of opposites to denote them both and everything in between. Thus, Adam conveyed that he and the woman were alike across the range of human experience.

The phrase “my/your bone and flesh” also reflects a covenant formula of reciprocal unalterable loyalty (Gen 29:13–14; Judg 9:1–2; 1 Chron 11:1–3).⁸⁷¹ This forms the biblical counterpart to many modern marriage vows, “in weakness (flesh) and in strength (bone).”⁸⁷² Adam recognized that he and the woman shared equal footing yet differed from the animals.⁸⁷³

A 25th century BC Pyramid Text used a similar rhetorical device to insist upon the immortality of a deceased pharaoh by identifying him with the resurrected god Osiris. It says:⁸⁷⁴ “O Atum, the one here is that son of thine, Osiris, whom thou hast caused to survive and to live

⁸⁶⁵ Holladay, “תַּרְדֵּמָה” (*tardemah*), *CHALOT*, 395.

⁸⁶⁶ M. Oeming, “תַּרְדֵּמָה” (*tardemah*), *TDOT* 13: 338–9.

⁸⁶⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 177, 179.

⁸⁶⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 188.

⁸⁶⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70.

⁸⁷⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, “Marriage (Old Testament and Ancient Near East),” in *ABD* 4:559–69, 568.

⁸⁷¹ Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gen 2:23a,” *CBQ* 32, no. 4 (1 October 1970): 532–42, 534–5.

⁸⁷² Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 179–80.

⁸⁷³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 70.

⁸⁷⁴ Pritchard, *ANET*, 32.

on. He lives—(so also) this King Unis lives. He does not die—(so also) this King Unis does not die. Thy body is the body of this King Unis. Thy flesh is the flesh of this King Unis. Thy bones are the bones of this King Unis. When thou departest, this King Unis departs. When this King Unis departs, thou departest.⁸⁷⁵

Not until after the fall of humanity did Adam name Eve (Gen 3:20). In Gen 2:23, Adam identified her as his true counterpart.⁸⁷⁶ The term “woman” (*ishah*) is simply the feminine form of the word “man” (*ish*)⁸⁷⁷,⁸⁷⁸ Moses emphasized the shared identity and equality of this first couple.⁸⁷⁹ This poem portrays the ideal marriage in ancient Israel, characterized by harmony and intimacy.⁸⁸⁰ While difficult to express in English, God’s pronouncement of “very good” after Eve’s creation forms a superlative: everything was the very best it could be (Gen 1:31).⁸⁸¹ Within the Ancient Near East, only Israel reported a separate creation account for the first woman.⁸⁸²

Read Gen 2:21–23. Why did Adam react as he did when he saw Eve? What did he communicate about her?

A Transfer of Loyalty

f) Gen 2:24: Here Moses inserted an editorial comment regarding the covenant commitment of marriage.⁸⁸³ He wrote, “For this reason a man shall forsake (*azav*) his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife.” To forsake someone strongly implies abandonment, as in Ps 22:1.⁸⁸⁴ When a man marries, he must sever one set of loyalties to begin another.⁸⁸⁵ In traditional societies like Israel’s, honoring one’s parents rose to just below the obligation to revere God (Exod 20:1–12), making this remark about forsaking them quite shocking.

The word “cling” (*davaq*) often occurs in the context of maintaining a covenant relationship, as it does here (Deut 4:4; Deut 10:20; Deut 11:22–3).⁸⁸⁶ Thus, the one-flesh union goes beyond sexuality or even the spiritual and emotional bond which develops as newlyweds form a new household. Just as we consider a person’s blood relatives the same “flesh and blood,” so is one’s spouse.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁷⁵John A. Wilson, trans., “The Conquest of Death,” in *ANET*, lines 167–93, 32–3.

⁸⁷⁶Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 97.

⁸⁷⁷Botterweck and Ringgren, eds., “הִשָּׁה” (*ishah*), *TDOT*, 1:429.

⁸⁷⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יִשׁ” (*ish*), 35,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/34/mode/2up>.

⁸⁷⁹Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 180.

⁸⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69.

⁸⁸¹Gesenius, *GKC*, 426, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/426/mode/2up>.

⁸⁸²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 177.

⁸⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis, A Commentary*, 90.

⁸⁸⁴Robert L. Alden, “*azav*,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:364–5.

⁸⁸⁵Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁸⁸⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁸⁸⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

Israel exempted a newly married man from military service and other duties which would take him away from home for one year in order that he would “bring joy to his wife” (Deut 24:5). The biblical pattern for establishing a couple’s own home contrasts with what occurs in many cultures even today. In some places, a man brings his new wife into his parents’ house, where she becomes the lowest-ranking member of the family. Jesus quoted this verse to emphasize the permanence of the marriage bond, which a spouse can choose to dissolve only in the aftermath of adultery, desertion, or abuse (Matt 19:4–6).⁸⁸⁸

Read Gen 2:24. In what ways are men to leave their parents and become one with their wives when they marry? Why would Moses’s original audience have found this shocking?

Marital Separation

4) 1 Cor 7:10–11: This chapter contains many enigmas for the modern reader despite Paul’s excellent communication skills. Therefore, we must conclude that his original audience interpreted his words through cultural understandings which we no longer share. Thankfully, Jewish and Greco-Roman marriage and divorce papyri from the fourth century BC through the fourth century AD clear up much of the confusion.⁸⁸⁹

By speaking “to the ones who have married” in v. 10, Paul first addressed situations in which both partners were believers. Here he gave the only command in all of 1 Cor 7:10–16.⁸⁹⁰ He wrote, “A wife from her husband must not be separated. But if she does separate, she must remain unmarried, unless to reconcile with her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.” The apostle emphasized the moral nature of choosing to end one’s marriage. In this chapter, Paul typically addressed men first when he gave instructions to both genders (1 Cor 7:1–4; 1 Cor 7:25–28; 1 Cor 7:32–34). Therefore, it appears that, in Corinth, women initiated most divorces.⁸⁹¹

The instruction from the Lord almost certainly refers to Mark 10:2–12,⁸⁹² where the context involved a Jewish audience (note the teaching on Deut 24:1–4).⁸⁹³ Jewish marriages were based on the concept of obligation, with both partners required to obey the stipulations of Exod 21:10–11. Should the husband violate them, the Mosaic law required a certificate of freedom for his wife. Yet, by the time of Christ, a man could obtain a divorce for any reason he chose.⁸⁹⁴ Since a Jewish woman could legally end a marriage for very few reasons, Jesus’s opposition to

⁸⁸⁸20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, 1992, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage,” <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>, 292.

⁸⁸⁹David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 190, [Http://www.divorce-remarriage.com/](http://www.divorce-remarriage.com/).

⁸⁹⁰Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 323.

⁸⁹¹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 291.

⁸⁹²Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 323.

⁸⁹³Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 138.

⁸⁹⁴Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

divorce defended the rights of married women.⁸⁹⁵ The desperate financial plight of a divorced woman forced her to remarry, which explains the phrase “makes her commit adultery” (Rom 7:1–3).⁸⁹⁶

Divorce among both Jews and gentiles existed to enable marriage to someone else.⁸⁹⁷ According to Christ, if one divorces one’s spouse without valid grounds, such as sexual immorality, the marriage does not truly dissolve. A subsequent marriage equates to adultery.⁸⁹⁸ However, Jesus released the innocent party in marriages where sexual immorality had occurred, and he seems to have permitted remarriage (Matt 5:31–32). Paul may have omitted this exception since it both Jews and Greeks recognized it.⁸⁹⁹

A Jewish woman could leave her marriage but not initiate a legal divorce. Meanwhile, in Greco-Roman societies, such as in Corinth, either party could dissolve the marriage bond.⁹⁰⁰ Paul argued that Christians should not instigate divorce. Instead, both men and women should fulfill the Mosaic obligations to provide emotional support, to care for physical needs, and to fully give themselves to each other sexually to prevent any rationale for a marital split (Deut 21:10–14; 1 Cor 7:3–6).⁹⁰¹

Jewish marriage certificates included a list of these requirements based upon the rights of a woman sold into marriage, with the implication that such marital neglect permitted divorce. Rabbis taught that if even a slave woman received such legal protection, so should all women and men.⁹⁰² However, in cases where a spouse failed to meet those stipulations, the court sought to persuade the guilty party to change by increasing or decreasing the wife’s dowry until the person relented or the money was spent (*m. Ketubot* 5.7).⁹⁰³

Some couples in Greco-Roman society formalized their divorce with legal documents. Usually, a man sent his wife away with the declaration “take your things [and go].” That effected a divorce.⁹⁰⁴ If the woman wanted to end the marriage, she could gain a separation by simply leaving.⁹⁰⁵ Typically, the man owned their house.⁹⁰⁶

The terms “divorce” (*aphiēmi*) and “separate” (*chōrizō*) in these verses were equivalent: a disavowal of the marriage.⁹⁰⁷ No warning was necessary, nor could either party legally prevent it.⁹⁰⁸ Paul addressed this type of illegitimate divorce.⁹⁰⁹ Marriage and divorce contracts employed more than fifty words for “divorce,” pointing to the frequency of marital splits. Often, several of the terms appeared in a single document.⁹¹⁰ During this time, most Greco-Roman marriages

⁸⁹⁵ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 19:9.

⁸⁹⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1–7* (ICC; Edinburgh; London; New York: T & T Clark, 1988), 528.

⁸⁹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 200.

⁸⁹⁸ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 19:9.

⁸⁹⁹ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 138.

⁹⁰⁰ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:10–11.

⁹⁰¹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 196.

⁹⁰² Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

⁹⁰³ Sola and Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna*, *Ketubot* 5.7, 254–5, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm124.htm>.

⁹⁰⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 171.

⁹⁰⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 325.

⁹⁰⁶ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199.

⁹⁰⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

⁹⁰⁸ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 190.

⁹⁰⁹ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 140.

⁹¹⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199.

ended before the death of one's spouse.⁹¹¹ In fact, scribes wrote marriage certificates with this expectation.⁹¹²

Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) complained, "Is any woman ashamed of being divorced, now that some noble ladies reckon the years of their lives, not by the number of the consuls, but by that of their husbands, now that they leave their homes in order to marry others, and marry only in order to be divorced?"⁹¹³ One funeral inscription from this era noted, "Uncommon are marriages which last so long, brought to an end by death, not broken apart by divorce; for it was our happy lot that it should be prolonged to the forty-first year without estrangement."⁹¹⁴ Paul's decree to stay married was truly counter-cultural.⁹¹⁵

Furthermore, where divorce by separation had occurred, Paul called upon believers to do all they could to reverse it and to remain single while the other partner had not remarried.⁹¹⁶ Thus, he did not enshrine "no divorce" as law, and the church did not remove the person who initiated the dissolution of a marriage. However, he permitted remarriage only to the original spouse,⁹¹⁷ unless one partner refused to respect the commitments necessary to maintain the fundamental integrity of the marriage.⁹¹⁸

a) Read 1 Cor 7:10–11. What exception did Jesus allow concerning divorce? Why did he oppose it? What was Paul's command to those who had divorced without just cause and whose former spouse remained unmarried?

Concerning Mixed Marriages

b) 1 Cor 7:12–13: In approximately 177 AD, the Greek philosopher Celsus noted that women constituted a large majority of new converts among the gentiles. He complained, "[Christians] desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children."⁹¹⁹

For those whose husbands remained polytheists, these religiously mixed marriages constituted a serious problem. Greco-Roman society promoted household solidarity and male superiority.⁹²⁰ Plutarch (46–122 AD) gave this Advice to a Bride and Groom:

⁹¹¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

⁹¹² Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

⁹¹³ Lucius Annasus Seneca, *On Benefits* (trans. John W. Basore; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 3.16.2, 65, <https://archive.org/stream/lannaeusenecao00stewgoog#page/n83/mode/2up>.

⁹¹⁴ G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1983), 34.

⁹¹⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

⁹¹⁶ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199–200.

⁹¹⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 327.

⁹¹⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 293.

⁹¹⁹ Origen, *Against Celsus* (ed. A. Cleveland Coxe; vol. 4 of *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second*; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; ANF; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1926), 44.3, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefathe00menzgoog#page/n458/mode/2up>.

⁹²⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 294.

“A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor.”⁹²¹

Compounding the problem, Jewish people and Christians viewed gentiles as sexually immoral people.⁹²² Therefore, the recipients of this letter wondered if sex with an unbelieving spouse would defile a Christian (1 Cor 5:9–13; 1 Cor 6:15–20).⁹²³ Indeed, Paul later commanded the Corinthians not to marry non-Christians (2 Cor 6:14). With remarkable mutuality, Paul exhorted these Christian men and women to remain married.⁹²⁴

However, if the unbeliever chose to leave, God no longer bound the Christian spouse to maintain the union.⁹²⁵ Paul viewed matrimony as a genuine partnership. Consequently, he refrained from urging Christian men to force submission or conversion upon their wives, even within that patriarchal culture.⁹²⁶

Read 1 Cor 7:12–13. What was Paul’s advice to those who converted to Christ while married? Why was that revolutionary in their society? How did that differ from his command for believers who contemplated union with a non-Christian?

Contagious Holiness

c) 1 Cor 7:14: Prior to Christ’s coming, the dominant Jewish view asserted that unclean things contaminated holy ones (Lev 11:24–25; Lev 13:45–46; Hag 2:11–14). However, Jesus exhibited contagious holiness. When he touched unclean people, they became clean without dying and without defiling him (Num 4:15; Luke 5:12–14).⁹²⁷

Similarly, Paul contended that the Lord viewed the religiously mixed marriages he mentioned in 1 Cor 7:12–13 as Christian unions.⁹²⁸ He wrote that these partners should remain together, for “sanctified is the unbelieving man in his wife and sanctified is the unbelieving wife in the [Christian] brother. Otherwise, your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

Women converted to Christianity in far greater numbers than men in the early church.⁹²⁹ In the event of a divorce in Greco-Roman society, the children typically remained with their father.⁹³⁰

⁹²¹Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom (Conjugalia Praecepta)*, 19,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D19>.

⁹²²Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 290.

⁹²³Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

⁹²⁴Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 295–6.

⁹²⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 329.

⁹²⁶Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 296.

⁹²⁷Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 297.

⁹²⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 329.

⁹²⁹Origen, *Against Celsus*, 44.3, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefathe00menzgoog#page/n458/mode/2up>.

⁹³⁰Keener, *IVPBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:14.

By the first century AD, Jewish people abandoned the notion of marriage as a transfer of ownership from the bride’s parents to her husband. Instead, they adhered to the concept of being set apart for one another. “Sanctify,” “set apart,” “consecrate,” “treat as holy,” and “dedicate” are all translations of one Greek word, *hagiazō*.⁹³¹ Therefore, a man avowed that his wife was sanctified to him and he would sanctify her, affirming the lawfulness of their marriage. In addition, by having set apart a spouse to oneself prior to coming to Christ, that unbeliever now lived within a godly sphere of influence.⁹³²

Unlike the rabbis (*m. Kiddushin* 2:1–3, 10), Paul denoted the believing spouse as the one who sanctifies the unbeliever, regardless of gender. This placed a female Christian in the more spiritually powerful role normally reserved for a Jewish male.⁹³³ Elsewhere, he wrote, “there is not Jew nor Greek, there is not slave nor free, there is not male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Furthermore, Paul’s thought differs from Jewish teaching that any children issuing from a religiously mixed marriage assume the status of the “genealogically blemished” spouse (Ezra 10:1–3, 16–17; *m. Kiddushin* 3:12). Instead, they are holy, with the full right of access to the community of believers.⁹³⁴ The status of their children proves that God has set both spouses apart in his sight.⁹³⁵ This family solidarity derives from the “two becoming one flesh” in the divinely ordained institution of marriage (Gen 2:24). Thus, their home becomes a sacred sphere for God’s transforming power, with increased potential for their salvation.⁹³⁶

Read 1 Cor 7:14. What effect does one believing spouse have upon a family? Why is that?

Dissolution of Marriage

d) 1 Cor 7:15–16: Paul continued, writing, “But if the unbeliever separates, let him separate; the brother or the sister is not enslaved in such cases, but in peace God has called us.” In the Greco-Roman context, separation constituted a legal divorce. The apostle taught that a believer should work to continue the marital union (1 Cor 7:10–14).⁹³⁷ However, if the non-Christian spouse refused to remain in the relationship due to the new believer’s allegiance to Christ,⁹³⁸ Paul advised the Christian to allow the dissolution of their marriage.⁹³⁹ Likely, nothing could prevent the divorce anyway.⁹⁴⁰ In these cases, God does not require his people to maintain the spousal affiliation.⁹⁴¹

⁹³¹ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “α*γιάζω” (*hagiazō*), *BDAG*, 9–10.

⁹³² Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 298–9.

⁹³³ Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, “Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14,” *JBL* 121, no. 4 (12 January 2002): 711–44, 718.

⁹³⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 301–302.

⁹³⁵ Gillihan, “Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14, 715.

⁹³⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 299–301.

⁹³⁷ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199–200.

⁹³⁸ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

⁹³⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 333.

⁹⁴⁰ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

⁹⁴¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 334.

On the other hand, new converts must avoid the temptation to start living in the Christian world so completely that they shut out their spouses, leaving their partners feeling so abandoned and estranged that divorce occurs. Instead, new believers should model self-sacrificing love, more committed to the health of their marriages than ever. In that way, only radical prejudice could cause their non-Christian mates to leave.⁹⁴²

Since the foundational definition of marriage in the Bible involves cleaving to one's spouse (Gen 2:23–24; Mark 10:2–12), adultery and desertion rend asunder the one-flesh relationship (Matt 5:31–32). In effect, they each dissolve a marriage even before a court grants a legal divorce. An official dissolution merely acknowledges what has already occurred.⁹⁴³

Given the Greco-Roman context, being “not bound as a slave” implies both the freedom to divorce and the right to remarry another believer (1 Cor 7:39).⁹⁴⁴ However, this applies only to the innocent party.⁹⁴⁵ Paul compared having to live as if one were married after being abandoned akin to slavery.⁹⁴⁶ All Jewish divorce certificates and most Greco-Roman divorce decrees included a phrase such as, “you are free to marry any man you wish,” wording that rabbis considered essential (*m. Gittin* 9.3).⁹⁴⁷

Concerning other circumstances so damaging that a marriage was already destroyed,⁹⁴⁸ the rabbis also recognized emotional neglect, cruelty, and humiliation as just grounds for a legal divorce (*m. Ketubot* 7:1–5).⁹⁴⁹ The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence produced an Equality Wheel and a Power and Control Wheel to help people differentiate between healthy and abusive relationships.

Categories of Power and Control include:

Intimidation – Causing fear with looks, acts, or physical gestures; breaking things; hurting pets; showing weapons

Emotional Abuse – Criticizing; insulting; calling bad names; causing a person to feel crazy; humiliating; making someone feel guilty

Isolating – Controlling what a person does, sees, or reads; controlling what a person sees; controlling who a person sees or talks to; using jealousy as an excuse

Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming – Does not take a person's concern about abuse seriously or says it did not happen; refuses to take responsibility for abuse or says the person caused it

Using Children – Makes a person feel guilty about their children; uses the children to send messages; makes visiting children an opportunity to harass someone; threatens to take children

⁹⁴² Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 303.

⁹⁴³ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139.

⁹⁴⁴ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 201.

⁹⁴⁵ Keener, *IVPBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:15.

⁹⁴⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 303.

⁹⁴⁷ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 119, 202.

⁹⁴⁸ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139.

⁹⁴⁹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 107–8.

Male Privilege – Treats a woman like a servant; makes all the major decisions; acts like “a king in a castle”; decides what men’s roles and women’s roles should be

Economic Abuse – Stops someone from getting a job; makes a person ask for money or gives an allowance; takes a person’s money; does not let someone understand family income or finances

Coercion and Threats – Threatens to hurt someone, leave the relationship, commit suicide, or report a person to authorities; makes someone drop legal charges; makes someone break the law

Physical Violence –

Sexual Violence –

Categories of Equality include:

Non-Threatening Behavior – Talks and acts so a person feels safe and comfortable to say and do things

Respect – Listens without judging; affirms and understands someone’s emotions; values a person’s opinions

Trust and Support – approves of and helps someone reach personal goals; respects a person’s right to have feelings, make friendships, engage in activities, and express opinions

Honesty and Accountability – Accepts responsibility for own behavior; acknowledges any past violence; admits it when wrong; communicates freely and truthfully

Responsible Parenting – Shares responsibility for children; behaves as a positive role model

Shares Responsibility – Agrees to fairly divide work that needs to be done; makes family decisions together

Economic Partnership – Makes decisions about finances together; ensures both partners benefit from available money

Negotiation and Fairness – Seeks to resolve conflict to satisfy both partners; accepts change; is willing to compromise

Nonviolence –⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁵⁰<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/EqualitywheelNOSHADING.pdf>;
<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_about.html).

Since one of the terms in 1 Cor 6:9–11 means “reviler, abusive person” (*loidoros*),⁹⁵¹ Paul taught that such behavior remains incompatible with the presence of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:19–24). In fact, he advised the church to remove abusive people from their fellowship (1 Cor 5:9–13).⁹⁵²

Where abuse or neglect occur, we must consider each case on its own merits to avoid the twin errors of easy acceptance of divorce and a complete lack of forgiveness toward those who end their marriages.⁹⁵³ Otherwise, we afflict the innocent spouse with even greater physical and emotional damage.⁹⁵⁴ With a desire for reconciliation at the core of our Christian identity, God calls us to adopt a peace-loving approach, for “as much as you are capable, with all people live in peace” (Rom 12:18).⁹⁵⁵

Paul’s words, “For how do you know, wife, if your husband you shall save? Or how do you know, husband, if your wife you shall save?” are somewhat ambiguous. It remains unclear whether he offered hope that if they stay married, their influence would cause their spouses to embrace the faith, or whether he advised them not to fight a divorce because they have no assurance of conversion.⁹⁵⁶ Although Paul previously observed that unbelieving spouses have been sanctified by being married to Christians (1 Cor 7:14), the Lord does not promise their salvation.⁹⁵⁷

Read 1 Cor 7:15–16. How did Paul advise believers whose non-Christian spouses choose to end their marriages? What do adultery, desertion, and abuse do to the one-flesh relationship? How do pp. 291–292 of the PCA Position on Divorce and Remarriage reflect Paul’s teaching?⁹⁵⁸ In what practical ways can you support people who are experiencing such trauma?

⁹⁵¹ Danker et al., “λοιδωρος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602, <https://archive.org/stream/greekenglishlex00liddrich#page/902/mode/2up>.

⁹⁵² Danker, et al., “λοιδωρος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602.

⁹⁵³ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 142–3.

⁹⁵⁴ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139–40.

⁹⁵⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 304.

⁹⁵⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *Rev. Ed.*, 337–8.

⁹⁵⁷ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:16.

⁹⁵⁸ According to this theologically conservative denomination, “The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threaten the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the Session, or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the Session should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by ‘hating’ the abused spouse and not ‘nourishing and cherishing’ this one (Eph. 5:28–29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the Session that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:15].” 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage,” 291–2. <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>.

Naked and Not Ashamed

5) Gen 2:25: The final verse of this creation account announces, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and [they were] not ashamed (*bosh*) before one another.”⁹⁵⁹ No barrier had yet driven a wedge between Adam and Eve.⁹⁶⁰ Israel’s culture was shame-based, unlike our guilt-based Western society.⁹⁶¹

Apart from this verse, nudity in the Old Testament always connotes humiliation, whether due to poverty or oppression (Job 24:7–10), as a circumstance of birth (Ezek 16:4–5), or—most often—as a symbol of disgrace (Ezek 16:35–39).⁹⁶² Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve gloried in their nakedness, unaware of any sense of impropriety (Gen 3:6–7).⁹⁶³

Read Gen 2:25. Why did Adam and Eve feel this way?

An Overview of Creation

6) Close this chapter by prayerfully reading Ps 104. This psalm serves as an inspired commentary on the first two chapters of Genesis.⁹⁶⁴ Note the correspondence between Day 1 and verses 1–2a; Day 2 and vv. 2b–3; Day 3 and vv. 5–18; Day 4 and vv. 19–23; Day 5 and vv. 24–26; Day 6 and vv. 27–30; and Day 7 with vv. 31–32.

What new insights have you gained by reading Gen 1–2 in its Ancient Near Eastern context?

⁹⁵⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בֹּשׁ” (*bosh*), *BDB*, 101–2, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/100/mode/2up>.

⁹⁶⁰ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁹⁶¹ Timothy C. Tennant, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 83.

⁹⁶² Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁹⁶³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

⁹⁶⁴ John E. Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 182.

Chapter 6: A Serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3:1–13)

The narrative of Gen 2:4–24 reiterates the sixth day of creation from a more intimate perspective. It describes the Lord’s provision for and relationship with those created in his image (Gen 1:26–30). After forming Adam from the ground and breathing a living soul into him, God placed him into a well-watered, luxuriant garden to perform the priestly function of serving, working, cultivating, and keeping it. This beautiful park was full of trees which produced wonderful food, including the tree of life which stood at its center (Gen 2:8–15).

The Lord gave Adam freedom to eat from any of these. However, there was one prohibition. The Lord God laid charge upon the man, saying, ‘From all of the trees of the garden you are able to eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, because in the day you eat it, you shall surely die’” (Gen 2:16–17). Adam was to acquire wisdom through his relationship with the Lord, rather than seeking it on his own.

Recognizing that it was not good for Adam to be alone, God paraded the animals he had created before him. While exercising the authority of an image-bearer of God by naming each animal,⁹⁶⁵ Adam reached a devastating conclusion. Every animal had its mate, but an equal and adequate partner did not exist for him (Gen 2:18–20).

Now that God had awakened Adam’s longing, the Lord placed him into a very deep, supernatural sleep. God took raw material, not from the ground, but from Adam’s side to fashion the first woman. Upon awakening, the man recognized his true counterpart and enthusiastically uttered a covenant of unalterable loyalty:

This, this time,
[is] bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called woman,
for from man was taken this!⁹⁶⁶

In harmonious intimacy, the two became one flesh; they were naked but knew no shame (Gen 2:21–25).

Serpents in the Ancient Near East

1) Gen 3:1: Humanity experienced a time of probation in the garden through Adam as our representative. God expected Adam to adhere to the prohibition of eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:16–17). This test would determine whether Adam accepted his position of power under the Lord, his emperor, when presented with what seemed to be an arbitrary command.⁹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the serpent had a two-fold objective: to halt the spread of the kingdom of God and to prevent humanity from continuing to serve as the Lord’s ambassadors.⁹⁶⁸ In the Ancient Near East (ANE) during the second millennium BC, people associated serpents with both death and wisdom.⁹⁶⁹

For example, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the protagonist dove through deep water to procure the “Old Man Becomes a Young Man” plant which one could eat to become immortal.

⁹⁶⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 75.

⁹⁶⁶ Translation by G. Wenham; see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70.

⁹⁶⁷ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

⁹⁶⁸ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 120.

⁹⁶⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:1.

Before Gilgamesh could test it, a snake smelled the plant, sneaked up behind him, and stole it. As the serpent slithered away, it sloughed off its skin, demonstrating that the plant imparted eternal life.⁹⁷⁰ Due to this treachery, Gilgamesh was doomed to die, for “Enlil...the father of the gods...has destined thy fate, O Gilgamesh, for kingship, for eternal life he has not destined it.”⁹⁷¹

The Akkadian story of a man named Adapa also features an account of squandered eternal life.⁹⁷² A serpent-shaped god whose name means “Lord Productive Tree” (Gishida) ruled over the netherworld.⁹⁷³ He offered Adapa the bread of life to give him immortality. However, another god had already tricked Adapa, saying, “When they offer thee bread of death, thou shalt not eat [it]. When they offer thee water of death, thou shalt not drink [it]. When they offer thee a garment, put [it] on.” Therefore, when Lord Protective Tree presented the bread of life to Adapa, he refused it.⁹⁷⁴

According to Egyptians, each night the ship of the sun god moved through the skies of the underworld, where a demon named Apophis lurked.⁹⁷⁵ This forty-five-foot serpent operated as an “anti-god and enemy of order.”⁹⁷⁶ Therefore, Egyptian priests performed daily temple rituals to repulse him, sparing the land from destruction:⁹⁷⁷ “This spell is to be recited over Apophis drawn on a new sheet of papyrus in green color and put inside a box on which his name is set, he being tied and bound and put on the fire every day, wiped out with [your] left foot and spat upon four times in the course of every day. “[The sun god] Re is triumphant,” and “Pharaoh—life, prosperity, health!—is triumphant over his enemies”—four times.⁹⁷⁸

On the other hand, the serpent Wadjet served as the patron goddess of Lower Egypt. People portrayed her as a cobra on the headdress of the pharaoh. Egyptians viewed Wadjet as very wise and capable of great magic.⁹⁷⁹

During the time of Moses, artists depicted the fertility goddess Qudshu on Egyptian amulets and reliefs. Typically, she appeared naked, holding snakes in both hands or flowers in one and serpents in the other.⁹⁸⁰ She often surfaced in erotic scenes with other minor gods. Later, her identity fused with that of a Canaanite fertility goddess named Astarte or Asherah, who bore seventy sons.⁹⁸¹ Eventually, Asherah ensnared Israel (Judg 6:24–25; 1 Ki 18:17–19; 2 Ki 23:7). In sum, people in the ANE often worshiped serpents. They represented occult wisdom, chaos, fertility, and immortality.⁹⁸²

In Gen 2:25–3:1, Moses employed wordplay concerning the man’s and the woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*) and the snake’s shrewdness (*arum*). This accentuated the

⁹⁷⁰ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, 11:265–89, 96.

⁹⁷¹ S. N. Kramer, trans., “The Death of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, lines 33–5, 50.

⁹⁷² Pritchard, *ANET*, 101.

⁹⁷³ Walton, *Genesis*, 203.

⁹⁷⁴ E. A. Speiser, trans., “Adapa,” in *ANET*, lines 20–70, 101–2, 101–3.

⁹⁷⁵ James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 3rd. Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 6.

⁹⁷⁶ Ludwig D. Morenz, “Apophis: On the Origin, Name, and Nature of an Egyptian Anti-God,” *JNES* 63, no. 3 (July 2004):201–5, 201, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/424771>.

⁹⁷⁷ Pritchard, *ANET*, 7.

⁹⁷⁸ John A. Wilson, trans., “The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation,” in *ANET*, 7.

⁹⁷⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 203.

⁹⁸⁰ The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, “Plaque 61–14–1655,” <http://www.penn.museum/collections/object/338637>. This site features an excellent photo.

⁹⁸¹ John Day, “Asherah (Deity),” *ABD* 1:483–7, 484.

⁹⁸² Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:1–5.

vulnerability of Adam and Eve.⁹⁸³ A neutral term, we can also translate *arum* as “cunning” or “prudent,” a remedy for naiveté (Prov 1:4).⁹⁸⁴ Yet, when utilized by those who seek evil, such craftiness connotes danger (Exod 21:14).⁹⁸⁵

Moses described the snake as an animal, presumably one of the creatures made by God. An evil force came from within the created order; it did not break into the world from another realm.⁹⁸⁶ The text gives no hint of a supernatural entity,⁹⁸⁷ except for the fact that the serpent spoke.⁹⁸⁸ It seems that the snake had heard the prohibition which the Lord had delivered to Adam (Gen 2:16–17).⁹⁸⁹ He then altered it to ensnare his victims, asking the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from all the trees of the garden?’”.

In effect, the serpent said, “You must have misheard. Surely a good God would not limit someone he loves in that way.”⁹⁹⁰ As a result, the snake altered the attitude of the creatures toward their creator, encouraging people to make judgments about God’s words rather than simply obeying them.⁹⁹¹ Genesis does not explain why the serpent addressed Eve,⁹⁹² nor does it disclose why Adam failed to assist her in rebuffing the snake’s claims.⁹⁹³

a) Read Gen 3:1. How did people in the ANE view serpents? What act by the serpent in Eden first revealed his craftiness?

A World-Altering Conversation

b) Gen 3:2–5: By the time of Moses, serpents represented occult wisdom, chaos, fertility, and immortality in the Ancient Near East.⁹⁹⁴ In the garden, a snake engaged Eve in conversation regarding the Lord’s prohibition in Gen 2:16–17. He began by asking, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from all the trees of the garden?’”.

Moses reported, “The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but of the tree which [is] in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, or you will die.”’ The serpent said to the woman, ‘You shall not *surely* die. For God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.’”

⁹⁸³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90.

⁹⁸⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עָרוּם” (*arum*), *BDB*, 791, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/790/mode/2up>.

⁹⁸⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 203–4.

⁹⁸⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

⁹⁸⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

⁹⁸⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

⁹⁸⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73.

⁹⁹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 106.

⁹⁹¹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 107–8.

⁹⁹² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

⁹⁹³ Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

⁹⁹⁴ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:1–5.

She corrected the snake, but not quite accurately, adding a ban on even touching the tree.⁹⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Lord had warned, “You shall surely die” (*moth tamuth*) (Gen 2:16–17). He underscored the inevitability of death,⁹⁹⁶ not an immediate loss of life. Eve reported that God said, “...or you shall die” (*temuthun*) which has a slightly different nuance. The serpent recognized Eve’s faulty understanding and capitalized upon it by contradicting her, not God.⁹⁹⁷

It responded with an unusual construction which occurs only three times in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 49:8; Amos 9:8. By placing the word “not” (*lo*) in front of “surely die” (*lo moth tamuth*), the snake negated the emphatic inevitability of death, not that it would occur.⁹⁹⁸ The snake asserted, “Death is not an immediate hazard. You have nothing to fear.”⁹⁹⁹

This event underscores the importance of teaching what God says, rather than making the Bible seem more restrictive than it really is. Since evil can take advantage of this type of exaggeration, we must guard against it.¹⁰⁰⁰ If Eve had been informed that she would die if she merely touched the fruit and suffered no harm for doing so, this may have caused her to doubt the veracity of what God forbade and encouraged her to proceed in error. Although placing limits upon ourselves to avoid falling into sin reflects wisdom, we must accurately teach others what Scripture declares (Deut 4:2; Deut 12:32).

After asserting that Eve faced no immediate threat from death,¹⁰⁰¹ the serpent directed her attention to the Lord’s inner thoughts, suggesting that he could ascertain the mind of God. Instead of judgment, the snake promised that disobedience would result in blessings.¹⁰⁰² The nature of evil entices humans to sit in judgment on God’s word, not to simply hear and obey it.¹⁰⁰³

Ultimately, rebellion treats the truth as a lie.¹⁰⁰⁴ According to the serpent, Adam and Eve could begin their heavenward climb to becoming like God, moving beyond the limits set by the Lord in understanding his mysteries.¹⁰⁰⁵ Had they waited, the wisdom the serpent pledged to Adam and Eve might have been theirs to enjoy in the future, when they passed the test and the time was right.¹⁰⁰⁶

Read Gen 3:2–5. What did Eve say that the Lord commanded? How does that differ from what he told Adam in Gen 2:16–17? Why was the serpent able to use her misunderstanding to his advantage? What did the snake promise?

⁹⁹⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

⁹⁹⁶ Gesenius, *GKC*, 342.

⁹⁹⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 205.

⁹⁹⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 205.

⁹⁹⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 205.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 109.

¹⁰⁰¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 205.

¹⁰⁰² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 189.

¹⁰⁰³ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 108.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 112.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 190.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 205–6.

Succumbing to Temptation

d) Gen 3:6: Adam and Eve viewed the snake—a creature under their authority—as the paragon of wisdom (Gen 1:26–28). Folly drove their decision, for they possessed all the good things they needed but wanted more (Gen 1:29–30).¹⁰⁰⁷ Consequently, Eve chose to view the fruit from the forbidden tree like all other produce in Eden: good for food and a delight to the eyes (Gen 2:8–9, 16–17).¹⁰⁰⁸

Once she determined that the tree was “desirable in order to become wise,” covetousness arose in her heart.¹⁰⁰⁹ Unaware of evil, Eve likely saw this as an opportunity to grow in godlikeness.¹⁰¹⁰ Craving something she did not have,¹⁰¹¹ Eve ignored God’s command to pursue aesthetic appearance, sensual desire, and convenience.¹⁰¹²

Moses wrote, “And she took of its fruit, and she ate, and she gave [it] also to her husband [who was] with her, and he ate.” The verb forms point to a chronological sequence of events, with each one representing the logical consequence of what preceded it.¹⁰¹³ This rapidly cascades to push the narrative forward.¹⁰¹⁴ The text does not convey that Eve tempted Adam. We do not know what type of fruit they ate. The notion of an apple comes from the Latin words for “apple” and “evil” sounding alike.¹⁰¹⁵

Read Gen 3:6. What changes took place in Eve’s heart? How did Adam respond when his wife offered him forbidden fruit? Why do you think he did that? In what sense did Adam and Eve die that day? How do you respond to things which delight your eyes and offer a short-cut to achieving your goals?

Their Eyes Are Opened

e) Gen 3:7: In one respect the serpent told the truth. Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery (Gen 3:4–5). They were naked!¹⁰¹⁶ The duality of good and evil demolished their prior unity of knowledge, with all things beneficial.¹⁰¹⁷ Thus, a sign of their healthy relationship suddenly became shameful (Cf. Gen 2:25),¹⁰¹⁸ and they immediately experienced the

¹⁰⁰⁷ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 103.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 75.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 190.

¹⁰¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 113.

¹⁰¹¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 190.

¹⁰¹² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 91.

¹⁰¹³ Gesenius, *GKC*, 328, <https://archive.org/details/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft/page/328>.

¹⁰¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 75.

¹⁰¹⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 191.

¹⁰¹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

¹⁰¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 122.

¹⁰¹⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 191.

alienation of spiritual death (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁰¹⁹ Ironically, fig leaves come from trees which symbolize the fertility of life.¹⁰²⁰

Read Gen 3:7. How did the opening of their eyes differ from what Adam and Eve had expected? What did their shame lead them to do? How do you react to shameful experiences?

Receiving the Crown of Life

2) James 1:12: Earlier in chapter 1, James exhorted his readers to respond with joy to trials because the testing of their faith would produce perseverance (Jas 1:2–4).¹⁰²¹ Yet, every ordeal we encounter also carries an inner enticement to sin.¹⁰²² Therefore, he contrasted two paths we can take. Facing tests with endurance leads to life. Yielding to desire produces sin, which causes death.¹⁰²³

Our loyalty to God causes us to turn from temptation, for real love for the Lord manifests itself in action.¹⁰²⁴ God has promised the crown of life to those who love him. James employed imagery of disciplined, well-trained athletes so enthralled with their sport that they pursue their goal to the end and win the race, earning laurel wreath crowns.¹⁰²⁵

a) Read James 1:12. How does temptation provide both a pitfall and an opportunity? What enables you to persevere through trials?

A Baited Trap

b) James 1:13–15: Since the same Greek word means “test” and “tempt” (*peirazō*),¹⁰²⁶ some of James’s readers regarded testing by God as an act in which he tempted people to sin.¹⁰²⁷ In keeping with Prov 19:3, a Greek text records Zeus making this complaint: “See how men lay blame upon us gods for what is after all nothing but their own folly...though he knew it would be the death of him; for I sent Hermes to warn him not to do either of these things...Hermes told him this in all good will but he would not listen, and now he has paid for everything in full.”¹⁰²⁸

James used two allusions familiar to people who hunt and fish to explain how evil works. Someone who fishes employs a lure to capture and drag away a fish, and a hunter sets bait to

¹⁰¹⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 92.

¹⁰²⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

¹⁰²¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 69.

¹⁰²² Moo, *The Letter of James*, 72.

¹⁰²³ Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 121.

¹⁰²⁴ David P. Nystrom, *James* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 72.

¹⁰²⁵ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 70.

¹⁰²⁶ Danker, et al., “πειράζω” (*peirazō*), *BDAG*, 792–3.

¹⁰²⁷ McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 114.

¹⁰²⁸ Homer, *The Odyssey* (trans. Samuel Butler, revised by Timothy Power and Gregory Nagy; London: A. C. Fifield, 1900), 1.32–4, [Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0218](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0218).

entice an unsuspecting victim.¹⁰²⁹ Even so, the seductive power of human desire pulls us toward sin.¹⁰³⁰ We may blame others, Satan, or even God, but ultimately the guilt for our moral failure falls upon us.¹⁰³¹

Read Jas 1:13–15. Why do we know that God does not tempt us? How and why are we tempted?

Hiding from God

3) Gen 3:8: This verse does not depict God calmly enjoying an evening stroll through paradise ignorant of what Adam and Eve have done.¹⁰³² The phrase commonly translated “cool of the day” also means “wind (*ruakh*) of the storm” (*yom*), a reference to God’s sudden intervention (Cf. Job 38:1–3; Ps 18:9–15).¹⁰³³ Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment (Cf. Ps 29; Nah 1:2–3). No wonder they ran into hiding!¹⁰³⁴ Even as they fled, they likely suspected that one cannot escape from God.¹⁰³⁵

a) Read Gen 3:8. Why were Adam and Eve so frightened? How would you have reacted?

A Day of Reckoning

b) Gen 3:9–13: Genesis 3:9–19 forms a chiasm. This type of parallelism takes the form A–B–C–B–A. First, God addressed the man, then the woman, and finally the serpent. The penalties for their rebellion occur in the reverse order. In a chiasm, the most important point usually comes at the center, as it does here (Gen 3:14–15).

The passage opens with the Lord calling Adam to account, just as a pharaoh later demanded an explanation from Abraham (Gen 12:14–20).¹⁰³⁶ Afraid to answer the question but not daring to lie, Adam explained that he hid because he was naked, even though he had covered himself (Gen 3:6–8).¹⁰³⁷ Ironically, we can translate “I heard (*shama*) your voice in the garden” as “I obeyed your voice in the garden.”¹⁰³⁸ That is precisely what Adam failed to do.¹⁰³⁹

The Lord gave Adam an opportunity to confess his transgression. He asked, “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁰⁴⁰ Adam exhibited

¹⁰²⁹ Nystrom, *James*, 74.

¹⁰³⁰ McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 118.

¹⁰³¹ Nystrom, *James*, 73.

¹⁰³² Meredith G. Kline, “Primal Parousia,” *WTJ* 40, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 245–80, 245, <https://meredithkline.com/klines-works/articles-and-essays/primal-parousia/>.

¹⁰³³ Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

¹⁰³⁴ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:8.

¹⁰³⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 129.

¹⁰³⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 76.

¹⁰³⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 193.

¹⁰³⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמָע” (*shema*), *BDB*, 1033–4,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1032/mode/2up>.

¹⁰³⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 194.

the divisive effects of rebellion, instead of acknowledging his sin. God’s silence indicates that he rejected this explanation.¹⁰⁴¹ Eve also failed to express contrition. However, she blamed neither God nor her husband.¹⁰⁴² Nevertheless, sin obliterated the harmony between God and humanity, between men and women, and between people and animals (Gen 1:26–31; Gen 2:18–25).¹⁰⁴³

Read Gen 3:9–13. How did Adam’s evasive answer indict him? Who did Adam blame for his actions? How did Eve explain her behavior? Why do we tend to exhibit this pattern?

Falling for Deception

4) 2 Cor 11:2–4: The serpent employed rhetorical guile to ensnare Eve (Gen 3:1–6). In the same way, Paul’s rivals snaked their way into the Corinthian church. They won its members’ affection and captured their minds with an alluring false gospel.¹⁰⁴⁴

Surprisingly, people did not identify Satan with the serpent in Eden until the second century BC–first century AD.¹⁰⁴⁵ According to a Jewish apocryphal text, Satan envied humanity because God made them in his image and installed them as his representatives over the created order (Gen 1:26–28). It says, “God formed us to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made us. But by the envy of the devil [that Adam and Eve had dominion over all creation], death entered the world, and they who are allied with him experience it” (Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–4, NABR).

During the centuries before and after the birth of Christ, authors speculated concerning Eve’s deception, with some writing that the serpent physically seduced her.¹⁰⁴⁶ In 4 Maccabees (first century AD), the heroes’ mother stated, “No seducer of the desert *or* destroyer in the field destroyed me, nor did the destroyer, the deceitful serpent, maltreat my innocent virginity. So, I remained until the end with *my* husband.”¹⁰⁴⁷ Later, the Babylonian Talmud made a more explicit assertion: “Rabbi Yohanan (180–279 AD) says, ‘When the serpent copulated with Eve, he infused her with lust’” (*b. Yebam 103b*).

Contrary to a popular view that women are more prone to deception, Paul warned the entire Corinthian church that falling for deceit did not exonerate Eve. Neither would they be without guilt if they followed false teachers.¹⁰⁴⁸

¹⁰⁴¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 77.

¹⁰⁴² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 194.

¹⁰⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Garland David E., *2 Corinthians* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 462.

¹⁰⁴⁵ New American Bible Revised Edition, Wisdom 2:23–4,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Wisdom+2%3A23-24&version=NABRE>.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 445.

¹⁰⁴⁷ R. Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 4 Macc 18:8.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 463.

a) **Read 2 Cor 11:2–4.** Why did Paul compare the members of the congregation in Corinth to Eve? What was his concern? Why is it significant that he compared both men and women to Eve? How can you avoid following false teachers?

An Angel of Light

b) **2 Cor 11:13–15:** Paul exposed the scandalous nature of the “false apostles” and “deceitful workmen” in Corinth who challenged his position as an apostle.¹⁰⁴⁹ Unfortunately, successful con men often assume religious personas to pursue their selfish ambition. However, their narcissism and superior attitudes ultimately reveal that they masquerade as people sent by God.¹⁰⁵⁰

One pertinent document, entitled “The Life of Adam and Eve,” was written during the first century AD. This fictitious work describes the lives of the couple after their exile from Eden.¹⁰⁵¹ It says, “Eighteen days passed. Then Satan grew angry and transfigured himself into the brilliance of an angel and went off to the Tigris River to Eve.”¹⁰⁵²

Another apocryphal work gives this account of the fall according to Eve: “And the devil spake to the serpent saying, ‘Rise up, come to me and I will tell thee a word whereby thou mayst have profit.’ And he arose and came to him. And the devil saith to him, ‘I hear that thou art wiser than all the beasts, and I have come to counsel thee. Why dost thou eat of Adam's tares and not of paradise? Rise up and we will cause him to be cast out of paradise, even as we were cast out through him.’ The serpent saith to him, ‘I fear lest the Lord be wroth with me.’ The devil saith to him: ‘Fear not, only be my vessel and I will speak through thy mouth words to deceive him.’ And instantly he hung himself from the wall of paradise, and when the angels ascended to worship God, then Satan appeared in the form of an angel and sang hymns like the angels. And I bent over the wall and saw him, like an angel. But he saith to me: ‘Art thou Eve?’”¹⁰⁵³

Since Satan can fashion himself into an “angel of light,” we should not be shocked when his followers disguise themselves as “ministers of righteousness.”¹⁰⁵⁴

Read 2 Cor 11:13–15. Why must we be on guard for false teaching in our churches? How can we protect ourselves from falling prey to con artists and deception?

¹⁰⁴⁹Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 524.

¹⁰⁵⁰Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 484.

¹⁰⁵¹Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 351.

¹⁰⁵²Berlie Custis, Gary A. Anderson, and R. Layton, trans., *The Life of Adam and Eve* (1995), 9:1, <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/anderson/vita/english/vita.lat.html>.

¹⁰⁵³R. H. Charles, trans., “The Apocalypse of Moses,” in *APOT, Vol. 2* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 16.1–17.2, 145–6, <https://archive.org/details/CharlesRHTheApocryphaPseudepigraphaOfTheOldTestamentInEnglishVol21913/page/n161>.

¹⁰⁵⁴Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 525.

Chapter 7: Seed of the Serpent and of the Woman (Genesis 3:14–15)

Adam—as the representative for all humanity—underwent a time of probation to determine whether he would accept his position of power under God, his emperor. The Lord accomplished this by presenting him with what seemed to be an arbitrary command (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁰⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the serpent sought to thwart the expansion of the kingdom of God through the disqualification of the Lord’s ambassadors (Gen 1:26–28).¹⁰⁵⁶

In contrast to the man and woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*), the snake was shrewd (*arum*) (Gen 2:25–3:1).¹⁰⁵⁷ Aside from the fact that the serpent spoke,¹⁰⁵⁸ the text gives no hint that it was anything more than an animal made by God.¹⁰⁵⁹ Moses did not state why the serpent addressed Eve,¹⁰⁶⁰ why she misunderstood what the Lord had said, nor why Adam failed to assist her in countering the snake’s assertions.¹⁰⁶¹ By twisting God’s words, the serpent snared Eve into allying herself with him in her quest for divine wisdom, causing her to covet the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:2–5).

From there, events cascaded rapidly: “And she took of the fruit, and she ate, and she gave [it] also to her husband [who was] with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6). Each fell because of the other, in unity yet carrying the entire burden of guilt. In one respect the serpent told the truth. Their eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery. They were naked!¹⁰⁶² With their innocence replaced by shame, they quickly made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves (Gen 3:7).

Well-aware of what they had done, the Lord came to Eden in “the wind of the storm.”¹⁰⁶³ Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment and hid themselves (Gen 3:8).¹⁰⁶⁴ In his attempt to evade answering God’s question, Adam immediately indicted himself by declaring that he knew he was nude. The divisive effects of sin quickly emerged. Adam blamed Eve as well as God for creating her. Eve admitted she was deceived and pointed to the serpent (Gen 3:9–13). Thus, sin obliterated the harmony between God and humanity, men and women, and people with animals (Gen 2:18–24).¹⁰⁶⁵

God Curses the Serpent

1) Gen 3:14: This verse comprises the beginning of the center of the A-B-C-C-B-A chiasm concerning God’s interrogation of the guilty and his decree of judgment (Gen 3:9–19).¹⁰⁶⁶ Thus, the focus of the entire passage falls upon Gen 3:14–15. Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither questioned the serpent nor permitted him to explain his behavior (Cf. Gen 3:9–13).¹⁰⁶⁷ Only to the serpent and to Cain did God pronounce, “Cursed are you” (Gen 4:11).¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁵⁵ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:1.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

¹⁰⁶¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

¹⁰⁶² Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

¹⁰⁶³ Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:8.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

¹⁰⁶⁶ In this case, it forms an A-B-C-C-B-A pattern.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

The crafty (*arum*) one is now cursed (*arur*).¹⁰⁶⁹ As a result, snakes consist of the archetypal unclean animals (Lev 11:41–45).¹⁰⁷⁰ The mandate “You must be holy (*qadhosh*) because I am holy” frames the command that “You must not make yourselves unclean with all the swarming things which creep upon the earth” (Lev 11: 44–45).¹⁰⁷¹ This implies that we must give our allegiance to the Lord, rather than with to serpent.

Spells within the Egyptian Pyramid Texts from the second half of the third millennium BC were designed to force a serpent to “fall down and crawl away,”¹⁰⁷² keeping its face on the ground so could not rear up and strike.¹⁰⁷³ In Egypt, this concept persisted until at least 311 BC. Devised to control the monster who swallowed the sun every night and his horde of attendant demons,¹⁰⁷⁴ this incantation says:

“Get thee back, Apep (Apothis), thou enemy of [the sun god] Ra, thou winding serpent in the form of an intestine, without arms [and] without legs. Thy body cannot stand upright so that thou mayest have therein being, long is [thy] tail in front of thy den, thou enemy; retreat before Ra. Thy head shall be cut off, and the slaughter of thee shall be carried out. Thou shalt not lift up thy face, for his (i.e., Ra's) flame is in thy accursed soul.”¹⁰⁷⁵

Similarly, God’s curse in Genesis 3 limits the aggressive nature of snakes. It does not suggest that they once walked.¹⁰⁷⁶ This verse employs symbolism, as we know of no ancient writer who believed that serpents truly ate dust.¹⁰⁷⁷ Not only does eating dust represent humiliation and total defeat (Ps 72:8–9),¹⁰⁷⁸ it also depicts the grave, where dust fills the mouths of the dead. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu dreams on his deathbed about the netherworld as a dark place “where dust is their fare and clay their food.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Similarly, the Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World describes “the land of no return...the dark house...the house which none leave who have entered it... wherein the entrants are bereft of light, where dust is their fare and clay their food.”¹⁰⁸⁰

a) Read Gen 3:14. How would Moses's original readers have understood the effect of the Lord’s curse upon the serpent in this verse?

¹⁰⁶⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73.

¹⁰⁷¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁדָד” (*qadhosh*), *BDB*, 872–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuof#page/872/mode/2up>. This word also means “set apart” and “consecrated.”

¹⁰⁷² Ramadan B. Hussein, “Recontextualized—The Pyramid Texts ‘Serpent Spells’ in the Saite Contexts,” *Institut Des Cultures Mediterraneennes et Orientales de L’Academie Polonaise Des Sciences* 26 (2013): 274–90, 289n 50, http://www.academia.edu/5240927/Recontextualized_the_Pyramid_Texts_Serpent_Spells_in_the_Saite_Contexts.

¹⁰⁷³ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:15.

¹⁰⁷⁴ E.A. Wallis Budge, *Legends of the Gods: The Egyptian Texts, Edited with Translations* (London: British Museum, 1912), 2, https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA_vlvJ9uLy/page/n3.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Budge, *Legends of the Gods: The Egyptian Texts*, 76, https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA_vlvJ9uLy/page/n77.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁰⁷⁹ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, lines 4:33–7, 87.

¹⁰⁸⁰ E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World,” in *ANET*, obv. lines 1–8, 107.

The First Good News

b) Gen 3:15: This is one of the most famous verses in all of Scripture.¹⁰⁸¹ Early Christian commentators, beginning with Justin Martyr (ca. 160 AD) and Irenaeus (ca. 180 AD), called this inaugural Old Testament messianic prophecy the Protoevangelium (“first good news”).¹⁰⁸² The Lord said to the serpent, “And enmity I will put between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head and you will strike his heel.”

In his grace, the Lord intended to convert Eve’s inclinations toward Satan to righteous desire for himself (Cf. Gen 3:1–6).¹⁰⁸³ God’s counterattack started with the woman, where the serpent’s assault began.¹⁰⁸⁴ Therefore, the Lord ordained conflict between the serpent’s seed and the seed of the woman.¹⁰⁸⁵

Like in English, we can translate “zera” (seed) as either singular or plural. It refers to an immediate descendant, distant offspring, or a collective group of descendants.¹⁰⁸⁶ Here Moses developed and merged all three nuances.¹⁰⁸⁷ “Seed of the serpent” consists of people living in rebellion against God (Matt 12:34; Matt 23:33; John 8:44).¹⁰⁸⁸ It does not denote physical snakes or demons. Angels—even fallen ones—do not procreate (Matt 22:30). Everyone who unites against the Lord will fight against God’s people. This struggle forms a major theme of the remainder of Genesis (e.g. Gen 4:1–8).¹⁰⁸⁹

The serpent and his descendants shall share the same fate. Since the serpent symbolized sin, death, and malevolence, the curse upon him envisaged a long struggle between good and evil, with redeemed humanity triumphing.¹⁰⁹⁰ While the seed of the woman incline their hearts toward God, hostile unbelief characterizes the seed of the serpent (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43). Moses’ unspoken question to the reader is, “Whose seed are you?”¹⁰⁹¹

To accomplish God’s plan of redemption announced in Gen 3:15, the Lord allows the serpent to test the faithfulness of each generation. This teaches God’s covenant people to vie against Satan and his followers. It also fits with the nuance of the “seed” as a plural.¹⁰⁹²

However, the oldest Jewish interpretations understood this verse as the serpent being vanquished by a single messiah. For example, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible utilized a singular noun (*spermatos*) to describe him.¹⁰⁹³ While all of God’s people participate in the fight, this would ultimately result in a battle of champions,¹⁰⁹⁴ much as David and Goliath each represented their armies in single combat (1 Sam 17:8–10, 48–50).

¹⁰⁸¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 197.

¹⁰⁸² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

¹⁰⁸³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 133.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “זֶרַע” (*zera*), *BDB*, 282–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/282/mode/2up>.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 108.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 79–80.

¹⁰⁹¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

¹⁰⁹² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

¹⁰⁹³ Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Gen 3:15.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

Regarding what they would do to each other, both verbs are the same word (*shuph*), appearing in a form which implies repeated attacks by both sides.¹⁰⁹⁵ Thus, their enmity would be ongoing, with repeated skirmishes.¹⁰⁹⁶ Among the translation options for this verb are “bruise,”¹⁰⁹⁷ “crush,” “snap at,” “snatch at,”¹⁰⁹⁸ and “strike at.”¹⁰⁹⁹ Since the parallelism employed dictates translating these words the same way,¹¹⁰⁰ the most suitable option is, “He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

While not all serpents produce venom, those which do tend to be the most aggressive. Thus, people in the Ancient Near East considered an attack by a snake a potentially mortal blow.¹¹⁰¹ Indeed, grievous wounds would afflict the messiah (Isa 53:4–5),¹¹⁰² even to death. Both the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent would attack the most vulnerable part of the other.¹¹⁰³ Based upon the body parts involved, it appears that the serpent would strike as the seed of the woman stepped on him, resulting in both injuries occurring at once.

Read Gen 3:15. What is the difference between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? How would you characterize yourself? Why? What happens to someone whom a viper strikes on the heel?

The Accuser

2) Job 1:6–11 and Job 2:1–7: The setting of the book of Job corresponds to an era before the time of Moses. However, linguistically the book fits the time-period just before the exile.¹¹⁰⁴ It offers tantalizing clues of what was to come in redemptive history.

The story begins with Satan living up to his nickname “the Accuser” (Rev 12:10). He charged that Job served the Lord only because God had blessed him. Yet, Job proved true. Despite incredible suffering inflicted by the devil, he emphatically insisted, “Even now, behold, in the heavens is my witness, and my advocate is on high” (Job 16:19).¹¹⁰⁵ Job trusted that a

¹⁰⁹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 80.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Marten H. Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” *CTJ* 6, no. 2 (November 1, 1971): 194–203, 200–1, https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/te_d_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra_gen3_15_ctj.htm.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שׁוּפַח” (*shuph*), *BDB*, 1003, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1002/mode/2up>.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Holladay, “שׁוּפַח” (*shuph*), *CHALOT*, 364.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” 202, https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/te_d_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra_gen3_15_ctj.htm.

¹¹⁰⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 197.

¹¹⁰¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:15.

¹¹⁰² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹¹⁰³ Walton, *Genesis*, 226.

¹¹⁰⁴ James L. Crenshaw, “Job, Book of,” *ABD* 3:858–68, 863.

¹¹⁰⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שׁוּפַח” (*edh*), *BDB*, 729, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/728/mode/2up>.

member of the divine council would intervene with God for him (Cf. 1 John 2:1–2; 1 Tim 2:5).¹¹⁰⁶

After enduring further attacks from his friends (eg. Job 18), Job voiced his desperation, feeling that the Lord had hemmed him in on all sides. Nevertheless, he asserted, “I know that my redeemer lives, and one coming after me shall arise [to vindicate me]. And after this skin of mine has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26). Job built his confession of the resurrection upon the logic which would later form the cornerstone of Christian faith (John 5:28–29; 1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–55).¹¹⁰⁷ God’s restoration of Job’s fortune illustrates this in an amazing way. When we compare Job’s material and relational wealth as listed in Job 1:1–3 with his blessings in Job 42:12–13, we can see that every amount doubled except for the number of his children.

Read Job 1:6–11 and 2:1–7. What evidence do we see that the Lord has reined in the devil’s ability to strike? Why did Job stand firm? How does Job receiving the same number of children after his great trial illustrate his confession of the resurrection of the dead? What encouragement does the book of Job give you?

Satan Addresses the Heavenly Council

3) Zech 3:1–5: This passage paints a strong picture of Satan’s desire to disqualify God’s priests and thus thwart the Lord’s purposes. In response to this attack by the devil upon the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), Yahweh created a new social and religious structure which would affect not only Judah but the world. What happened in heaven would soon occur on Earth (Gal 3:27–28; 1 Pet 2:4–10).¹¹⁰⁸ It will recur in the New Jerusalem (Rev 3:1–6; Rev 22:3–4).

Joshua, whose name means, “Yahweh is salvation,” served as the first post-exilic high priest.¹¹⁰⁹ Shortly after returning from exile in Babylon,¹¹¹⁰ the prophet Zechariah experienced an incredible vision in which the heavenly council focused upon Joshua.¹¹¹¹

This meeting meshes with the Ancient Near Eastern concept of the gods consulting with one another before rendering decisions.¹¹¹² In *Enuma Elish*, “Marduk summoned the great gods to Assembly; presiding graciously, he issues instructions. To his utterance the gods pay heed.”¹¹¹³ However, the Lord consulted with angels rather than with other gods.

¹¹⁰⁶John H. Walton and Kelly L. Vizcaino, *Job* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 215.

¹¹⁰⁷John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 297.

¹¹⁰⁸Carol A. Newsom, “Angels: Old Testament,” *ABD*, 1:251–3, 251.

¹¹⁰⁹George W. Ramsey, “Joshua (Person),” *ABD* 3:999–1000, 999.

¹¹¹⁰Stanley E. Porter, “Joshua (Person),” *ABD* 3:1001.

¹¹¹¹Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 251.

¹¹¹²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Zech 3:4.

¹¹¹³Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 68.

As occurred with Job, Satan participated in this council as Joshua’s accuser (Job 1:6–11; Job 2:1–7; Rev 12:10).¹¹¹⁴ Given the priest’s filthy clothing, this denunciation concerned Joshua’s unworthiness to perform the duties required of his office (Exod 28:1–4, 36–41).¹¹¹⁵ Since God had chosen Israel for himself (Deut 4:37–38), the Lord rebuked the devil and said to the priest, “See, I have taken away, from upon you, your sin and shall clothe you with stately robes.” After being dressed in new garments, Joshua received a clean turban to restore his priestly dignity, rendering him fit to approach the Lord.¹¹¹⁶

a) Read Zech 3:1–5. What was Satan doing? Based upon the state of Joshua’s clothing, was the devil correct in his assessment? How was Joshua made fit to serve as the high priest? What parallels do you see with your own experience?

God’s Servant, the Branch

b) Zech 3:6–10: After promising Joshua free access to God’s presence if he would walk in the Lord’s ways and faithfully serve him, the Angel of the Lord made an astounding statement. He said, “Hear me, Joshua the high priest, you and the men sitting before you are a sign that...I am going to bring forth my servant, the Branch.” Joshua’s name means, “The Lord is Salvation.” The Greek version of that title is “Ἰησοῦς,”¹¹¹⁷ which we translate as “Jesus.” “The Branch” (*tsemakh*) refers to the rightful heir of David’s dynasty. He would merge the priestly and royal offices (Zech 6:11–13).¹¹¹⁸ Scripture recognizes Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king (Matt 21:1–11; Heb 7:24–8:2; Matt 2:1–2).

Verse 9 remains enigmatic, as we can also translate the “seven eyes” (*ayin*) as “seven springs.”¹¹¹⁹ If the latter, on the day when God cleanses the land from sin, seven gushing springs will water it, signifying an era of peace and prosperity.¹¹²⁰ Bolstering the case for “seven eyes,” Zech 4:10 says, “They shall rejoice and shall see the plumb stone in the hand of Zerubbabel, these seven eyes of Yahweh, they go roving about in all the earth” (Cf. Rev 5:6).¹¹²¹

The reference to “one stone with seven eyes” alludes to the Ancient Near Eastern tradition of overlaying a foundation stone with gold or silver and encrusting it with gems.¹¹²² A Hittite ritual states:

¹¹¹⁴Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 199.

¹¹¹⁵Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 251.

¹¹¹⁶Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 200.

¹¹¹⁷Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יהושׁוּעַ” (*yehoshua*), *BDB* 221,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/220/mode/2up>.

¹¹¹⁸Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 257.

¹¹¹⁹Brown, Driver, Briggs, “עֵינַי” (*ayin*), *BDB*, 744–5.

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/744/mode/2up>.

¹¹²⁰Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 202.

¹¹²¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 322.

¹¹²²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Zech 3:9.

“When they rebuild a temple that had been destroyed...Beneath the four corner(stones), each one of them, he deposits as follows: 1 foundation stone of silver, 1 foundation stone of gold, 1 foundation stone of lapis, 1 foundation stone of jasper, 1 foundation stone of marble, 1 foundation stone of iron, 1 foundation stone of copper, 1 foundation stone of bronze, 1 foundation stone of diorite. The four corner(stones) are (each) provided with these in the same way. While doing so he speaks as follows: ‘See! This temple which we have built for thee, the god (he mentions the name of the god for whom they build it)—it is not we who have (really) built it, all the gods have built it.’”¹¹²³

According to this passage, “The Branch” shall make the Day of Atonement obsolete when “he shall remove the sin of this land in one day” (Lev 16:29–34).¹¹²⁴ This cleansing will usher in an age of plenty, with everyone sitting under their own grape vines and fig trees in the kingdom of God (Mic 4:1–4).¹¹²⁵

Read Zech 3:6–10. How was Joshua a sign that the Lord shall fulfill the promise of Gen 3:15? What comfort does this passage give you?

Satan Tempts Christ

4) Matt 4:1–4: Immediately after Christ’s baptism confirmed his status as God’s Son (Matt 3:16–17; Mark 1:12), Jesus prepared himself for public ministry with an extensive time of communion with his Father.¹¹²⁶ He ventured into the Judean wilderness close to where John baptized him.¹¹²⁷ People in the Ancient Near East (ANE) considered the desert haunted by evil spirits, as it lay beyond the bounds of civilized society.¹¹²⁸ According to 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD), God commanded this regarding a leader among fallen angels, “Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert which is in Dudael and cast him therein.”¹¹²⁹

On the Day of Atonement, a designated man led Israel’s scapegoat into the wilderness “to Azazel” (Lev 16:8–10, 20–22, 26),¹¹³⁰ an inaccessible wilderness area inhabited by demonic forces. Once the scapegoat returned the people’s sins to the site where evil originated, those transgressions no longer bound them.¹¹³¹

Several centuries after Christ, Antony of Egypt (AD 251–356) lived in seclusion for twenty years, even dwelling in a tomb in the desert.¹¹³² His biographer recounted these events:

¹¹²³Albrecht Goetze, trans., “Ritual for the Erection of a House” in *ANET*, obv. lines 1–31, 356.

¹¹²⁴Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 258.

¹¹²⁵Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 202.

¹¹²⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 154.

¹¹²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 63.

¹¹²⁸Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 354.

¹¹²⁹Charles, trans., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, 10.4, 22–3, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n137/mode/2up>.

¹¹³⁰Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Demons: Old Testament” in *ABD* 2:139–40, 139.

¹¹³¹John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1992), 241.

¹¹³²Bradley Nassif, *Bringing Jesus to the Desert: Uncover the Ancient Culture, Discover Hidden Meanings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 43–4.

“He had requested one of his acquaintances to bring him bread at long intervals. He then entered one of the tombs, the man locked the door on him, and he remained alone within. This was too much for the Enemy to bear, indeed, he feared that he would presently fill the desert too with his asceticism. So, he came one night with a great number of demons and lashed him so unmercifully that he lay on the ground speechless with the pain.”¹¹³³

Jesus, too, entered the desert to confront the Lord’s enemy. Since the Spirit led Christ into the wilderness, ultimately God initiated this confrontation.¹¹³⁴ This trial tested Jesus’s ability to obey Deut 6:4–5,¹¹³⁵ a passage repeated by devout Jewish people twice daily even today.¹¹³⁶ Christ did not engage in spiritual arm-wrestling by pitting the power of the Holy Spirit within him against Satan. Since temptation involves twisting reality, the best defense comes from Scriptural truth.¹¹³⁷ Many Jewish rabbis of that era employed the format of this debate.¹¹³⁸ Indeed, reciting bible verses provides a helpful pattern for us to follow when dealing with sinful enticement.¹¹³⁹

All three texts Christ quoted in Matt 4:1–10 consist of commands the Lord gave to Israel in the wilderness.¹¹⁴⁰ By undergoing these temptations, Jesus replicated the experiences of both Adam and Israel yet did not succumb to desire (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–6; Num 21:4–5).¹¹⁴¹

Satan chose to attack after Jesus fasted for forty days, when he was physically weakest.¹¹⁴² He aimed to disqualify Christ as a sinless savior and obedient son to disrupt God’s plan to redeem humanity (Phil 2:5–11; Heb 4:14–16; 2 Cor 5:16–21).¹¹⁴³ While some Bible versions use the word “if” in verse 3, a better translation is, “Since the son of God you are....”¹¹⁴⁴ Just like the demon in Mark 1:23–24, the devil knew Jesus’s identity (Cf. James 2:19).¹¹⁴⁵ He was saying, “We both know you’re the Son of God, now prove it by helping yourself.”¹¹⁴⁶

Would Christ exercise his messianic power to avoid the pain of a normal human life?¹¹⁴⁷ Or would he accept the path before him of suffering and eventual death?¹¹⁴⁸ Jesus responded by quoting Deut 8:1–10.

a) Read Matt 4:1–4. How is this temptation like what Adam and Israel experienced (Gen 3:1–6)? Do you think that the Lord used Satan to fulfill his own purposes? Why or why not? How can we use Jesus’s method of defense when we undergo temptation?

¹¹³³Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony* (Meyer, Robert H., trans. (ACW; New York; Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1978), 26, <https://archive.org/details/lifeofsaintanton00atha/page/26>.

¹¹³⁴Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 360.

¹¹³⁵Osborne, *Matthew*, 131.

¹¹³⁶Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 181.

¹¹³⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 161.

¹¹³⁸Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 352.

¹¹³⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 157.

¹¹⁴⁰Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:1–11.

¹¹⁴¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156–7.

¹¹⁴²Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 64.

¹¹⁴³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 157.

¹¹⁴⁴Danker, et al., “ei” (*ei*), *BDAG*, 277.

¹¹⁴⁵Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 65.

¹¹⁴⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 132.

¹¹⁴⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 158.

¹¹⁴⁸Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 65.

A Second Temptation

b) Matt 4:5–7: For the next two temptations, the devil transported Jesus from the wilderness in a vision. No mountain vista can provide a view of “all the kingdoms of the world” at once (Matt 4:8).¹¹⁴⁹ Satan expertly used Scripture to tempt Christ to sin, quoting Ps 91:11–12.¹¹⁵⁰ For Jesus, this would have been a jump to safety, as God would have sent angels to rescue the messiah.¹¹⁵¹

The temptation was two-fold: 1) to test his Father’s love; 2) to make a spectacular display to gain a messianic following without proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and suffering the consequences (Matt 16:13–23).¹¹⁵² Christ responded by reciting Deut 6:16, another text from Israel’s journey through the wilderness.

Read Matt 4:5–7. Why do you think the devil stopped before reciting Ps 91:13? How does this event demonstrate the necessity of reading Scripture in context? What can you do to protect yourself from false or misleading interpretations of the Bible?

The Third Temptation

c) Matt 4:8–11: Technically, the devil made a false claim that the earthly realm belonged to him (Dan 4:32; Dan 7:13–14). Instead, he operates by usurping human hearts (Matt 13:19; 2 Tim 2:24–26).¹¹⁵³ Just as in the test failed by Adam and Eve, this temptation involved a choice between the will of God versus the plan of the serpent (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–13).¹¹⁵⁴ Satan asked Jesus to shift his allegiance, achieving the right end by the wrong means. Just before quoting Deut 6:14, Christ gave a curt dismissal of the tempter, proving that the devil remained under his control.¹¹⁵⁵

Jesus fulfilled what Adam, the first son of God, did not accomplish (Luke 3:38). While the first Adam failed under the best conditions, the last Adam succeeded in the worst (Gen 2:7–15; Matt 4:1–2). This victory set the stage for Christ to make atonement for his people (Heb 2:11–18),¹¹⁵⁶ resulting in the eventual recovery of paradise (Rev 21:1–7).¹¹⁵⁷ However, the devil would continue to attempt to derail Jesus from his mission of redemption (Luke 22:1–6).

Read Matt 4:8–11. What was the nature of this temptation? Why did Jesus succeed where both Adam and Israel failed? Does this encourage or discourage you? Why?

¹¹⁴⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 131.

¹¹⁵⁰ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:5–6.

¹¹⁵¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 67.

¹¹⁵² Wilkins, *Matthew*, 160.

¹¹⁵³ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:8–9.

¹¹⁵⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 68.

¹¹⁵⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 135.

¹¹⁵⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156.

¹¹⁵⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 356.

A Murderer from the Beginning

5) John 8:37–44: In approximately 150 BC, the Pharisees created a lay movement which developed the view that members of God’s covenant people could be identified by their adherence to the Mishnah. This commentary on the five books attributed to Moses formed a hedge around the Mosaic Law (*m. Avot* 1:1),¹¹⁵⁸ in violation of Deut 4:1–2 and Deut 12:32. For example, the Mishnah contains twenty-four chapters dedicated to Sabbath regulations alone (*m. Shabbat*).¹¹⁵⁹

Although the Pharisees did not descend from a priestly lineage, the members of this sect strictly maintained the Mishnah’s tradition of oral laws regarding purity, tithing, and the Sabbath intended for those serving in the temple. They took great care to separate from the impure “people of the land” who failed to avoid contaminating themselves (Matt 9:10–11; Luke 7:36–39).¹¹⁶⁰ However, Pharisees intended to practice Judaism in every area of life where they lived, rather than form a community which withdrew into the desert, as the Essenes did.¹¹⁶¹

Furthermore, Pharisees believed that the messiah would come to usher in the kingdom of God only when every Israelite fully obeyed all of the Mishnah’s interpretation of the Law of Moses.¹¹⁶² Consequently, Jesus’s teachings and behavior enraged them (Cf. Matt 12:1–8; Mark 7:1–15).¹¹⁶³ They concluded that Christ not only prevented Israel’s messiah from coming to rescue them, his popularity would result in more oppressive Roman domination (John 11:38–53).

The author of John’s gospel also wrote, “The one who continually practices sin is from the devil, because from the beginning the devil sins” (1 John 3:8). As Jesus testified, a person’s behavior and values attest to one’s spiritual sonship.¹¹⁶⁴ John the Baptist held a similar view, for he called Israel’s religious leaders “offspring of vipers” (Matt 3:7).

Read John 8:37–44. Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus? What makes their conclusion about him ironic? How do the verses cited here relate to the declaration of Gen 3:15?

Betrayed

6) Luke 22:1–6: Passover memorializes Israel’s deliverance from the final plague upon the gods of Egypt (Num 33:1–4).¹¹⁶⁵ At that time the Lord’s angel of death passed over the homes

¹¹⁵⁸ Stephen Westerholm, “Pharisees,” *DJG* 609–14, 609.

¹¹⁵⁹ *m. Shabbat*.

¹¹⁶⁰ Anthony J. Saldarini “Pharisees.” *ABD* 5:300–3, 300.

¹¹⁶¹ Roland Deines, “The Pharisees Between ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Common Judaism,’” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and Mark Seifrid; Tübingen; Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck; Baker Academic, 2001), 498.

¹¹⁶² Philip S. Alexander, “Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and Mark Seifrid; Tübingen; Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck; Baker Academic, 2001), 275.

¹¹⁶³ Marinus De Jonge, “Messiah,” *ABD* 783–8, 783.

¹¹⁶⁴ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 352–3.

¹¹⁶⁵ David E. Garland, *Luke* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 845.

covered by the blood of lambs and spared Israel’s firstborn sons (Exod 12:1–14).¹¹⁶⁶ Due to the deaths of many of their people, the Egyptians begged Israel to leave. This ended their enslavement (Exod 12:33–36).¹¹⁶⁷ Jesus would achieve the salvation that feast day commemorates (1 Cor 5:7).¹¹⁶⁸

As one of three required festivals in God’s presence, the population of Jerusalem swelled from about 70,000 to 250,000 each year during Passover (Exod 23:14–17).¹¹⁶⁹ Since the festival embodied themes of national liberation, those gatherings could provoke civil disturbances, upsetting the leaders of the Roman occupation.¹¹⁷⁰ Therefore, Christ’s opponents acted secretly to keep the throngs of festival pilgrims ignorant of their actions.¹¹⁷¹

However, these were not merely human schemes. Satan himself intervened,¹¹⁷² although he had always been lurking in the shadows (Luke 4:12–13; Luke 22:31–33; John 8:37–44).¹¹⁷³ When one of Christ’s disciples decided to defect, popularity with the people would no longer protect Jesus from the religious leaders.¹¹⁷⁴ Judas seems to have experienced satanic direction and influence,¹¹⁷⁵ rather than outright possession.¹¹⁷⁶ Thus, the right moment Judas sought to betray Jesus coincided with Satan’s own scheme.¹¹⁷⁷

Once the religious leaders involved the government, they completed the trinity of evil set against Jesus.¹¹⁷⁸ Ironically, those who appeared to control Jesus’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion did not. Christ permitted them to proceed. Not only did he know what Judas was doing,¹¹⁷⁹ Jesus wielded enough power to frustrate their plans (Matt 26:20–25, 48–54).

Read Luke 22:1–6. What role did the serpent play in the betrayal of Christ? How can we avoid participating in Satan’s schemes?

A Most Cruel and Ignominious Punishment

7) Matt 27:26–37: Cicero (106–43 BC) called crucifixion, “a most cruel and ignominious punishment.”¹¹⁸⁰ The Roman government employed it to control mutinous troops, to subdue conquered peoples, to wear down rebellious cities, and to punish criminals from the lower

¹¹⁶⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 545.

¹¹⁶⁷ Garland, *Luke*, 845.

¹¹⁶⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 545.

¹¹⁶⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 755–6.

¹¹⁷⁰ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 752–3.

¹¹⁷¹ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1030.

¹¹⁷² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 752.

¹¹⁷³ Garland, *Luke*, 845.

¹¹⁷⁴ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1029.

¹¹⁷⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 545.

¹¹⁷⁶ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1029.

¹¹⁷⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 753.

¹¹⁷⁸ Garland, *Luke*, 845.

¹¹⁷⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 544.

¹¹⁸⁰M. Tullius Cicero, *Against Verres*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 2.5.165,

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0018%3Atext%3DVer.%3Aactio%3D2%3Abook%3D5](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0018%3Atext%3DVer.%3Aactio%3D2%3Abook%3D5).

classes, especially slaves.¹¹⁸¹ Quintilian (ca. 35–96 AD) asserted, “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear.”¹¹⁸²

In Greco-Roman society, those engaging in polite discourse forbade even speaking the word “cross.”¹¹⁸³ Due to aesthetic considerations—not to the rarity of this practice—descriptions of crucifixion rarely appear in ancient literature.¹¹⁸⁴ According to Josephus (37–100 AD), in 70 AD, Titus’s army in Jerusalem whipped, tortured, and crucified five hundred men a day until “their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses and crosses wanting for the bodies.”¹¹⁸⁵

In 1986, *JAMA* published a detailed article with this summary of the process: “Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripe-like lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar...to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the [crossbar], after the [crossbar] was lifted onto the upright post...his feet were nailed to [it]. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus’s death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier’s spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.”¹¹⁸⁶

Confirming the gospel accounts of crucifixion, building contractors discovered an ossuary in northern Jerusalem. It contained the bones of an adult male who had been crucified between the onset of the first century AD and the mid-60s. His executioners had pierced his right heel with an iron nail and broken his shins (John 19:32).¹¹⁸⁷

a) Read Matt 27:26–37. How does the Roman practice of crucifixion fulfill Gen 3:15? Why did ancient literature rarely mention this form of execution? How does knowing that Jesus willingly died this way affect your view of him?

¹¹⁸¹Gerald G. O’Collins, “Crucifixion,” *ABD* 1:1207–1210, 1207–8.

¹¹⁸²Quintilian, *The Lesser Declamations* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 274.

¹¹⁸³ Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 150.

¹¹⁸⁴ Joel B. Green, “Death of Jesus,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (DJG) (ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. H. Marshall; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 147–63, 147.

¹¹⁸⁵Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 5.11.1, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D5%3Awhiston+chapter%3D11%3Awhiston+section%3D1>.

¹¹⁸⁶William D. Edwards MD, Wesley J. Gabel MDiv, and Floyd E. Hosmer MS, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *JAMA* 255, no. 11 (21 March 1986): 1455–63, <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=403315>.

¹¹⁸⁷ Green, “Death of Jesus,” *DJG*, 147.

Forsaken

b) Matt 27:38–49: Virtually all of Jesus’s followers abandoned him. Only his mother, John, and “many women” kept vigil at the cross (Matt 27:55). Those who passed by the three crosses heckled him. Darkness covered the whole land as an expression of God’s wrath.¹¹⁸⁸ However, this did not result from an eclipse. Passover occurs during a full moon (Lev 23:5), and eclipses can appear only during new moons.¹¹⁸⁹ Since God had plagued Egypt with darkness (Exod 10:22), the Jewish leaders should have recognized this apocalyptic image of mourning and judgment (Joel 2:1–2, 31–32).¹¹⁹⁰

Most crucified men gradually lost their strength and consciousness.¹¹⁹¹ Yet, Jesus cried out “with a loud voice, saying, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Those who heard him misunderstood his words as an appeal to Elijah. This seems to be why Matthew translated Christ’s name for God into Hebrew (*eli*) rather than precisely quoting Jesus’s call of desolation, which he uttered in Aramaic (*eloi*, as in Mark 15:34), the commonly spoken language in Israel at that time (Mark 5:41).¹¹⁹² This cry of complete devastation comes from Ps 22:1.¹¹⁹³

Horrific as crucifixion was for anyone, until that time Jesus had experienced the perfect fellowship of the Trinity. Therefore, we cannot accurately assess the true depth of his distress.¹¹⁹⁴ Christ bore divine retribution and the punishment for our sin (Isa 53:3–6). In fact, “the one who did not know sin, on our behalf became sin” (2 Cor 5:21). He was damned by God, for “Cursed is one who is hanged on a tree” (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13).¹¹⁹⁵

The cry, “My God” indicates that Christ’s lament did not express a loss of faith but rather a temporary deprivation of contact.¹¹⁹⁶ During that era, pious Jewish households recited the psalms as their prayer book.¹¹⁹⁷ Therefore, Jesus’s enemies should have recalled that Ps 22 ends with the sufferer’s vindication (Ps 22:25–31).¹¹⁹⁸ In our day, “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away” evokes much more than that simple phrase for anyone familiar with Star Wars. Thus, by citing the first verse of this psalm of desertion, Christ also looked forward to the vindication which he would receive at his resurrection (Heb 12:1–2).¹¹⁹⁹

Read Matt 27:38–49. How do we know that this darkness was not a natural phenomenon? What did it portend? Why did God forsake Jesus? How does the ending of the psalm Christ quoted provide you with hope?

¹¹⁸⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1075.

¹¹⁸⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1037.

¹¹⁹⁰ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 844.

¹¹⁹¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1075.

¹¹⁹² Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 844. Note that “i” at the end of a Hebrew noun means “my.”

¹¹⁹³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1076.

¹¹⁹⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 844–5.

¹¹⁹⁵ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 902–3.

¹¹⁹⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1076–7.

¹¹⁹⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 625.

¹¹⁹⁸ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 27:46.

¹¹⁹⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1037.

The Death of God

8) John 19:28–30: The apostle John wrote, “Jesus, knowing that already all had been completed, in order to complete the Scripture said, ‘I thirst.’” (Ps 69:21).¹²⁰⁰ Significantly, John used the verbal root *teleō* twice to indicate completion,¹²⁰¹ rather than the word *plēroō* employed in the usual formula “to fulfill the Scripture” (John 12:38; John 13:18; John 19:24).¹²⁰² In fact, the apostle recorded *teleō* only three times in his gospel, all in this passage.¹²⁰³

Nevertheless, Jesus did experience real thirst. After being scourged and left bleeding, he developed extreme dehydration (John 19:1).¹²⁰⁴ How ironic that the source of living water thirsted (John 6:35).¹²⁰⁵ Unlike the drugged wine Christ had earlier refused, this cheap sour wine vinegar offered by the soldiers should have prolonged his life and, consequently, his pain (cf. Matt 27: 33–34, 48).¹²⁰⁶ Indeed, in Ps 69:13–21, that drink comprised part of the torment inflicted upon the righteous sufferer.¹²⁰⁷

While on the brink of death, Christ wanted the crowd to hear him, so he called for a drink to moisten his dry mouth.¹²⁰⁸ After sipping the wine from a sponge, Jesus uttered his last word of triumph, “It has been accomplished!” (*tetelestai*, the perfect tense of *teleō*).¹²⁰⁹ In the Greek of that era, a verb in the perfect tense denoted a past action which results in a state of being which continues into the present without an end point.¹²¹⁰

Christ had completed his mission,¹²¹¹ purchasing our salvation through the cross.¹²¹² Ancient Greek receipts often included the word *tetelestai* to indicate that the amount due had been “paid in full.”¹²¹³ Visitors can see an example of this on shards of pottery in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted, “Christ and Christ’s adversary the devil are mutually exclusive opponents, but in such a way that even the devil, unwillingly, must serve Christ, and, willing evil, must ever again do good, so that the kingdom of the devil is always only under the feet of Christ.”¹²¹⁴

In describing Jesus’s death, John used a term (*klinō*) associated with going to sleep,¹²¹⁵ indicating that he voluntarily bowed his head.¹²¹⁶ Then, he “handed over” (*paradidōmi*) his spirit, a phrase which typically refers to giving something to a successor. Thus, at his death, Christ

¹²⁰⁰Danker, et al., “τέλειω” (*teleō*), *BDAG*, 997–9, 997.

¹²⁰¹ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.

¹²⁰²Danker, et al., “τέλειω” (*teleō*), *BDAG*, 997.

¹²⁰³Result of Logos 7 word studies of *plēroō* and *teleō*.

¹²⁰⁴ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 618–9.

¹²⁰⁵ Burge, *John*, 530.

¹²⁰⁶ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.

¹²⁰⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 351.

¹²⁰⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 720.

¹²⁰⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 352. This is *teleō* in the third person singular perfect tense.

¹²¹⁰Robert Crellin, “The Semantics of the Perfect in the Greek of the New Testament,” in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis* (ed. Steven E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch; Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 450.

¹²¹¹ Burge, *John*, 529.

¹²¹²Gerhard Delling, “τέλειω” (*teleō*), *TDNT* 8:57–61, 59.

¹²¹³ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 904.

¹²¹⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Clifford J. Green, ed., Reinhard Krauss, et al., *Ethics* (DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 65.

¹²¹⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 720–1.

¹²¹⁶Danker, et al., “κλινω” (*klinō*), *BDAG*, 549.

bestowed his ministry to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–23).¹²¹⁷ Since Jesus retained the authority to lay down his life, no one took it from him (John 10:17–18).¹²¹⁸

Read John 19:28–30. Why do you think the Apostle John chose to use the verb for completion, rather than for fulfillment, in this passage? What are the implications of Jesus’s last utterances for us? How did the serpent unwittingly serve the cause of Christ? Why did Jesus hand over his spirit? How does that delegation to the Holy Spirit impact your calling?

God Rends the Barrier

9) Matt 27:50–51: For several chapters of Matthew’s gospel, God the Father has seemed aloof. However, upon Christ’s death, he immediately began to vindicate his son with a series of astonishing miracles.¹²¹⁹ This signaled his approval of Jesus and his indignation with those behind Christ’s execution.¹²²⁰

Most likely, the curtain of the temple which tore was the inner curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, rather than the outer curtain which covered the temple’s entrance (Exod 26:1–3, 31–33; Heb 6:19–20; Heb 9:1–5, 8).¹²²¹ This inner curtain, embroidered with lions and eagles,¹²²² measured sixty feet high by thirty feet wide.¹²²³ Women had woven it from seventy-two twisted plaits of twenty-four threads,¹²²⁴ making its destruction a formidable task.

The verb indicating that the curtain “was torn (*schizō*) from top to bottom” appears in the passive tense.¹²²⁵ Furthermore, the rending of the veil from above points to an act of God.¹²²⁶ Matthew employed the same verb for the “tearing” of the curtain and the “splitting” (*schizō*) of the rocks,¹²²⁷ so perhaps the Lord used the divine judgment of the earthquake to rend the veil (Amos 8:8–10). Ironically, this event occurred shortly after those who saw Christ on the cross mocked him for having predicted that he would destroy the temple and then rebuild it in three days (John 2:19–22; Matt 27:39–40).¹²²⁸

¹²¹⁷ Burge, *John*, 530.

¹²¹⁸ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 621.

¹²¹⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 629.

¹²²⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 684.

¹²²¹ Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 848–9.

¹²²² Michael O. Wise, “Temple,” *DJG* 813–7, 813.

¹²²³ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

¹²²⁴ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

¹²²⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

¹²²⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1080.

¹²²⁷ Danker, et al., “σχίζω” (*schizō*), *BDAG*, 981.

¹²²⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 630.

Since the Most Holy Place could be entered only by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:2, 34), this rupture signified that the sacrificial system had reached its end.¹²²⁹ It also portended God’s judgment upon Israel’s priests.¹²³⁰ By this one act, God simultaneously foreshadowed the destruction of the entire temple in 70 AD and expressed that access to God comes through Jesus.¹²³¹ Now all the Lord’s people can enjoy bold, unrestricted access into God’s presence (Heb 10:19–22).¹²³²

a) Read Matt 27:50–51. What does the tearing of the temple’s curtain from top to bottom signify? How does the passage in Amos add to our understanding of the earthquake? What difference does the destruction of the veil make in your life?

The Resurrection of the Righteous

b) Matt 27:51–53: Another testimony affirming Jesus’s innocence consisted of raised bodies.¹²³³ This resurrection of the righteous alludes to Ezek 37:12–13.¹²³⁴ In Dura Europos, Syria, archaeologists discovered a synagogue from 244 AD with many intact frescoes.¹²³⁵ Three of these depict Ezekiel’s vision,¹²³⁶ verifying that the Jewish people interpreted that prophecy as a promise of the bodily resurrection of the faithful in the last days.¹²³⁷

The Babylonian Talmud states, “And should you ask, in those years during which the Almighty will renew his world, as it is written, ‘And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. What will the righteous do? The Lord will make them wings like eagles,’ and they will fly above the water...Ezekiel resurrected the dead in the valley of Dura” (*b. Sanhedrin 92b*).¹²³⁸

Returning to Matthew’s gospel, we will consider two pages of the Codex Vaticanus.¹²³⁹ The beginning of Matt 27:52 appears at the bottom of one page. The second half of the verse occurs at the top of the next page. A scribe wrote the Greek text in capitals, running continuously with neither breaks between words nor punctuation.

¹²²⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

¹²³⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

¹²³¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1080–1.

¹²³² Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

¹²³³ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

¹²³⁴ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

¹²³⁵ Paul Post, “Dura Europos Revisited: Rediscovering Sacred Space,” *Worship* 86, no. 3 (1 May 2012): 222–44, 224, 233. Sadly, this site appears to have suffered great damage by members of the Islamic State.

¹²³⁶ Wikimedia Commons, “Category: Dura-Europos Synagogue Painting,”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Dura-Europos_synagogue#/media/File:Ezekiels.jpg.

¹²³⁷ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

¹²³⁸ http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_92.html.

¹²³⁹ The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, “Codex Vaticanus,”

http://csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_03.

THISISNOTASDIFFICULTTOINTERPRETASITMIGHTSEEMINFACTISUSPECTTHATMANYOFOUAREHAVINGNOTROUBLEREADINGTHISPAPYRUSWASEXPENSIVESOSCRIBESDIDTHISOSAVESPACE.¹²⁴⁰

As a result, we have several translation options based upon the punctuation we select. The best choice for making sense of the time frame for Matt 27:51–53 is to place a period after “and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened.” Then the next sentences say, “And the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised. And coming out of the tombs with (META) his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many [people].”¹²⁴¹

Matthew merged the earthquake on Good Friday with the resurrection of the saints on Easter Sunday. He regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus as a single salvation-historical event,¹²⁴² for the combined effect of these two milestones broke the power of death and raised us up with Christ (1 Cor 15:3–5; 14–17, 52–57; Eph 2:1–7).¹²⁴³ These holy people were likely Old Testament heroes and martyrs. They testified to the effect of Christ’s resurrection in a foretaste of the eternal life which all believers can eagerly anticipate (John 5:25–29).¹²⁴⁴

Consider this analogy. When an enormous boulder falls upon the soft sands of the seabed, the resounding thud reverberates in all directions, making ripples in the sand. When Jesus rose from the dead, that momentous event affected everything in the cosmos. Both the past and the future, including the era in which we live, have been forever changed (John 8:56–59).¹²⁴⁵

None of the other gospels discuss this incident, leaving many unanswered questions.¹²⁴⁶ Did these saints have resurrection bodies like Jesus’s? Or were they, like Lazarus, in resuscitated bodies and subject to die again (John 11:41–44; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 42–44)?¹²⁴⁷ Did they stay on earth, or were they taken into heaven after appearing?¹²⁴⁸

Read Matt 27:51–53. How do you think the people of Jerusalem reacted to seeing these resurrected people? Why did this series of events vindicate Christ? What hope does it give to you?

Conversion of an Executioner

c) Matt 27:54: At the time of Christ, a Roman centurion represented the most powerful military on earth. After overseeing the flogging, mocking, and crucifixion of Jesus, this commander and his men observed the supernatural darkening of the sky (Matt 27:33–37, 45–49).¹²⁴⁹ They saw

¹²⁴⁰Joel Harlow, personal communication, 3/15/2012.

¹²⁴¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 906.

¹²⁴²Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

¹²⁴³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 850.

¹²⁴⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 906–7.

¹²⁴⁵Edward T. Oakes S.J., “The Apologetics of Beauty,” in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (ed. Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands, and Roger Lundin; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 220.

¹²⁴⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1081.

¹²⁴⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 850.

¹²⁴⁸Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 634.

¹²⁴⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 920–1.

that “in this way he breathed his last” (Mark 15:39),¹²⁵⁰ and they experienced the earthquake (Matt 27:50–51).

As a result, the members of the execution team recognized their victim’s true identity.¹²⁵¹ Taking the title used to mock the dying man in Matt 27:40, these gentiles made it the confession of their hearts.¹²⁵² They recognized Jesus’s innocence and repented for their complicity in his death.¹²⁵³ Thus, they acted as the “two or three witnesses” required for official testimony (Deut 19:15; John 8:14–18).¹²⁵⁴

Normal Roman usage of the term “son of God” referred to a semi-divine hero or the son of a deity, such as the Roman emperor.¹²⁵⁵ For example, the Priene Inscription (9 BC) notes that “the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings (*euangelion*) for the world.”¹²⁵⁶

However, the Greek structure of the sentence indicates that the centurion confessed that Jesus was *the* Son of God.¹²⁵⁷ Some sects hold that the lack of a definite article “the” (*ho*) before “God” (*theos*) means that the centurion confessed, “This was *a* god.” However, in Greek grammar, nouns without “the” (*ho*) occurring before “to be” verbs (*ēn*) express the nature or character of the subject. In other words, Jesus had the same nature as God,¹²⁵⁸ and he perfectly reveals God to us (Cf. Phil 2:5–11).¹²⁵⁹ When a creature has the characteristics and nature of a duck, it is a duck.

The soldiers concluded that truth was on the side of Christ rather than with his mockers.¹²⁶⁰ Thus, Jesus’s death became the definitive event which proclaimed his true status.¹²⁶¹ Matthew had hinted at the inclusion of gentiles within God’s people from the very beginning of his gospel. Except for Mary, he included only gentile women (Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth) in the genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:1–16). Nevertheless, this pronouncement by the soldiers accentuated Jesus’s post-resurrection command to “make disciples of all the people-groups” (Matt 28:19).¹²⁶²

Read Matt 27:54. How were the Roman centurion and the soldiers with him affected by what they had witnessed? Why did Matthew include them in his account of Jesus’s death? When did you recognize the divinity of Christ?

¹²⁵⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1083.

¹²⁵¹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 688.

¹²⁵² Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 635

¹²⁵³ Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 852.

¹²⁵⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1083.

¹²⁵⁵ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 27:54.

¹²⁵⁶ Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” 69, http://www.jgrchj.net/volume1/JGRChJ1-5_Evans.pdf.

¹²⁵⁷ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1047.

¹²⁵⁸ Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, 87, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H7.jpg>.

¹²⁵⁹ Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, no. 1 (3 January 1973): 75–87, 75, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H1.jpg>.

¹²⁶⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1084.

¹²⁶¹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 688.

¹²⁶² Wilkins, *Matthew*, 921.

A New Dawn

10) Matt 28:1: As foretold in Gen 3:15, Christ’s conquest of the serpent came via his execution. Nevertheless, few people in Israel expected their messiah to die (Cf. Deut 21:23; John 12:31–34; 1 Cor 1:22–23). Imagine how forlorn and forsaken Jesus’s followers must have felt (Matt 27:50, 54–61; Luke 24:17–21).¹²⁶³

In keeping with the other gospel writers, Matthew simply announced Christ’s resurrection.¹²⁶⁴ He did not describe how or even exactly when it occurred.¹²⁶⁵ The familiarity of his original audience with this event may account for our lack of insight.¹²⁶⁶ Ancient writers felt little inclination to pay a scribe to record what their intended readers already knew. In that era, a scribe earned twelve days’ unskilled wages for penning a scroll equal to the length of Matthew’s gospel.¹²⁶⁷

Every resurrection account in the four gospels varies considerably. In the case of Luke 24, the author may have wished to fill the remaining space on his costly scroll. This resulted in a long, detailed report.¹²⁶⁸ Matthew dictated one of his shortest narratives when discussing the resurrection,¹²⁶⁹ likely due to the constraints of scroll length, rather than for theological purposes.¹²⁷⁰ A standard papyrus scroll twelve feet long cost the equivalent of eight days’ wages for an unskilled laborer, just for the materials. People also avoided scrolls over thirty feet long as too unwieldy.¹²⁷¹

Each author wrote of this event from a perspective familiar to him, without concern about matching someone else’s details.¹²⁷² This points to independent narratives based upon eyewitness traditions circulating in the first century. They broadly converged on the crucial facets of the circumstances of that day:¹²⁷³ several women visited Jesus’s grave on Sunday morning; they encountered one or more angels; then discovered that Christ no longer inhabited the tomb, for he had risen from the dead.¹²⁷⁴ We have no sense of coordinated deception from the gospel writers.¹²⁷⁵ Only reliable testimony of Jesus’s bodily resurrection can explain the explosive growth of early Christianity (Acts 4:1–4; 1 Cor 15:1–8).¹²⁷⁶

Matthew began his account of Easter morning by writing, “Now, after the Sabbath, at the dawning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.” Early Christians celebrated Jesus’s resurrection on the first day of each week,¹²⁷⁷ calling

¹²⁶³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

¹²⁶⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097

¹²⁶⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 867.

¹²⁶⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

¹²⁶⁷E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 168–9. I calculated this by comparing the length of Matthew to that of Romans in the Codex Vaticanus (http://www.csntm.org/Manuscript/View/GA_03).

¹²⁶⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 697–8.

¹²⁶⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

¹²⁷⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 18 note 48.

¹²⁷¹Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 51–2.

¹²⁷²Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1992), 733.

¹²⁷³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

¹²⁷⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097.

¹²⁷⁵Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 697.

¹²⁷⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 934.

¹²⁷⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 868.

it “the Lord’s day” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1–2; Rev 1:9–10).¹²⁷⁸ The *Didache* (ca. 50–120 AD), also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, provides us with the earliest extra-biblical record of Christian practices.¹²⁷⁹ It says, “But every Lord’s day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”¹²⁸⁰

Close to the same era, the Epistle of Barnabas (80–120 AD) states the rationale for gentiles changing the day of the Sabbath (Gen 2:1–3). It proclaims: “[W]hen there is no more sin, but all things have been made new by the Lord, then we shall be able to keep it holy because we ourselves have first been made holy. Furthermore, he says to them, ‘Your new moons and your Sabbaths, I cannot away with’ [Isa 1:13]. Do you see what he means? The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world. Wherefore, we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into heaven.”¹²⁸¹

In his First Apology (ca. 150–160 AD), Justin Martyr described a service early in church history:

“On the day called Sunday, all who live in the cities or the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then, we all rise together and pray...when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen’; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well-to-do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, or those, who through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. “But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world [Gen 1:1–5]; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”¹²⁸² The arrival of dawn on that Sunday morning ushered in a new era in human history.¹²⁸³

¹²⁷⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698.

¹²⁷⁹Larry W. Hurtado, “Christology: Didache” in *DLNT*, 181.

¹²⁸⁰M. B. Riddle, trans., “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *ANF* 7. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. (New York: Christian Literature, 1886), 381, <https://archive.org/details/antenicenefather071913robe/page/380>.

¹²⁸¹Lake, trans., “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 395–6, <https://archive.org/stream/theapostolicfath00unknuoft#page/334/mode/2up>.

¹²⁸²Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin Martyr: With Text and Translation,” in *ANF01* (trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. A. Cleveland Coxe; New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 67, 186, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/186/mode/2up>.

¹²⁸³Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 664.

In each of the four gospels, Mary Magdalene emerges as a primary witness to the events at the garden tomb.¹²⁸⁴ The “other Mary” refers to the mother of James. Matthew did not mention at least two other women, either for stylistic purposes or due to the slight differences inherent in eyewitness accounts (Cf. Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1, 9–10; John 20:1).¹²⁸⁵ All of them had watched Jesus during his crucifixion, helped with preparations for his burial, and observed his entombment (Matt 27:55–61; Mark 15:40–47).¹²⁸⁶ Now, they returned to Christ’s grave, likely to express their grief in prayer.¹²⁸⁷

Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) first merged Mary Magdalene’s identity with that of a prostitute in a homily dating to 591. He said, “She whom Luke calls the sinful woman [Luke 7:36–50]...we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark [16:9]” (Cf. Luke 8:2).¹²⁸⁸ No evidence exists that Mary Magdalene had ever worked as a prostitute, either within the gospels or in extra-biblical records.¹²⁸⁹

Read Matt 28:1. Why didn’t Jewish people expect their messiah to die, especially by crucifixion? How do the variations in the four gospel accounts of Christ’s resurrection point to the reality of this event? Why did early Christians begin meeting together on Sundays? How would you characterize the people who first visited Jesus’s tomb that morning?

Rolling Away the Stone

b) Matt 28:2–4: Matthew continued his account of Easter morning by noting a series of spectacular signs (Matt 28:1). By employing the conjunction “for” (*gar*), Matthew emphasized the apocalyptic nature of this event.¹²⁹⁰ He wrote, “And behold, a great earthquake occurred, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and he moved to and rolled away the stone, and he was sitting on top of it.”

It remains unclear whether this earthquake refers to an after-shock of the one described in Matt 27:51–54 or to an entirely separate cataclysm.¹²⁹¹ He cited the angel’s activity as the primary cause of the upheaval (Cf. Rev 8:5; Rev 16:17–19).¹²⁹² Just as “an angel of the Lord”

¹²⁸⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

¹²⁸⁵Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

¹²⁸⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 936–7.

¹²⁸⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹²⁸⁸Michelle J. Morris, “Mary Magdalene” in *Lexham Bible Dictionary (LBD)*. John D. Barry et. al, eds. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), no pages.

¹²⁸⁹Raymond F. Collins, “Mary (Person)” in *ABD* 4:579–81, 580.

¹²⁹⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹²⁹¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹²⁹²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1099.

announced Christ's birth, here one proclaimed his resurrection, book-ending Matthew's gospel (Matt 1:18–25).¹²⁹³

Archaeological evidence reveals that Jerusalem's graveyard of that era contained numerous tombs carved in soft rock, trees and plants, and pathways leading to the individual burial sites.¹²⁹⁴ By the first century BC, prominent Jewish people constructed large, elaborate tombs to convey their familial authority and grandeur. This practice continued into the first century AD, even after they no longer wielded political power under Rome's domination.¹²⁹⁵

Two styles of rock-hewn graves predominated in Jerusalem during that era. Some, called *arcsolias*, consisted of one room with three arches, each surrounding a shelf large enough to hold one body.¹²⁹⁶ More commonly, Jewish families created tombs called *loculi*, which permitted them to remain together while buried individually.¹²⁹⁷ Such graves could hold up to a dozen corpses, each with its own room.¹²⁹⁸

A large wheel covered the entrance to Jesus's tomb (Matt 27:57–60). These stones typically rested in a track, allowing those attending to the body to push the wheel aside and wedge it in place to keep the entrance open. Removing the wedge closed the door.¹²⁹⁹ Possibly by means of the earthquake,¹³⁰⁰ in an act of supernatural triumph, the angel rolled the enormous stone to the side and sat upon it.¹³⁰¹ However, neither the stone nor the seal kept Christ inside (Cf. John 20:19–20).¹³⁰² The angel rolled it away to enable the women to see that Jesus had already departed.¹³⁰³

Regarding the angel, Matthew reported, “His appearance was like lightning and his clothing [was] white like snow.” This description typically applies to visions of God and the glorified Christ (Cf. Dan 7:9–10, 13–14; Dan 10:4–6; Matt 17:1–2; Rev 1:12–18).¹³⁰⁴ The angel's appearance reflected that of the resurrected Lord.¹³⁰⁵ Lightning and the color white symbolized power and holiness.¹³⁰⁶

When the soldiers at the cross experienced miraculous darkness and a great earthquake, they had responded in faith (Matt 27:45–54).¹³⁰⁷ The military men whom Pontius Pilate posted at the tomb reacted very differently (Matt 27:62–66). Using the verb related to the term for the earthquake (*seismos*), Matthew noted, “but from the fear of him, the guards shook (*seiō*) and they became like dead men.”

Despite belonging to the Roman Army—one of the most effective military forces on earth—nothing equipped these soldiers to face such a terrifying entity.¹³⁰⁸ The men tasked with

¹²⁹³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

¹²⁹⁴Rachel Hachlili, “Burials: Ancient Jewish,” *ABD* 1:789–94, 789.

¹²⁹⁵Andrea M. Berlin, “Power and Its Afterlife Tombs in Hellenistic Palestine,” *NEA* 65, no. 2 (1 April 2002):138–48, 147, https://www.academia.edu/381520/Power_and_Its_Afterlife_Tombs_In_Hellenistic_Palestine.

¹²⁹⁶Byron R. McCane, “Burial Practices: Jewish,” *DNTB*, 173–175, 174.

¹²⁹⁷Hachlili, “Burials: Ancient Jewish,” 1:793.

¹²⁹⁸McCane, “Burial Practices: Jewish,” 174.

¹²⁹⁹George W. Buchanan and PHEME PERKINS, “Tomb of Jesus,” *HBD*, 1058.

¹³⁰⁰Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

¹³⁰¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 701.

¹³⁰²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097–8.

¹³⁰³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

¹³⁰⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

¹³⁰⁵Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

¹³⁰⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

¹³⁰⁷Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 666.

¹³⁰⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

protecting a dead man fell to the ground like corpses.¹³⁰⁹ Even after that encounter, they failed to believe (Luke 16:19–31; Matt 28:11–15).¹³¹⁰

Read Matt 28:2–4. What spectacular signs occurred on Easter morning? Why were the soldiers so terrified? What effect did that experience have upon them? How do you think you would have reacted?

Apostles to the Apostles

c) **Matt 28:5–7:** Ignoring the guards,¹³¹¹ the angel of the Lord directed his attention to a selective audience (Matt 28:1–4).¹³¹² Matthew reported, “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not *you* be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus, the crucified one. He is not here, for he has been raised, even as he said. Come! See the place where he was lying.’”

Due to the soldiers’ reactions, the angel made an emphatic statement,¹³¹³ adding the grammatically unnecessary word “you” (plural of *su*).¹³¹⁴ Heavenly messengers typically found it necessary to reassure the people they visited (Cf. Luke 1:13, 30; Luke 2:10).¹³¹⁵ No doubt the women initially responded with the same terror the guards experienced.¹³¹⁶

In Koine Greek, the perfect tense denotes a past action which has ongoing consequences. For example, “I had been in the Air Force” implies that one’s past military service influences life today and into the future. By calling Jesus “the one who had been crucified” (*estaurōmenon*) — a term which appears as a perfect participle—the angel announced that the past effect of Christ’s sacrifice would continue in the future (Gal 3:13; Phil 2:5–11).¹³¹⁷ When an enormous boulder falls upon the soft sands of the seabed, the resounding thud reverberates in all directions, making ripples in the sand. When Jesus rose from the dead, that momentous event affected everything in the cosmos. Both the past and the future, including the era in which we live, have been forever changed (Exod 3:13–14; John 8:56–59).¹³¹⁸

Although the women had seen Jesus buried in the tomb, the angel triumphantly revealed that he no longer there resided there in death (Matt 27:45–50; John 19:30–31).¹³¹⁹ The passive verb “has been raised” (*ēgerthē* from *egeirō*) indicates that God himself physically resurrected his son from death.¹³²⁰ The tomb remains empty.¹³²¹

¹³⁰⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

¹³¹⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 701.

¹³¹¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

¹³¹²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

¹³¹³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹³¹⁴William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 0209), 135.

¹³¹⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹³¹⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

¹³¹⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

¹³¹⁸Oakes, “The Apologetics of Beauty,” in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, 220.

¹³¹⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

¹³²⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939.

¹³²¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

Just as Jesus predicted, the Son of Man spent three days and three nights “in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40; Matt 16:21; Matt 17:22–23; Matt 20:17–19).¹³²² The Jewish reckoning of a “day” (*yom*) began at twilight and lasted until the following evening (Gen 1:5; Lev 23:5, 32).¹³²³ Even a portion of a day counted. Christ died at approximately 3:00 pm on Friday, remained in the grave on Saturday, and was raised from the dead early on Sunday morning, fulfilling his prophecies (Matt 27:45–50; John 19:30–31).¹³²⁴

Ironically, Jesus’s enemies recognized the implications of what Christ had taught, while his own followers did not (Matt 27:62–66; John 20:19).¹³²⁵ By raising Jesus from the dead, God thoroughly affirmed his claims of deity and vindicated him of any wrongdoing (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 9:27–34; Matt 26:59–67; Matt 28:16–20). As people who put our trust in Christ’s sacrificial death on our behalf, we all look forward to receiving resurrected bodies in the age to come (1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–55).¹³²⁶

The angel invited the women to enter the tomb to verify his claim for themselves.¹³²⁷ Then, he charged them, “Now, quickly go, say to his disciples that he has been raised from the dead, and behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I told you.”

In that era, Greco-Roman and Jewish authorities regarded the testimony of women with suspicion.¹³²⁸ Concerning one Vestal Virgin, the Greco-Roman philosopher Plutarch (46–122 AD) noted, “Now Tarquinia was a holy virgin, one of the Vestals, and received great honors for this act, among which was this, that of all women her testimony alone should be received.”¹³²⁹ In general, men in those societies considered females easily-deceived.¹³³⁰ For example, Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) called women “by nature light-minded.”¹³³¹

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) promoted this view: “But let not a single witness be credited, but three, or two at the least, and those such whose testimony is confirmed by their good lives. But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”¹³³²

Had the apostles fabricated the events of Easter morning, they would have chosen very different messengers to deliver the news that Jesus had risen.¹³³³ On the other hand, the gospel authors delivered a powerful theological statement by preserving these accounts (Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10).¹³³⁴ God selected the same group of women who witnessed Jesus’s death and

¹³²²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1098.

¹³²³W. Von Soden, J. Bergman, and M. Sæbø, “יום” (*yom*), *TDOT* 6:7–32, 23–4.

¹³²⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 936.

¹³²⁵Osborne, *Matthew*, 1067.

¹³²⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939.

¹³²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

¹³²⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698–9.

¹³²⁹Plutarch, “Publicola,” in *Plutarch’s Lives, Vol 1*. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1914), 8.4, 523, <https://archive.org/details/plutarchslives01plut2/page/522>.

¹³³⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698 note 283.

¹³³¹Philo, “That Every Good Person is Free,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, Vol. 3* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 18, 532, <https://archive.org/details/theworksofphiloj03yonguoft/page/532>.

¹³³²Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.8.15,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8%3Awhiston%20section%3D15>.

¹³³³Osborne, *Matthew*, 1067.

¹³³⁴Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 699.

burial to proclaim his resurrection (Matt 27:55–61; Mark 15:40–47).¹³³⁵ In this new era of God’s kingdom, the gospel overcomes traditional gender and social limitations (Gal 3:28; Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1–4, 16–21; Rom 16:1–12).¹³³⁶

An “apostle” (*apostolos*) consists of a person formally sent to convey a specific message with the full authority of the sender.¹³³⁷ This made the women who received the angel’s proclamation and saw the empty tomb apostles to the apostles (Cf. Luke 24:9–10).¹³³⁸

Concerning Mary Magdalene, Thomas Aquinas (1224/6–1274) wrote this: “Notice the three privileges given to Mary Magdalene. First, she had the privilege of being a prophet because she was worthy enough to see the angels, for a prophet is an intermediary between angels and the people. Secondly, she had the dignity or rank of an angel insofar as she looked upon Christ, on whom the angels desire to look. Thirdly, she had the office of an apostle; indeed, she was an apostle to the apostles insofar as it was her task to announce our Lord’s resurrection to the disciples. Thus, just as it was a woman who was the first to announce the words of death, so it was a woman who would be the first to announce the words of life.”¹³³⁹ The women’s testimony of Christ’s resurrection comprises the cornerstone of the Christian faith (Acts 2:22–36; 1 Cor 15:1–8; Rom 10:9–13).¹³⁴⁰

Finally, the angel delivered instructions for the remaining disciples to return to Galilee, where Jesus had lived and often ministered (Matt 2:19–23; Matt 3:13; Matt 4:12–25; Matt 19:1–2).¹³⁴¹ There the risen Christ would meet them. Once they arrived, Jesus spent forty days preparing them for their crucial role in spreading the good news of the kingdom of God (Matt 28:16–20; John 21; Acts 1:1–3).¹³⁴² Except for John, the eleven disciples had fled when the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus (Matt 26:56; John 19:25–27). In contrast, these faithful women who remained with Jesus to the end would not have to wait to see the risen Lord (Matt 26:56; Matt 27:55–61; Matt 28:8–10).¹³⁴³

Read Matt 28:5–7. Why did the angel emphasize that the women should not be afraid? How does Greek grammar indicate that the effects of Christ’s crucifixion continue even today? Why do we say that Jesus was in the grave for three days, when it was less than 48 hours? What did Jesus’s enemies understand about his predictions that even Christ’s disciples missed? How did God upend gender limitations by having the angel deliver his message to the apostles via these women? What credibility does that act give to the resurrection accounts?

¹³³⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939–40.

¹³³⁶Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698, 702.

¹³³⁷Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “ἀπόστολος” (*apostolos*), *TDNT* 1:407–44, 421.

¹³³⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

¹³³⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (trans. Fabian L. Larcher; Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1998), John 20, 2519, <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/english/John20.htm>.

¹³⁴⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

¹³⁴¹Sean Freyne, “Galilee: Hellenistic/Roman Galilee” *ABD* 2:895–9, 899.

¹³⁴²Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939–40.

¹³⁴³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1098.

From Terror to Adoration

d) Matt 28:8–9: After encountering the angel of the Lord at Christ’s empty tomb, the women followed his directions and ran to share the news of Jesus’s resurrection (Matt 28:1–7). In these verses, they received conclusive evidence of the angel’s proclamation and responded in worship. Matthew wrote, “And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and they ran to give an account to his disciples. And, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Good morning!’”

Despite the angel’s admonition not to fear,¹³⁴⁴ their alarm likely derived from the angel’s appearance, the urgency of their task, and the knowledge that the authorities who executed Jesus would not perceive this message as good news (Matt 27:62–66).¹³⁴⁵ At the same time, the women rejoiced in Christ’s victory over death.¹³⁴⁶

Notably, at the ending of the most reliable manuscripts of Mark’s gospel, the women experienced only fear (Mark 16). Manuscript evidence for Mark 16:9–20 does not exist prior to the fifth century.¹³⁴⁷ Experts remain divided over whether Mark 16:1–8 formed the original conclusion of that gospel or if,¹³⁴⁸ coming at the end of a scroll, it was lost.¹³⁴⁹ The additional verses read like a composite of materials from the gospels and Acts (e.g. Acts 27:42–28:8). Given the abruptness of finishing at Mark 16:8, it appears that scribes formulated the two alternatives to provide a more satisfying ending.¹³⁵⁰

Contradicting the restrictions upon women giving testimony in that era,¹³⁵¹ the women in Matthew’s account went on their way to deliver (*apangellō*) an official proclamation imbued with sacred substance.¹³⁵² Suddenly, Jesus himself met them. Given that the last time they saw Jesus they watched his burial (Matt 27:57–61), Matthew’s matter-of-fact description seems like an understatement.¹³⁵³

Christ simply greeted them as one would on any typical day (Matt 26:49).¹³⁵⁴ “*Chairete*” (from *cairō*) carries a double meaning. In addition to “Hello” it can mean “Rejoice” (Matt 27:27–29; Phil 4:4).¹³⁵⁵ Here, the term implies both nuances.¹³⁵⁶ Unlike the disciples on their way to Emmaus, the women immediately knew Jesus (Luke 24:13–18, 30–35). John provided a more detailed account in which Mary Magdalene recognized Christ when he spoke her name (John 20:11–16).¹³⁵⁷

Matthew reported, “And after coming to him, they held his feet and they worshiped him.” The women did not encounter a mere vision.¹³⁵⁸ Being able to grasp Jesus’s feet points to a

¹³⁴⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 873.

¹³⁴⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

¹³⁴⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1101.

¹³⁴⁷Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, 28. *Revidierte Auflage* (ed. Barbara Aland, et al.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 175–6.

¹³⁴⁸Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2001), 545.

¹³⁴⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

¹³⁵⁰David E. Garland, *Mark* (NAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 616–7.

¹³⁵¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 7027

¹³⁵²Julius Schniewind, “ἀπαγγέλλω” (*apangellō*), *TDNT* 1:64–7, 65–6.

¹³⁵³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

¹³⁵⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

¹³⁵⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

¹³⁵⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 1068.

¹³⁵⁷Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

¹³⁵⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

physical resurrection (Luke 24:36–43; 1 Cor 15:42–55).¹³⁵⁹ They responded much like the gentile wise men had in the beginning of this gospel (Matt 2:1–2, 9–11).¹³⁶⁰ In that era, people expressed their loyalty and adoration to a ruler by clasping his feet (Cf. Luke 7:36–38).¹³⁶¹

The *Babylonian Talmud* recounts the story of Rabbi Akiba, who spent twenty-four years away from home with his wife’s consent while he studied. It says:

“When he finally returned, he brought with him twenty-four thousand disciples. His wife heard [of his arrival] and went out to meet him...On approaching him she fell upon her face and kissed his feet. His attendants were about to thrust her aside, when [R. Akiba] cried to them, ‘Leave her alone, mine and yours are hers.’ Her father, on hearing that a great man had come to the town, said, ‘I shall go to him; perchance he will invalidate my vow.’ When he came to him [R. Akiba] asked, ‘Would you have made your vow if you had known that he was a great man?’ ‘[Had he known]’ the other replied, ‘[I would not have made the vow].’ He then said to him, ‘I am the man.’ The other fell upon his face and kissed his feet and also gave him half of his wealth.”¹³⁶²

Similarly, the first century BC Roman historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus reported a woman saying this after her son returned from an absence of many years to conquer his own people:¹³⁶³

“If it is right and lawful for a woman to grovel at the feet of her son, even to this and every other posture and office of humility will I submit in order to save my country.’ With these words, she threw herself upon the ground, and embracing the feet of Marcius with both hands, she kissed them.”¹³⁶⁴

Matthew used “worship” (*proskuneō*) to describe the women’s interaction with the risen Lord. The term connotes “prostrating oneself in total submission to a high-ranking figure in authority.”¹³⁶⁵ Jesus previously said that people should worship only God. Therefore, Matthew’s positive portrayal of this act alludes to Christ’s divine status (Cf. Matt 4:9–10; Rev 22:8–9).¹³⁶⁶

John added some additional information in his gospel account regarding Mary holding Christ’s feet (John 20:17). He wrote, “Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father and my God and your God.’”

Scholars debate whether Christ referred to an immediate rising to and returning from the Father in one day,¹³⁶⁷ or if he wanted Mary to let go of him and run to share the good news with his disciples that he would ascend into heaven forty days later (Acts 1:1–3; Heb 10:11–17).¹³⁶⁸ In one view, Jesus invited Thomas to touch him because he failed to believe that Christ had indeed risen from death (John 20:19–29).¹³⁶⁹ Others hold that ascending immediately to the Father comprised an important aspect of Jesus’s saving work (Heb 9:11–14). John’s gospel equates

¹³⁵⁹Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

¹³⁶⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 703.

¹³⁶¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

^{1362b}. Kethubot 63a, http://halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_63.html.

¹³⁶³Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, Vol. 5 (trans. Earnest Cary and Edward Spelman; LCL; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1945), 8.51.1–4, 151, <https://archive.org/details/romanantiquities05dionuoft/page/150>.

¹³⁶⁴Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* Vol.5, 8.53.4–54.1, 157, <https://archive.org/details/romanantiquities05dionuoft/page/156>.

¹³⁶⁵Arndt et. al, “προσκυνέω” (*proskuneō*), *BDAG*, 882.

¹³⁶⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 1069.

¹³⁶⁷Beasley-Murray, *John*, 376.

¹³⁶⁸Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 743.

¹³⁶⁹Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 644–5.

news of the ascension with Matthew's announcement of the resurrection. They assert that by the time Christ met Thomas a week later, his interim journey to heaven had ended.¹³⁷⁰

Matthew's account indicates the women saw the Lord whom they loved after he rose from the grave. This transformed their terror into adoration.¹³⁷¹ Most of Christ's other disciples experienced the same reaction after they followed the directive to meet Jesus in Galilee (Matt 28:16–17). A polite response to someone who rises from death seems inadequate.¹³⁷² Christ's resurrection exonerated him of any wrongdoing and pointed to what all his people can anticipate in the age to come (John 2:13–22; 1 Cor 15:20–23).¹³⁷³

Read Matt 28:8–9. Why were the women simultaneously afraid and joyful when they left the angel? When did they recognize Jesus? What did grasping someone's feet mean in their culture? What are the implications of Christ accepting the women's worship? Do you believe that John 20:17 refers to an immediate ascension of Jesus or to the one which occurred forty days later? Why?

A Restoration of Status

e) **Matt 28:10:** With emotionally-fraught events swirling around Mary Magdalene and the other women,¹³⁷⁴ the risen Christ repeated the angel of the Lord's comfort and directive, with one major difference (Cf. Matt 28:1–9).¹³⁷⁵ The angel had referred to Jesus's followers as his "disciples" (*mathētais*).¹³⁷⁶ However, Christ said, "Do not be afraid. Go and speak to my brothers and sisters (*adelphois*) in order that they might go into Galilee. There they will see me."

In Koine Greek, a masculine plural noun can include women in a group of mixed gender (Matt 12:48–50). During Christ's arrest, trial, and crucifixion only John and "many women" had remained with him (Matt 26:55–58, 69–75; John 19:25–27; Matt 27:55–61). Jesus experienced desertion by most of his male disciples. Yet, he still included them among his "brothers and sisters,"¹³⁷⁷ even before they expressed contrition for abandoning him.¹³⁷⁸ This indicates that Christ had already forgiven them.¹³⁷⁹

¹³⁷⁰Beasley-Murray, *John*, 377.

¹³⁷¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

¹³⁷²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

¹³⁷³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874–5.

¹³⁷⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 941.

¹³⁷⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

¹³⁷⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

¹³⁷⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 703.

¹³⁷⁸Osborne, *Matthew*, 1069.

¹³⁷⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102–3.

Jesus had lived and often ministered in Galilee (Matt 2:19–23; Matt 3:13; Matt 4:12–25; Matt 19:1–2),¹³⁸⁰ so they likely knew exactly where he wanted them to reunite (Matt 26:31–32; Matt 28:16).¹³⁸¹ Matthew focused upon the gradual expansion of God’s kingdom to gentiles (Matt 2:1–2; Matt 8:5–13; Matt 27:50–54; Matt 28:18–20).¹³⁸² By employing female disciples as his envoys at this critical point in salvation history, Christ restored women to the status they originally occupied as equal and adequate partners (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 2:18–23; Rom 16:1–12).¹³⁸³

Read Matt 28:10. How did Jesus indicate his forgiveness for even the disciples who had abandoned him? Why did he choose Galilee as their place to reunite? How does this verse point to the renewed equality of male and female disciples of the Lord?

A New Mandate

11) Matt 28:18–20: This final event in the gospel of Matthew provides the key to understanding the rest of the book.¹³⁸⁴ Matthew restated and emphasized his most important theme.¹³⁸⁵ With our loyalty belonging to Jesus our king, his ambassadors must expand his realm by making disciples all over the world (Cf. Gen 1:26–28).¹³⁸⁶ After Jesus rose from the dead, the women he commissioned delivered his message. All his committed followers met in Galilee (Matt 28:5–10; 16–17).¹³⁸⁷ Despite the abject failure of almost all the male disciples, Christ restored them to positions of trust (Matt 26:56; Matt 27:55–57; John 19:25–27; John 20:21–23).¹³⁸⁸ In the midst of their bewildering circumstances and emotions, Jesus brought clarity to their new existence.¹³⁸⁹

This passage takes the form of a chiasm (A-B-C-B'-A') with baptism as the central focus of emphasis.¹³⁹⁰ Jesus used the word “all” (*pas*) four times,¹³⁹¹ pointing to the comprehensive extent of our mandate as Christians.¹³⁹² The lack of a verbal response by the disciples suggests that Christ expected them to fully receive and obey his command.¹³⁹³ Matthew wrote, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.’”

During his previous ministry in Israel, Jesus exercised his ability to heal the sick, to forgive sins, to raise the dead, and to disclose the will of his Father (Matt 9:1–8, 18–25; Matt

¹³⁸⁰Freyne, “Galilee: Hellenistic/Roman Galilee” *ABD* 2:895–9, 899.

¹³⁸¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 942.

¹³⁸²Osborne, *Matthew*, 1096–9.

¹³⁸³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 942.

¹³⁸⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 881.

¹³⁸⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950.

¹³⁸⁶Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 715.

¹³⁸⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 881.

¹³⁸⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1107–8.

¹³⁸⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950.

¹³⁹⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 882.

¹³⁹¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1109.

¹³⁹²Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950–1.

¹³⁹³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112.

11:27–30).¹³⁹⁴ In Christ’s time of trial in the wilderness, Satan had offered him “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” in exchange for his worship (Matt 4:8–11).¹³⁹⁵ Jesus passed the test, unlike the first son of God (Luke 3:38; Gen 3:1–7). While the first Adam failed under the best conditions, the Second Adam succeeded in the worst (Gen 2:7–15; Matt 4:1–2).¹³⁹⁶ By refusing to short-circuit the plan devised within the Trinity, Jesus received far more than the devil promised (John 14:23–31; John 17:1–5; Matt 26:36–42; Acts 4:23–31).¹³⁹⁷

Using the divine passive “has been given,”¹³⁹⁸ Christ asserted that the Father delivered universal dominion to his vindicated Son.¹³⁹⁹ His promised status as the enthroned Son of Man who rules over heaven and earth now reflects reality (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 19:27–30; Matt 26:59–66).¹⁴⁰⁰ Previously handed over to the power of earthly rulers, he now reigns over them all (Luke 22:1–6; John 18:29–19:16; Phil 2:5–11).¹⁴⁰¹ A new era had arrived in redemptive history,¹⁴⁰² with a world-wide expansion of Christ’s kingdom.¹⁴⁰³

Jesus authoritatively proclaimed,¹⁴⁰⁴ “Therefore, after going, make disciples of all the people-groups, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all which I commanded you.” The Greek structure of this sentence consists of one main verb—the command “make disciples”—accompanied by three secondary verbs.¹⁴⁰⁵ “Going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” combine to describe the process of making disciples.¹⁴⁰⁶ In this case, the terms also function as commands,¹⁴⁰⁷ so Christ ordered all his followers to take up this mandate.¹⁴⁰⁸ It applies to disciples who remain in Israel as well as to those who cross cultures (Cf. Acts 1:12–14; Acts 2:1–11).¹⁴⁰⁹

“To make/become a disciple” (*mathēteuō*) occurs only four times in the New Testament,¹⁴¹⁰ usually in the passive sense (Matt 13:52; Matt 27:57; Acts 14:21).¹⁴¹¹ For example, in the verse in Acts, Luke referenced the word as resulting from evangelizing.¹⁴¹² Only here in Matt 28:19 does it appear as a call to action.¹⁴¹³ Jesus invested considerable time and energy into recruiting his followers and training them to emulate his righteousness (Matt 4:18–25; Matt 10:1–8; Matt 16:21–27).¹⁴¹⁴ In this passage, he commanded his disciples to repeat that pattern of making Christ-followers while this era of human history endures (Cf. Rom 8:29).¹⁴¹⁵

¹³⁹⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

¹³⁹⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113.

¹³⁹⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156.

¹³⁹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113.

¹³⁹⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

¹³⁹⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

¹⁴⁰⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112–3.

¹⁴⁰¹Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 682.

¹⁴⁰²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

¹⁴⁰³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

¹⁴⁰⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

¹⁴⁰⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

¹⁴⁰⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

¹⁴⁰⁷Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

¹⁴⁰⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 954.

¹⁴⁰⁹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 718–9.

¹⁴¹⁰Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “μαθητεύω” (*mathēteuō*), *TDNT* 4:461.

¹⁴¹¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

¹⁴¹²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

¹⁴¹³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

¹⁴¹⁴Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

¹⁴¹⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

The word *ethnos* depicts a group of people with common descent, a shared history, and a unified language.¹⁴¹⁶ Prior to this, Jewish people incorporated gentiles within Israel who desired to join them or welcomed them into their synagogues. Such gentiles had to seek to convert to Judaism; Jewish people did not actively evangelize them (Deut 4:5–8; Josh 2:1–14; Ruth 1:16–18; Ruth 4:9–12; 1 Ki 8:41–43; Matt 1:5–6; Matt 10:5–6).¹⁴¹⁷

However, after his resurrection,¹⁴¹⁸ Christ expanded that mission to extend as wide as the universal dominion of the Son of Man predicted by Isaiah (Isa 11:10–12; Isa 42:5–10; Isa 49:5–7; Matt 24:14).¹⁴¹⁹ His call to reach all people-groups encompasses Jews and gentiles alike (Luke 10:1–2; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8; Acts 13:13–16; 26–39, 43–49).¹⁴²⁰

During this era, gentiles who chose to convert to Judaism received baptism as a rite of initiation.¹⁴²¹ Regarding such an individual, the *Babylonian Talmud* states: “If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith...As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution (immersion in water), when two learned men must stand by his side and acquaint him with some of the minor commandments and with some of the major ones. When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects. In the case of a woman proselyte, women make her sit in the water up to her neck, while two learned men stand outside and give her instruction in some of the minor commandments and some of the major ones” (*b. Yebamoth* 47b).

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55–135 AD) also recognized baptism as an indicator of religious conversion.¹⁴²² He wrote, “When we see anyone wavering, we are wont to say, ‘This is not a Jew, but only acts like one.’ But, when he assumes the sentiments of one who has been baptized and circumcised, then he both really is, and is called, a Jew.”¹⁴²³

In the Great Commission, baptism represents the beginning of a new life as a Christian disciple (Cf. Rom 6:1–4).¹⁴²⁴ It replaced the baptism of repentance, which anticipated the arrival of the kingdom of God (Matt 3:1–6; John 4:1–2; Acts 19:1–7).¹⁴²⁵ Matthew provided almost no background information regarding the practice,¹⁴²⁶ most likely due to his original audience’s familiarity with the rite (Acts 2:38–42; Acts 8:12, 30–38).¹⁴²⁷ Being baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” connotes belonging to and fellowship with the Trinity (Acts 9:10–19; Gal 3:26–29). The term “name” (*onoma*) occurs in singular form, pointing to one entity.¹⁴²⁸ Grouping the resurrected Son with

¹⁴¹⁶Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “ἔθνος (*ethnos*) in the NT,” *TDNT* 2:369–72, 369.

¹⁴¹⁷Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

¹⁴¹⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

¹⁴¹⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

¹⁴²⁰Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 684.

¹⁴²¹Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Second Ed. (IVPBBCNT2)*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 125.

¹⁴²²Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 779.

¹⁴²³Epictetus, “Discourses,” in *The Works of Epictetus: His Discourses, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments* (trans. Thomas Wentworth Higginson; New York: Thomas Nelson, 1890), 2.9,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D9>.

¹⁴²⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

¹⁴²⁵Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 720.

¹⁴²⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

¹⁴²⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1117.

¹⁴²⁸Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 685.

the Father and the Spirit elevates Jesus to equality with them and identifies him as worthy of our faith (Col 1:15–23; 2 Cor 13:14).¹⁴²⁹

The *Didache* (ca. 50–120 AD) provides us with the earliest extra-biblical record of Christian practices.¹⁴³⁰ Regarding baptism, it says:

“And concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in living [running] water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then warm. But if thou have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism, let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days before.”¹⁴³¹

Jesus also requires that his disciples help new believers to grow in faith by “teaching them to keep all which [he] commanded.” Christ calls each of his followers to adhere to this mandate.¹⁴³² Those with greater maturity should instruct others how to live in a way which emulates, obeys, and honors the Lord (Matt 5:17–20; Matt 7:15–29; Matt 12:46–50). Matthew intended his account of Jesus’s words and life to achieve that goal.¹⁴³³

In contrast to the convention of that era, this applies to every believer: both male and female (Acts 18:24–28; Rom 16:1–12; 1 Cor 11:4–6).¹⁴³⁴ While some rabbis asserted that men should teach the Mosaic law to their daughters, others charged that doing so amounted to debauchery (*m. Sotah* 3.4). The Jerusalem Talmud went further, contending, “Let the words of the law be burned rather than committed to women” (*y. Sotah* 3:19).¹⁴³⁵ Consequently, few Jewish women received training in the law,¹⁴³⁶ although they did acquire some basic instruction to enable them to teach their children. Prior to Jesus’s ministry, women in Israel could neither travel with nor study under a formal religious instructor (John 4:25–27; Luke 8:1–3; Luke 10:38–42).¹⁴³⁷

This gospel concludes with a grand promise. Jesus proclaimed, “And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the present age.” As we labor to live for Christ and accomplish the task of evangelizing every people-group, his presence goes with us.¹⁴³⁸ He fulfills the meaning of the name Immanuel (Isa 41:10; Matt 1:23).¹⁴³⁹ Through his power, we can accomplish his purpose for our lives as we await the day when Jesus returns to set all things right (Matt 13:24–30, 36–52; Matt 25:31–46).¹⁴⁴⁰ May all of us walk closely with Christ as we proclaim the good news of the kingdom among the nations.¹⁴⁴¹

¹⁴²⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1108.

¹⁴³⁰Hurtado, “Christology: Didache” in *DLNT*, 181.

¹⁴³¹Riddle, trans., “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *ANF* 7, 7, 379, <https://archive.org/details/antenicenefather071913robe/page/378>.

¹⁴³²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 888.

¹⁴³³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956–7.

¹⁴³⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956.

¹⁴³⁵John Lightfoot, *From the Talmud and Hebraica: A Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 580, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/lightfoot/talmud.vii.iii.html>.

¹⁴³⁶Keener, *IVPBCNT*, 1 Tim 2:11.

¹⁴³⁷Ben Witherington III, “Women: New Testament,” *ABD* 6: 957–61, 957.

¹⁴³⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

¹⁴³⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 888.

¹⁴⁴⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

¹⁴⁴¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 959.

Read Matt 28:18–20. How do we know that the women who met Christ at the tomb delivered Jesus’s message? Why did the Father grant all authority to the Son? What process do we use to make disciples? How would you define a “people-group”? What does baptism signify? Why did Jesus indicate that the Father, Son, and Spirit share one name? What made Christ’s command about teaching radical for his era? How does Jesus’s enduring presence encourage you?

Our Great High Priest

12) Heb 2:14–18: For God to nullify the work of the devil in Eden,¹⁴⁴² he had to become a Second Adam: flesh and blood, just like us in every way (Gen 3:1–13; Phil 2:5–11). Moreover, he had to live without committing sin from the time of his birth until his death (2 Cor 5:16–21; Heb 9:11–15).¹⁴⁴³ Once again, Scripture portrays Christ as God’s champion engaged in single combat (Gen 3:14–15; Matt 4:1–11).¹⁴⁴⁴

As a result of his victory through death, Jesus has rendered Satan’s tyranny ineffective, making our salvation possible (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Pet 3:18).¹⁴⁴⁵ God’s people still die. However, by covering our sin, Christ eliminated the devil’s ability to intimidate us with the threat of death (1 Cor 15:54–57).¹⁴⁴⁶ No longer must that fear paralyze us like cowering slaves,¹⁴⁴⁷ nor lead us to evade the reality of death. Jesus sets us free from the terrifying power of the grave (Gen 3:17–19; 1 Cor 15:21–26; 2 Cor 5:1–5).¹⁴⁴⁸

Due to his lifetime of faithful obedience to the Father, our great high priest has cleansed us from our sins. This enables us to enter into God’s presence (1 Cor 1:26–31; Heb 10:17–22).¹⁴⁴⁹ By making atonement through his blood,¹⁴⁵⁰ Christ has removed all the impurity of our rebellion against God (Eph 1:7–8; Col 2:13–14).¹⁴⁵¹ Jesus fulfills the promise of 1 Sam 2:35, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted according to our likeness yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).¹⁴⁵²

¹⁴⁴² Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 110.

¹⁴⁴³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 84–5.

¹⁴⁴⁴ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 62.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 110–1.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 148.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 61.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 148.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 150.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Verbrugge, “ἱλάσκομαι” (*hilaskomai*), *TDNTWA*, 269.

¹⁴⁵¹ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 151.

¹⁴⁵² Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 65.

Read Heb 2:14–18. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become a Second Adam? What did his sacrifice accomplish? How does this affect the way you view death?

Satan Vanquished

13) Rom 16:20: This verse consists of a promise, rather than a prayer or a benediction.¹⁴⁵³ The name Satan derives from the Hebrew verb which means “to accuse,” “to be an adversary,” and “to slander” (*satan*) (Ps 38:20; Ps 71:13; Zech 3:1–2).¹⁴⁵⁴ In keeping with his name, the devil continually accuses us before God (Rev 12:10).¹⁴⁵⁵ However, we serve “the God of peace.” Ultimately, division within the church comes from the devil (2 Cor 11:3–4; Jude 17–25). To achieve harmony among God’s people, we must partner with the Lord and with each other to deal decisively with Satan (Luke 10:17–20; Eph 6:10–18).¹⁴⁵⁶

This reference to Gen 3:15 alludes to the final end-time victory when God will throw the devil and his seed into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10, 14–15).¹⁴⁵⁷ The metaphor of crushing Satan under foot fits well with Roman victory parades. Coins from shortly after Paul’s era depict the victorious emperor Trajan (98–117 AD) treading upon his vanquished enemies.¹⁴⁵⁸

D-Day during World War II provides a good illustration of inaugurated eschatology, the concept that the kingdom of God has come, is here, and has not yet come. We celebrate the anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 1944 as the decisive battle of WWII. However, not until May 8, 1945 did Germany declare defeat. In the interim, soldiers engaged in battle—with many losing their lives—despite the certainty of the outcome. For example, the Nazi regime executed the great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer on April 9, 1945, one month before the war ended.

“It has been accomplished (John 19:28–30), yet we still encounter warfare. The kingdom of God in all its fullness shall not arrive until Christ returns (Rev 21:1–7). As members of God’s church, the Lord calls us to continually work toward a restoration of the conditions that existed in Eden prior to the fall (Gen 1:26–28, 31; Gen 2:8–15; 1 Cor 15:54–58).

Read Rom 16:20. Why do we still experience great difficulties? When will the curse upon the serpent be completely fulfilled? What does God call you to do until that occurs?

¹⁴⁵³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:803.

¹⁴⁵⁴Victor P. Hamilton, “Satan,” *ABD* 5:985–9, 985.

¹⁴⁵⁵James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 905.

¹⁴⁵⁶Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 398.

¹⁴⁵⁷Douglas Moo J., *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 932–3.

¹⁴⁵⁸Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan_Sestertius_116_833039.jpg.

Chapter 8: Pain and Desire (Gen 3:16, 20)

Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither interrogated the serpent nor allowed him an opportunity to explain his behavior (Gen 3:6–13).¹⁴⁵⁹ Instead, the one who was crafty (*arum*) became cursed (*arur*) (Gen 3:1, 14–15).¹⁴⁶⁰ By forcing the serpent to crawl on his belly and eat dust, God reined in the snake’s aggression and hinted at his demise.¹⁴⁶¹ The serpent and his seed would engage in battle with the seed of the woman,¹⁴⁶² corporately and—eventually—in single combat.¹⁴⁶³ Both champions would receive mortal wounds.

An Anguishing Process

1) Gen 3:16: The Lord told Eve, “I will increase greatly your anguish (*itsabon*) and your conception (*herayon*). With pain you shall bear children.” Notably, God did not curse Eve but instead spoke of the outcome of her foolish choice (Gen 3:1–6). He cursed only the snake and the ground (Gen 3:14, 17).¹⁴⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the arrival of the seed which the woman would conceive would cause her agony (Gen 3:15).¹⁴⁶⁵

Moses likely chose the word for pain used here (*etseb*) for its resemblance to the word for a tree (*ets*), rather than using the typical term. Ultimately, a tree led to her trauma,¹⁴⁶⁶ hardship, pain, and distress (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁴⁶⁷ The consequences of sin produced difficult labor for both Eve and Adam, for *itsabon* occurs in both verdicts of judgment (Gen 3:17).¹⁴⁶⁸ Although the only other Old Testament use of *itsabon* appears in Gen 5:29, nouns using the same Hebrew root connote agony, difficulty, grief, and anxiety.¹⁴⁶⁹ Childbirth itself involves the pain and toil associated with strenuous work.¹⁴⁷⁰ However, emotional anguish accompanies the physical pain.

Commentators disagree whether the correct translation is “conception” or “pregnancy,” as the Hebrew term *herayon* can refer to either one.¹⁴⁷¹ Even conception can evoke pain, for attempting to conceive can certainly produce misery and anxiety. Most likely, this is another example of merism, where the entire process from conception to childbirth causes emotional travail and/or physical pain. Walton paraphrases Gen 3:16a as, “I will greatly increase the anguish you will experience in the birth process, from the anxiety surrounding conception to the strenuous work of giving birth.”¹⁴⁷² Without the blessing of modern medicine, people in the ancient world deemed the pain accompanying childbirth the worst of agonies (Mic 4:9–10; Isa 13:6–8; Isa 21:3).¹⁴⁷³

¹⁴⁵⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁴⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

¹⁴⁶¹Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

¹⁴⁶²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

¹⁴⁶³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

¹⁴⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

¹⁴⁶⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

¹⁴⁶⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

¹⁴⁶⁷Holladay, “עֲצָבֹן” (*itsabon*), *CHALOT*, 280.

¹⁴⁶⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֲצָבֹן” (*itsabon*), *BDB*, 781,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁶⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 227.

¹⁴⁷⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֲצָבֹן” (*etseb*), *BDB*, 780,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷¹M. Ottosson, “הֵרָיוֹן” (*herayon*), *TDOT*, 3:436,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/248/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷²Walton, *Genesis*, 227.

¹⁴⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

Due to the high rate of miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant mortality in Mesopotamia, people considered expectant mothers and newborns prime targets for attack by the demons Lamashtu and Pazuzu. In the later months of pregnancy, many women wore an amulet depicting the head of Pazuzu, often inscribed with an incantation. Lamashtu appears as a hideous nude woman with long talons, the head of a bird or lion, and dangling breasts. This demon slithered through a small crack into a house and, upon finding an unattended infant, would suckle the baby to kill it.¹⁴⁷⁴ People also attributed the pain of childbirth to her.¹⁴⁷⁵

The second half of verse 16 says, “and for (*el*) your husband your longing (*teshuqah*) shall be,¹⁴⁷⁶ and he will rule (*mashal*) over you.” A recent revision of the ESV has ignited controversy by departing from all other major translations in translating *el* as “contrary to,” rather than depicting movement from the woman toward her husband. While Eve longed to reestablish their relationship of equality and partnership,¹⁴⁷⁷ Adam would seek to rule over his wife (Cf. Gen 2:18–24). The verb *mashal* means simply “rule, have dominion, reign” without any sense of tyrannical behavior.¹⁴⁷⁸ It describes how the sun and moon govern the day (Gen 1:17–18), while also depicting how God and people can have dominion over humanity (Judg 8:23; Ps 89:8–9).¹⁴⁷⁹

No longer reigning in unity as co-equals over creation (Gen 1:26–28), fierce disputes would characterize their marriage.¹⁴⁸⁰ Eve’s subordination to her husband resulted from a broken creation,¹⁴⁸¹ rather than as a punishment from her creator.¹⁴⁸²

a) Read Gen 3:16. How did Moses express similarities between what the man and the woman experienced? Why did he likely choose an unusual word to express the woman’s pain? How was the experience of childbearing altered? What does this verse imply about Adam and Eve’s prior interactions?

A Renewed Covenant

b) Gen 3:20: Moses wrote, “Now, the man called the name of his wife “Eve,” for she became the mother of all the living.” People in the Ancient Near East associated giving someone a name with the one in authority making a covenant with a subordinate, either for protection or exploitation (Gen 17:1–5; 2 Ki 24:17, 20).¹⁴⁸³

¹⁴⁷⁴Erle Lichty, “Demons and Population Control,” *Expedition*, vol. 13, issue 2, Winter 1971: 23–4, <http://www.penn.museum/documents/publications/expedition/PDFs/13-2/Lichty.pdf>. This includes a sketch.

¹⁴⁷⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:16.

¹⁴⁷⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לָשׁוּן” (*el*), *BDB*, 38–40, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/38/mode/2up>, and “תִּשְׁוּקָה” (*teshuqah*), *BDB*, 1003, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1002/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷⁷Janson C. Condren, “Toward a Purge of the Battle of the Sexes and ‘Return’ for the Original Meaning of Gen 3:16b,” *JETS* 60, no. 2 (April 1, 2017): 227–45, 245, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/60/60-2/JETS_60-2-227-245_Condren.pdf.

¹⁴⁷⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*mashal*”, *BDB*, 605, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/606/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷⁹Philip J. Nel, “*mashal*”, *NIDOTTE*, 2:1137.

¹⁴⁸⁰Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202.

¹⁴⁸¹Howard N. Wallace, “Eve (Person),” *ABD* 2:676–7, 677.

¹⁴⁸²Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 51.

¹⁴⁸³Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 232.

Not until after the fall of humanity did Adam name his wife. Previously, he identified her as his true counterpart (Gen 2:18, 23–24).¹⁴⁸⁴ In Hebrew, the term “woman” (*ishah*) is simply the feminine form of the word “man” (*ish*).^{1485,1486} This emphasizes the shared identity and equality of this couple.¹⁴⁸⁷ By calling her “Eve” (*khauah*), Adam noted her identity in keeping with her destiny as the mother of all “the living” (*khay*).¹⁴⁸⁸

Read Gen 3:20. Why did naming the woman indicate that Adam’s relationship with her had changed? Do you think his renewed covenant with her reflected his desire to protect her or to exploit her? Why? How do you relate to people with whom you have made a covenant?

Slaves and War Brides

2) Exod 21:10–11 and Deut 21:10–14: Slavery and war captivity were facts of life in the Ancient Near East. These laws from God protected those most vulnerable to exploitation. As a result, married former slaves and war brides shared the rights of free Israelite women.¹⁴⁸⁹ If their husbands failed to meet their moral and legal obligations and divorce occurred, these women received freedom without a reduction of their status.¹⁴⁹⁰

Since women seized in war typically suffer sexual assault, forbidding consummation for a month and making the women unattractive discouraged men from taking them.¹⁴⁹¹ An unmarried woman captured in this way could mourn the loss of her people before being forced into a new community.¹⁴⁹² Shaving her head and allowing new hair to grow, trimming her nails, and changing her clothing also signified the shedding of a former life and taking on a new status as a member of the nation of Israel.¹⁴⁹³ This reminded her spouse not to treat her as a foreigner or slave.¹⁴⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 21:14 says, “You shall not deal tyrannically (*amar*) with her.”¹⁴⁹⁵ By the time of Christ, rabbis taught that these obligations also applied to free women and to men (*m. Ketuboth* 5:6–8).¹⁴⁹⁶

Read Exod 21:10–11 and Deut 21:10–14. What were the rights of slaves and war captives, women who were highly vulnerable to exploitation? Why would this regulation prevent battlefield rape? How does this express God’s concern for all women and men?

¹⁴⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 97.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אִשָּׁה” (*ishah*), *BDB*, 61, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/60/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “אִישׁ” (*ish*), 35, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/34/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 180.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Deut 21:10–4.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 475.

¹⁴⁹¹ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 475.

¹⁴⁹² Block, *Deuteronomy*, 496.

¹⁴⁹³ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 281.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 496.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עָמַר” (*amar*), *BDB*, 771, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/770/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Instone-Brewer, David, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 196, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm124.htm>.

God Hates Violence

3) Mal 2:13–16: As a result of the sins of these men, God refused to accept their offerings, leading them to weep and to wail. Despite this, they failed to truly exhibit a broken spirit or a contrite heart.¹⁴⁹⁷ Through the prophet Malachi, the Lord called for marital faithfulness, noting that a marriage covenant exists between three parties: the husband, the wife, and God.¹⁴⁹⁸

Malachi announced, “The Lord God of Israel said he hates divorcing (*shalakh*) and covering over the garment with violence (*khamas*),¹⁴⁹⁹ ... so guard yourselves on peril of your life, and you shall not deal treacherously” (*bagadh*).¹⁵⁰⁰ In Hebrew, “violence” can refer to an attitude which oppresses others as well as to physical destruction.¹⁵⁰¹

An official statement of the theologically conservative Presbyterian Church of America says:

“The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threatens the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the [elders], or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the [elders] should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by ‘hating’ the abused spouse and not ‘nourishing and cherishing’ this one (Eph 5:28-29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the [elders] that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:12–16].¹⁵⁰²

God holds accountable those who break their marriage covenants, causing a divorce.¹⁵⁰³ This passage does not apply to someone who discovers a spouse’s treachery and responds to those broken vows by filing for divorce.¹⁵⁰⁴

Since one of the terms in 1 Cor 6:9–11 means “reviler, abusive person” (*loidoros*),¹⁵⁰⁵ Paul recognized that such behavior is incompatible with the presence of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:19–24). In fact, he advised the church to remove abusive people from their fellowship (1 Cor 5:9–13).¹⁵⁰⁶ Domination and cruelty violate God’s order. He regards them as deplorable, hateful, and completely unacceptable within a marriage.¹⁵⁰⁷ The National Center on Domestic and Sexual

¹⁴⁹⁷Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 273.

¹⁴⁹⁸Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 325.

¹⁴⁹⁹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁלַח” (*khamas*), *BDB*, 329, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/328/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בָּגַדְתָּ” (*bagadh*), 93, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/92/mode/2up>. I cover the topic of divorce extensively in four consecutive posts on 1 Cor 7:10–16.

¹⁵⁰¹H. Haag, “שָׁמַח” (*khamas*), *TDOT* 4:480–7, 480–1.

¹⁵⁰²PCA Digest, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage.” (To the Twentieth General Assembly, 1992), Appendix 0, 291–2, <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰³Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 57.

¹⁵⁰⁴Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 359.

¹⁵⁰⁵Danker et al., “λοιδορος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602, <https://archive.org/stream/greekenglishlex00liddrich#page/902/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁶Danker, et al., “λοιδορος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602.

¹⁵⁰⁷David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 260.

Violence produced an Equality Wheel and a Power and Control Wheel to help people differentiate between healthy and abusive relationships.¹⁵⁰⁸ See pp. 85–86 for a summary.

Read Mal 2:13–16. How does God depict treachery and violence in this passage? Have you ever experienced people entering a room as if they wore a cloak of violence? Compare the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence’s Equality Wheel to the Power and Control Wheel. How can you identify a healthy relationship? What constitutes abusive behavior?¹⁵⁰⁹ What does the Lord’s refusal of the offerings of these men tell us about his heart toward those in abusive relationships? What can you do to align yourself with God’s concern?

Effects of the Fall Reversed

4) Rom 5:12–21: An important key to understanding this text involves the corporate solidarity of patrimonial headship within Ancient Near Eastern societies. The head of a family represented every member of his clan, both for good and for ill (2 Sam 21:1–9; Jer 35; Dan 6:24).¹⁵¹⁰ Thus, this passage focuses upon the contrasting effects of the lives of Adam and of Christ.¹⁵¹¹

Due to this theological reality, death comes to all people, for we all sinned collectively in the first transgression of Adam (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–7).¹⁵¹² Unlike most writers of his era, Paul blamed neither Eve nor Satan for sin’s entry into the world.¹⁵¹³ The sin of the first Adam plunged us into ruin by representation and imputation. Likewise, the obedience of the Second Adam redeemed us by representation and imputation (1 Cor 15:21–22). On the cross, Jesus took my place and paid the penalty for my sin. Similarly, God charged his righteousness to me (2 Cor 5:21).¹⁵¹⁴

Consequently, when the Father looks at me, he sees Jesus, for the blood of Christ covers all my sin (Ps 103:10–13). Consider the great magnitude of this promise: we can travel to the top of the North and visit the bottom of the South of our planet, but we can never reach the end of the East or the West. By his one act of sacrifice following a blameless life, Christ has reversed the effects of the fall (Gen 3:16).¹⁵¹⁵

¹⁵⁰⁸<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/EqualitywheelNOSHADING.pdf>;

<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_about.html).

¹⁵⁰⁹<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/EqualitywheelNOSHADING.pdf>;

<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_about.html)

¹⁵¹⁰Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 138.

¹⁵¹¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 316.

¹⁵¹²C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 1 (ICC; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 277–8.

¹⁵¹³James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 272.

¹⁵¹⁴R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1994), 107.

¹⁵¹⁵Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 458.

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

Now Jesus reigns in the place of Adam and calls us to rule over creation with him (Gen 1:26–28).¹⁵¹⁶ As Christians in Rome heard this letter for the first time, they could see a prime example of the effects of this new era in front of them. Paul wrote, “I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, being a deacon of the church in Cenchreae, that you might receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you might put yourselves at her disposal in any task in which she might have need, for she has been a patron of many and also to me” (Rom 16:1–2).

The apostle employed the word translated as “deacon” (*diakonon*) to describe himself and his coworkers in 2 Cor 6:4 and in his charge to church leaders in 1 Tim 3:8–13.¹⁵¹⁷ Note that the first word in 1 Tim 3:11 can be translated as “Women” or “Wives” (*gynē*). Most scholars hold to the first option.¹⁵¹⁸ Due to the form of the noun and the lack of a possessive pronoun in the Greek text, the translation “Their wives” requires grammatical gymnastics. Furthermore, both “women” and “deacons” (1 Tim 3:8) appear in the same noun case (accusative plural).

In Paul’s greetings to the church of Rome in Rom 16:1–12, seven of the twenty-seven people he greeted by name were women.¹⁵¹⁹ They served as “a deacon,” his “fellow workers” (*synergos*),¹⁵²⁰ “those who work hard (*kopiaō*) in the Lord,” women who “worked very hard” for the Lord or for the church,¹⁵²¹ and a woman who was “outstanding (*episēmos*) among (*ev*) the apostles.”¹⁵²²

In five of the seven times the New Testament mentions Paul’s co-workers Priscilla and Aquila, her name comes before his (Cf. Acts 18:1–3, 18–20, 24–26; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).¹⁵²³ That was quite rare in the Greco-Roman era, pointing to Priscilla’s prominence in ministry.¹⁵²⁴ John Chrysostom (347–407) wrote concerning Junia, “How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation (name) of apostle!”¹⁵²⁵

Regarding those who had “devoted themselves to the service (*diakonia*) of God’s people,”¹⁵²⁶ Paul charged the church in Corinth.¹⁵²⁷ He told them “to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it” (1 Cor 16:15–16).¹⁵²⁸ Concerning this last passage, some translations add the word “men,” possibly due to the masculine plural form found in “such as these.” However, in Greek, a masculine plural can apply to either men alone or include women in a group of mixed gender.¹⁵²⁹

¹⁵¹⁶N. T. Wright, “Excursus on Paul’s Use of Adam,” in *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (John H. Walton; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 170–80, 174.

¹⁵¹⁷A. J. Gordon, “The Ministry of Women,” in *The Missionary Review of the World* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), 910–21, 916–7.

<http://www.biblesnet.com/AJ%20Gordon%20The%20Ministry%20of%20Women.pdf>.

¹⁵¹⁸William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2000), 202–3.

¹⁵¹⁹Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 85.

¹⁵²⁰Danker, et al., “συνεργός” (*synergos*), *BDAG*, 969.

¹⁵²¹Danker, et al., “κοπιάω” (*kopiaō*), 558.

¹⁵²²Danker, et al., “ἐπίσημος” (*episēmos*), 378.

¹⁵²³Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 651.

¹⁵²⁴Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 301.

¹⁵²⁵John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (trans. J. B. Morris; Oxford; London: Parker; Rivington, 1841), 489, <https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc07john#page/488/mode/2up>.

¹⁵²⁶Danker, et al., “διακονία” (*diakonia*), 230.

¹⁵²⁷Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *Rev. ed.*, 918.

¹⁵²⁸Danker, et al., “συνεργός” (*synergos*), *BDAG*, 969. This is the same verbal root used for “fellow-worker.”

¹⁵²⁹Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 297.

The Greco-Roman patronage system consisted of asymmetrical relationships between two parties. One person provided food, money, hospitality, advice, and/or introductions to powerful people in exchange for public praise and loyalty.¹⁵³⁰ Almost certainly the carrier of this letter,¹⁵³¹ Paul's commendation of Phoebe indicates that she functioned as his envoy.¹⁵³² Thus, Phoebe publicly read Paul's epistle to the congregation, provided commentary,¹⁵³³ and answered any immediate questions raised by the book of Romans.¹⁵³⁴

Read Rom 5:12–21 and Rom 16:1–12. What was the result of Adam's sin? Why does the death and resurrection of Jesus reverse the effects of the fall? How does God view you? Why did Phoebe's task provide an object lesson for Paul's teaching about life after Christ's victory? What is the significance of the greetings at the end of Romans? How should these passages impact our churches today?

Unity in the Spirit

5) Eph 5:18–21: Paul had already enjoined the church community in Ephesus to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” through humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance (Eph 4:2–3). Since “being filled” (*plēroō*) expresses unity with God and the wholeness his salvation brings, Paul called all believers to make ourselves available as vessels for the presence and power of God.¹⁵³⁵

The Greek text of this passage begins with two imperatives (commands). Paul then employed a string of verbal nouns called participles to delineate the result of being Spirit-filled:¹⁵³⁶

Do not be intoxicated with wine...but be filled with the Spirit,
speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;
singing and praising
in your hearts to the Lord;
being thankful always for all [things]
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God,
even as to the Father;
being submissive (*hypotassō*) to one another
in reverence of Christ.

“Being submissive” (*hypotassomenoi*) appears in masculine plural form. In New Testament (NT)

¹⁵³⁰ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 289.

¹⁵³¹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:780.

¹⁵³² Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 553.

¹⁵³³ Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 202.

¹⁵³⁴ Allan Chapple, “Getting Romans to the Right Romans: Phoebe and the Delivery of Paul's Letter,” *TynBul* 62, no. 2 (1 November 2011): 195–214, 213–4, [Http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Bulletin/62=2011/03_Chapple.pdf](http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Bulletin/62=2011/03_Chapple.pdf).

¹⁵³⁵ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 290.

¹⁵³⁶ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 639. Wallace and Black both note that—based upon the grammar—one cannot separate v. 21 from the preceding verses.

Greek, that can encompass either men or a group of both genders.¹⁵³⁷ Consequently, Paul declared that Spirit-filled people submit to each other.¹⁵³⁸

a) Read Eph 5:18–21. How can you tell if you are being filled with the Spirit and exhibiting reverence for Christ?

Submissive to One Another

b) Eph 5:21–24: This section continues Paul’s discussion of how we can tell if we are living in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18–21). It opens with, “Being submissive (*hypotassō*) to one another in reverence for Christ.” Verse 22 states, “wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” Therefore, when a Bible translator separates verses 21 and 22 into different paragraphs, it leaves verse 22 without a verb.¹⁵³⁹

“Being submissive” (*hypotassomenoi*) appears in masculine plural form. In New Testament (NT) Greek, that can encompass either a group of men or both genders.¹⁵⁴⁰ As a result, one cannot accurately interpret this phrase as applying to only women. We cannot separate Paul’s exhortation to wives to submit from his charge to husbands (Eph 5:25–30).¹⁵⁴¹

In the NT, subordination involves placing oneself under someone else. Yet, it does not necessarily imply obedience.¹⁵⁴² Accounts from the book of Acts indicate that Paul would not have condoned women following their husbands into sinful practices (Acts 5:1–11, 27–29). The apostle also never advocated that women subject themselves to abuse.¹⁵⁴³

Regarding verse 24, R. C. Sproul wrote this:

“There is a teaching which has gone widely through evangelical Christianity which says that for a woman to be obedient to this passage, she must obey her husband no matter what he tells her to do. This is not true. For example, if her husband tells her to live a life of prostitution, she is to show her obedience to Christ by disobeying her husband’s wicked commands. That woman must disobey her husband, because her husband is commanding her to do something that God forbids. Similarly, if the husband forbids her to do something that God commands, she must disobey her husband.”¹⁵⁴⁴ Our allegiance to the Lord trumps our loyalty to our spouses (Acts 4:16–20).

In all five NT usages of “head” (*kephalē*) concerning Christ and the church, the word depicts Jesus as the nurturer who provides for our growth and well-being (Eph 1:22–23; Eph 4:15–16; Col 1:18–20; and Col 2:18–19). Scripture does not describe him as one who wields authority over his people. Thus, Christ does not hold headship over the church—but for it—as

¹⁵³⁷Longenecker, *Galatians*, 297.

¹⁵³⁸David Alan Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 37.

¹⁵³⁹Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 651.

¹⁵⁴⁰Longenecker, *Galatians*, 297.

¹⁵⁴¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

¹⁵⁴²Gerhard Delling, “ὑποτάσσω” (*hypotassō*), *TDNT* 8:39–46, 41.

¹⁵⁴³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

¹⁵⁴⁴R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 1994), 135–6.

our servant-provider.¹⁵⁴⁵ This counter-cultural attitude meshes with Jesus’s command to his disciples when they sought positions of preeminence (Mark 9:33–35; Mark 10:42–45).¹⁵⁴⁶

Read Eph 5:21–24. How does the masculine plural form of the verb meaning “being submissive” affect your understanding of this passage? Why should a wife submit to her husband? How do the NT texts depict Christ’s headship? What does this mean for husbands?

Sacrificial Love

c) Eph 5:25–30: We cannot separate Paul’s exhortation to wives to submit from his charge to husbands (Eph 5:18–24).¹⁵⁴⁷ As with fathers and slave owners, he instructed husbands not to abuse their authoritative position (Eph 6:1–4, 9; Col 3:19).¹⁵⁴⁸ Such reciprocity in household codes was unheard of in the Greco-Roman milieu. Typically, they regulated the behavior of women, children, and slaves toward husbands, parents, and masters.¹⁵⁴⁹

Greco-Roman men would have expected Paul to command husbands to rule over their households.¹⁵⁵⁰

For example, the first century BC author Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote:

“This custom still remains...[Roman] law obliged both the married women, as having no other refuge, to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands, and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions. Accordingly, if a wife was virtuous and in all things obedient to her husband, she was mistress of the house to the same degree as her husband was master of it.”¹⁵⁵¹

In contrast, Christian husbands could no longer emulate the harsh, oppressive rule which their fathers practiced as they led their families (Eph 6:1–4).¹⁵⁵² When Jesus came to earth, he

¹⁵⁴⁵Gilbert Bilezikian, “The Issue I Can’t Evade: The Headship of Husbands is a New Testament Teaching,” *Priscilla Papers* 17, no. 2 (1 April 2003): 5–6, https://www.academia.edu/35109479/The_Issue_I_Cant_Evade_The_headship_of_husbands_is_a_New_Testament_teaching.

¹⁵⁴⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 356.

¹⁵⁴⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

¹⁵⁴⁸Fitzgerald, “Haustafeln,” *ABD* 3:80.

¹⁵⁴⁹Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD* 3:318.

¹⁵⁵⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

¹⁵⁵¹Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities, Vol. 1* (trans. Earnest Cary and Edward Spelman; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1937), 2.25, 383, <https://archive.org/stream/romanantiquities01dionuoft#page/382/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁵²An official statement of the theologically-conservative Presbyterian Church of America states, “The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threatens the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the [elders], or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the [elders] should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by ‘hating’ the abused spouse and not ‘nourishing and cherishing’ this one (Eph. 5:28–29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the [elders] that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:12–

adopted a position of extreme abasement diametrically contrasted with his preexistent condition (Phil 2:5–11).¹⁵⁵³ During his ministry, humiliation, suffering, and death, Christ assumed the role of a slave for the sake of the church, his bride (Eph 5:31–32; Rev 19:6–9).¹⁵⁵⁴

Therefore, Paul called Christian husbands to follow the example of Jesus (Mark 9:33–35; Mark 10:42–45; John 13:1–5, 12–17).¹⁵⁵⁵ He charged them to apply the gospel to their cultural context.¹⁵⁵⁶ The proper exercise of headship consists of loving self-sacrifice, not self-assertion (Eph 4:15–16).¹⁵⁵⁷ Ironically, Paul later directed the women of Ephesus “to rule the house and family” (1 Tim 5:14).¹⁵⁵⁸ He used a term of strength (*oikodespotein*) which many translations weaken to mean “keep house.” In Greco-Roman households, homeowners expected their wives to oversee their children, their slaves, and crops growing on their estates.¹⁵⁵⁹

Like most other ancient writers, Paul did not specifically mention husbands loving their wives, yet his intent remains clear.¹⁵⁶⁰ Believers cannot insist on getting what we want but must love our neighbors as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Luke 6:31; Gal 5:13–26; Phil 2:1–8). Therefore, Paul taught that a Christian husband must exhibit this type of attitude with his wife, putting her interests before his own.¹⁵⁶¹ Paul described this kind of love in 1 Cor 13:4–8a.

The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus (30–102 AD) provides us with the closest Greco-Roman parallel to Paul’s admonition to Christian couples. He wrote this: “But in marriage there must be above all perfect companionship and mutual love of husband and wife, both in health and in sickness and under all conditions, since it was with desire for this as well as for having children that both entered upon marriage. Where, then, this love for each other is perfect and the two share it completely, each striving to outdo the other in devotion, the marriage is ideal and worthy of envy, for such a union is beautiful.

“But where each looks only to his own interests and neglects the other, or, what is worse, when one is so minded and lives in the same house but fixes his attention elsewhere and is not willing to pull together with his yoke-mate nor to agree, then the union is doomed to disaster and though they live together, yet their common interests fare badly; eventually they separate entirely or they remain together and suffer what is worse than loneliness.”¹⁵⁶²

Read Eph 5:25–30. Why is this passage counter-cultural? What did Jesus do for the church? How can a man emulate Christ’s expression of love for his wife? What happens in a marriage when a couple practices self-sacrificial love, submission, and respect?

16].” (PCA Digest, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage.” (To the Twentieth General Assembly, 1992), Appendix 0, <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>, 291–2).

¹⁵⁵³ J. Behm, “μορφή” (*morphē*), *TDNT* 4:750.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 55.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Gordon D. Fee, “The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9,” *Priscilla Papers* 31, no. 4 (1 September 2017): 6, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/cultural-context-ephesians-518%E2%80%9369>.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “οικοδεσποτέω” (*oikodespoteō*), *NIDOTTE*, 2:49.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 68–9.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 296.

¹⁵⁶¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366.

¹⁵⁶² Musonius Rufus, *Musonius Rufus, the Roman Socrates*. Translated by Cora Lutz (YCS; New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1947), 13a, 89,

<https://archive.org/details/MUSONIUSRUFUSSTOICFRAGMENTS/page/n27/mode/2up>.

Three Heads

6) 1 Cor 11:3: This verse begins a detailed section of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians concerning the proper appearance of a person’s head when praying and prophesying in church (1 Cor 11:3–16).¹⁵⁶³ Just prior to this, the apostle commanded that no one give offense to Jewish people, gentiles, or others within the congregation (1 Cor 10:31–11:2).¹⁵⁶⁴

In that time and place, people considered a woman’s failure to cover her hair a provocative act which stimulated male lust.¹⁵⁶⁵ Within Judaism, the public display of a woman’s hair constituted grounds for divorce (*m. Ketubah* 7:6).¹⁵⁶⁶ Consequently, Paul argued that the attire of one’s physical head reflected upon the glory or shame of one’s symbolic head.¹⁵⁶⁷ The misuse of newfound individual liberty for Christian women without regard for cultural propriety affected relationships within the congregation.¹⁵⁶⁸

Therefore, Paul wrote, “But I want you to know that Christ is of every man (*anēr/andros*) the head, and a man [is the] head of a woman, and God [is the] head of Christ.” While the arrangement within each word pair suggests precedence, their overall order refutes any notion of subordination.¹⁵⁶⁹ Instead, the apostle extolled the order of creation and the continued interdependence of men and women in the new creation (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 2:18–25; Luke 1:26–33; 2 Cor 5:16–17).¹⁵⁷⁰ By maintaining gender distinctions, women could fully utilize their gifts and callings in the church (Rom 16:1–12).¹⁵⁷¹

The controversy surrounding this verse centers upon the specific meaning of the word “head” (*kephalē*).¹⁵⁷² In secular usage, the term referred to something which was supreme, exhibited prominence, or occurred first.¹⁵⁷³ It did not refer to a chief or leader until the Byzantine Era (330–1453).¹⁵⁷⁴ How we translate *kephalē* greatly affects our understanding of the relationships within each of the three pairs.¹⁵⁷⁵ Typically in Paul’s letters, a metaphorical use of the word “head” connects it to a metaphorical body.¹⁵⁷⁶

Kephalē can refer to a chief or a leader in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX). Yet, it occurs in only six of the 171 times when the Hebrew term *rosh* refers to a ruler (Cf. Judg 11:11; 2 Sam 22:44; Ps 18:43; Isa 7:8–9; and Lam 1:4–5. Typically, the Greek translators used *kephalē* as the word for a physical head—in 226 of 239 total occurrences in the LXX—rather than for a symbolic one.¹⁵⁷⁷

¹⁵⁶³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 503.

¹⁵⁶⁴Verbrugge, “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*), *TDNTWA*, 302–4, 303.

¹⁵⁶⁵Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 11:2–16.

¹⁵⁶⁶Sola and Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna, m. Ketubah* 7:6, 259, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm126.htm>.

¹⁵⁶⁷Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 208.

¹⁵⁶⁸Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, 108.

¹⁵⁶⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 513.

¹⁵⁷⁰Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 236.

¹⁵⁷¹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 503.

¹⁵⁷²Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission*, 66.

¹⁵⁷³Heinrich Schlier, “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*), *TDNT* 3:673–81, 673–4.

¹⁵⁷⁴Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*), in *A Greek-English Lexicon, 9th Ed.* (rev Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie; Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dkefalh%2F>.

¹⁵⁷⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 553.

¹⁵⁷⁶Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 508.

¹⁵⁷⁷Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 554–5.

Within the New Testament, *kephalē* could depict relationships between a person and an entire community.¹⁵⁷⁸ It does not connote a sense of authority over one individual over another.¹⁵⁷⁹ The only unequivocally similar usages of the term in the New Testament (NT) occur in Eph 1:22–23 and Col 2:9–12,¹⁵⁸⁰ where Paul referred to Jesus and the church. In all five NT usages of “head” (*kephalē*) concerning Christ and the church, the word depicts Jesus as the nurturer who provides for our growth and well-being (Eph 4:15–16; Col 1:18–20; and Col 2:18–19). Christ does not hold headship over the church—but for it—as our servant-provider.¹⁵⁸¹ Therefore, Paul called for all believers to submit to each other, following Christ’s example (Mark 9:33–35; Mark 10:42–45; John 13:1–5, 12–17; Eph 4:15–16; Eph 5:18–30).¹⁵⁸²

Furthermore, within 1 Cor 11, the word “authority” (*exousia*) appears only once. It refers to a woman’s own prerogative to prophesy (*prophēteuō*) (1 Cor 11:5, 10).¹⁵⁸³ In the NT, this involved proclaiming God’s plan of salvation and delivering authoritative instruction to others based upon the Word of God.¹⁵⁸⁴ Concerning 1 Cor 11:3, John Chrysostom (347–407) wrote, “Had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as thou sayest, he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather of a slave and a master.”¹⁵⁸⁵

Some scholars assert that *kephalē* in this verse connotes prominence, as it does in the first appearance of the term in the Greek translation of Isa 7:8 and in Jer 31:7.¹⁵⁸⁶ Given the patriarchal cultural context, viewing the husband as the preeminent member of a couple has some merit.¹⁵⁸⁷

However, the primary controversy within this verse concerns whether *kephalē* carries the meaning “source,” as in 1 Cor 11:8 and Eph 4:14–15.¹⁵⁸⁸ The Hebrew term “head” (*rosh*) can refer to the first in a series, the beginning of something, or the origin of a river (Cf. 1 Chron 12:9; Isa 40:21; Gen 2:10).¹⁵⁸⁹ Paul explicitly noted the creation order of humanity later in this chapter (1 Cor 11:8–12).¹⁵⁹⁰ When taken in the context of the entire passage, the meaning “source” or “origin” provides the best fit.¹⁵⁹¹

The Greek historian Herodotus (ca. 484–425/413 BC) used the term in this way. He wrote, “From the sources (*kephalē*) of the river Tearus flows the best and fairest of all river

¹⁵⁷⁸Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 514.

¹⁵⁷⁹Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 815.

¹⁵⁸⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 67.

¹⁵⁸¹Gilbert Bilezikian, “The Issue I Can’t Evade: The Headship of Husbands is a New Testament Teaching,” *Priscilla Papers* 17, no. 2 (1 April 2003): 5–6, https://www.academia.edu/35109479/The_Issue_I_Cant_Evade_The_headship_of_husbands_is_a_New_Testament_teaching.

¹⁵⁸²Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 157–8.

¹⁵⁸³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 532.

¹⁵⁸⁴Gerhard Friedrich, “προφήτης” (*prophētēs*), *TDNT*, 6:781–861, 848, 851.

¹⁵⁸⁵John Chrysostom, “Homily 26,” in *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (trans. Hubert Kestell Cornish and John Medley; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1839), 348–68, 352, <https://archive.org/details/thehomiliesofchr01chryuoft/page/352>.

¹⁵⁸⁶Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 516.

¹⁵⁸⁷Alan F. Johnson, “A Review of the Scholarly Debate on the Meaning of ‘Head’ (Κεφαλή) in Paul’s Writings,” *ATJ* 41 (2009): 35–57, 54, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ashland_theological_journal/41-1_035.pdf.

¹⁵⁸⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 554.

¹⁵⁸⁹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רֹשׁ,” (*rosh*), *BDB*, 910–1, 911, <https://archive.org/details/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft/page/910>.

¹⁵⁹⁰Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 208–9.

¹⁵⁹¹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 555–6.

waters; hither came...the best and fairest of all men, even Darius... king of Persia and all the mainland.”¹⁵⁹²

According to the Orphic Fragment 21A (ca. 3rd–2nd century BC), “Zeus is the head (*kephalē*), Zeus the middle, and by Zeus all things were fabricated.”¹⁵⁹³

The Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) reported, “And of all the members of the clan here described Esau is the progenitor, the head (*kephalē*) as it were of the whole creature.”¹⁵⁹⁴ Jacob’s twin brother served as the source of his entire clan.¹⁵⁹⁵ Elsewhere, Philo employed wordplay to capture three meanings of *kephalē*. He wrote, “For as in an animal, the head (*kephalē*) is the first and best part...so too the virtuous one, whether single man or people, will be the head (*kephalē*) of the human race and all the others like the limbs of a body which draw their life from the forces in the head (*kephalē*) and at the top.”¹⁵⁹⁶

Therefore, we can translate this verse as “But I want you to know that of every man, Christ is the source; and of a woman, the man [is the] source; and of Christ, God [is the] source.” As the one through whom all things were created, Jesus originated every man (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–18; John 1:1–4).¹⁵⁹⁷ The derivation of a woman from a man refers to God’s fabrication of Eve from Adam (1 Cor 11:11–12; 1 Tim 2:13).¹⁵⁹⁸ When Christ became human, he came to Earth from the perfect fellowship of the Trinity (John 14:26; John 17:1–5; 1 Cor 3:18–23; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Cor 11:12; 1 Cor 15:26–28).¹⁵⁹⁹ Thus, the source of Christ is God.¹⁶⁰⁰ Their relationship exemplifies unity, love, and bringing glory to one another (John 1:18; John 10:17–18, 30; John 17:24–26).

The great theologian Athanasius (296–373) asserted it was “the Father who generated Him as His beginning; for ‘the Head of Christ is God.’”¹⁶⁰¹

Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–386) attested, “As I have said many times, He did not bring the Son from nothing into being, nor take him who was not into sonship, but the Father, being eternal, eternally and ineffably begat one only Son...the Father is the head of the Son; one is the

¹⁵⁹²Herodotus, *Herodotus, with an English Translation, Vol. 2* (trans. A. D. Godley; LCL; London; New York: Heinemann; Putnam, 1920), 4.91, 293, <https://archive.org/details/herodotuswitheng02herouoft/page/292>.

¹⁵⁹³Isaac Preston Cory, trans., “Orphic Fragments,” in *Ancient Fragments of the Phoenician, Chaldaean, Egyptian, Tyrian, Carthaginian, Indian, Persian, and Other Writers* (London: William Pickering, 1832), 289–300, 209, <https://archive.org/details/ancientfragments00coryrich/page/290>.

¹⁵⁹⁴Philo, “On the Preliminary Studies,” in *Philo in Ten Volumes* (LCL; trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1932), 458–551, 61, 489, <https://archive.org/stream/PhiloSupplement01Genesis/Philo%2004%20Tongues%2C%20Migration%20of%20Abraham%2C%20Divine%20Things%2C%20Preliminary#page/n497/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁹⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 555, note 46.

¹⁵⁹⁶Philo, “On Rewards and Punishments,” in *Philo, Vol 8* (trans. F. H. Colson; LCL; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1939), 312–389, 125, 389,

<https://archive.org/stream/PhiloSupplement01Genesis/Philo%2008%20Special%20Laws%20IV%2C%20Virtues%2C%20Rewards#page/n411/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁹⁷Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 515.

¹⁵⁹⁸Fee, *The First Epistle of the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 556.

¹⁵⁹⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 515.

¹⁶⁰⁰Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul*, 33–4.

¹⁶⁰¹Athanasius, *De Synodis* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson, rev Kevin Knight; NPNF2–04; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1892), 1.26.2, [Http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2817.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2817.htm).

beginning, for the Father begat his Son, Very God, called Emmanuel, and Emmanuel, being interpreted is God with us.”¹⁶⁰²

Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 375–444) addressed all the elements of 1 Cor 11:3. He wrote, “Thus we say that ‘the head of every man is Christ.’ For he was made by him...as God; ‘but the head of the woman is the man,’ because she was taken out of his flesh....Likewise, ‘the head of Christ is God,’ because he is of him by nature.”¹⁶⁰³

In this chapter, Paul focused upon the glory and shame in relationship with one’s source, rather than upon who had authority over whom (1 Cor 11:7–9).¹⁶⁰⁴

a) Read 1 Cor 11:3. Why was Paul concerned about the proper attire for a person’s head in the church? What makes the arrival of Adam, Eve, and Jesus a logical sequence? How did secular Greeks use the word *kephalē* until the fourth century AD? Why does Christ’s relationship with the church fail to promote viewing the term “head” as someone in authority over another person? What did Paul’s use of the typical term for “authority” (*exousia*) enable women to do? Which nuance of the term “head” did early theologians use? How does translating *kephalē* as “source” affect your understanding of this verse?

Women Praying and Prophesying

b) 1 Cor 11:4–6 and 1 Cor 14:34–35: In 1 Cor 11, Paul did not differentiate between acceptable ministry activities for men and for women. Instead, he addressed their physical appearance while participating in spiritual leadership.¹⁶⁰⁵ People living in the eastern Mediterranean of that era considered a woman’s failure to cover her hair as an act provoking male lust,¹⁶⁰⁶ just as in many areas of that region and the Middle East today.

A Greco-Roman statue in the Louvre portrays a man removing his new wife’s veil in the privacy of their bridal chamber (ca. 150–100 BC).¹⁶⁰⁷ Going out with her head uncovered constituted grounds for divorce in Jewish marriages (*m. Ketubah* 7:6).¹⁶⁰⁸

¹⁶⁰²Cyril of Jerusalem, “Lecture 11: On the Son of God as Only-Begotten, Before All Ages, and the Creator of All Things,” in *The Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem* (trans. Richard William Church and John Henry Newman; Oxford; London: Parker; Rivington, 1839), 110–122, 117, <https://archive.org/details/a566189200cypruoft/page/n169>.

¹⁶⁰³Cyril of Alexandria, *de recta fide ad Arcadium et Marinam*, 5.6 in Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 556, note 49.

¹⁶⁰⁴Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 556.

¹⁶⁰⁵Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 504.

¹⁶⁰⁶Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 11:2–16.

¹⁶⁰⁷Jastrow, “File: Couple Bridal Bed Louvre Myr268.Jpg,”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Couple_bridal_bed_Louvre_Myr268.jpg.

¹⁶⁰⁸Sola and Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna, m. Ketubah* 7:6, 259, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm126.htm>.

Apuleius, a writer from the second century AD, described a Roman householder’s seduction of a maidservant. By undressing and unbinding her hair, she “transformed herself to an image of Venus rising from the waves.”¹⁶⁰⁹

This stems from the ancient Greek view that the heads of both men and women produce semen which flows through hollow spaces in their hair.¹⁶¹⁰ According to the fifth century BC physician Hippocrates:

“As to the growth of hairs, it is as follows. They grow longest and most numerous where the epidermis is most porous and where the hair has a due amount of fluid for its nourishment. Also, where the epidermis becomes porous later, there the hairs grow later too, namely, on the chin, the pudenda, and wherever else they grow. For at the age when the semen is formed, the flesh becomes porous as well as the epidermis, and the veins open up more than before. For in boys, the veins are tiny and the semen does not flow out through them. In girls, the same holds true with regard to the menses. At the same age, a way is opened for the menses and for the semen, and in both the case of the boy and the girl, the pudenda become hairy...Those who are castrated in their childhood have neither hair on their pudenda nor on the chin and are smooth all over for the reason that no passage is opened up for the semen.”¹⁶¹¹

This concept explains the rationale behind Paul’s bewildering question, “Does not nature itself teach you that if a man lets his hair grow long, it is a dishonor to him?” (1 Cor 11:14). In both Jewish and Greco-Roman society, a woman in public with unbound hair conveyed sensual impropriety.¹⁶¹²

Prophesying (*prophēteuō*) in the early church primarily involved proclaiming the salvation plan of God and delivering authoritative instruction based upon the Word of God to others. It did not usually refer to predicting future events.¹⁶¹³ Thus, those who prophesy proclaim inspired revelation.¹⁶¹⁴

Later in the same letter, Paul delivered a seemingly contradictory command that, “Women in the churches should be silent...even as the law says” (1 Cor 14:34–35). Such a prohibition occurs nowhere in the Old Testament.¹⁶¹⁵ Typically, when Paul made such a pronouncement, he cited the verse in question (Cf. 1 Cor 9:8–9; 1 Cor 14:21–22).¹⁶¹⁶

Thus, “law” here most likely refers to the Jewish oral tradition, as in this from the Babylonian Talmud,¹⁶¹⁷ “Our Rabbis taught, ‘All are qualified to be among the seven [who read], even a minor and a woman, only the Sages said that a woman should not read in the Torah out of respect for the congregation’” (*b. Megilah 23a*).

¹⁶⁰⁹Lucius Apuleius, A. S. Kline, trans., *The Golden Ass* (2013), 2.17,

http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/TheGoldenAssII.htm#anchor_Toc347223998.

¹⁶¹⁰Troy W. Martin, “Paul’s Argument from Nature for the Veil in 1 Corinthians 11:13–15: A Testicle Instead of a Head Covering,” *JBL* 123, no. 1 (1 January 2004):75–84, 77,

<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/1%20Cor11%20head%20covering%20testicle.pdf>.

¹⁶¹¹Hippocrates, *On Intercourse and Pregnancy: An English Translation of On Semen and on the Development of the Child* (trans. Tage U. H. Ellinger; New York: Schuman, 1952), 68–70,

<https://archive.org/details/HippocratesOnIntercourseAndPregnancy/page/n33>.

¹⁶¹²Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 517.

¹⁶¹³Gerhard Friedrich, “προφήτης” (*prophētēs*), *TDNT*, 6:781–861, 848, 851.

¹⁶¹⁴Danker, et al., “προφητεω” (*prophēteuō*), *BDAG*, 890.

¹⁶¹⁵David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 672.

¹⁶¹⁶Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 791.

¹⁶¹⁷Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Correcting Caricatures: The Biblical Teaching on Women,” *Priscilla Papers* 31, no. 4 (1 September 2017):9–14, 13, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/correcting-caricatures>.

In Greco-Roman society, a married woman conversing with another woman's husband constituted a scandal.¹⁶¹⁸ For example, the influential author Plutarch (46–122 AD) wrote of a woman who suffered great embarrassment:

“In putting her cloak about her [she] exposed her arm. Somebody exclaimed, ‘A lovely arm.’ ‘But not for the public,’ said she. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition.”¹⁶¹⁹

Greco-Romans regarded a woman's disclosure of her thoughts as unseemly as physical immodesty. Since Paul's preaching offended both Jews and gentiles, he considered it imperative to avoid bringing shame to the gospel (1 Cor 1:22–23; 1 Cor 10:31–33; Tit 2:3–8).

Another possibility involves the practice of inquirers asking questions about the future to the oracle at Delphi (Pythia), who resided close to Corinth. Plutarch also wrote, “It seems that our beloved Apollo finds a remedy and a solution for the problems connected with our life by the oracular responses which he gives to those who consult him.”¹⁶²⁰ Seeing God speaking through women in Corinth likely prompted their peers with pressing questions to interrupt the church service.¹⁶²¹ Such behavior promoted disorder, a condition which Paul rejected (1 Cor 14:26–40).

Read 1 Cor 11:4–6 and 1 Cor 14:34–35. Why would a woman's uncovered head have given offense while she prayed and spoke in church services? How should we observe Paul's command in our culture? Why would Paul give instructions for women to pray and prophesy in church and then command their silence?

Having Authority on Her Head

c) 1 Cor 11:7–10: These verses concern propriety in worship, not family relationships.¹⁶²² However, Paul asserted that a link does occur between our fidelity in marriage and our worship of the Lord.¹⁶²³ He wrote, “Indeed a man is not obligated to cover the head, for he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man. For a man is not from a woman but a woman from a man. For indeed man was not brought into existence for a woman but a woman for a man.”

In this passage, Paul alluded to Gen 1:26 and Gen 2:18–24. He noted the lack of any contribution of humanity in the creation of Adam (Gen 2:7), but the necessary aspect of the man

¹⁶¹⁸Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 725.

¹⁶¹⁹Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom (Conjugal Praecepta)* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1928), 31,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D31>.

¹⁶²⁰Plutarch, “The E at Delphi,” in *Moralia in 15 Volumes, Vol. 5* (LCL; trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1936), 199–253, 201,
<https://archive.org/stream/moraliainfiftee05plut#page/200/mode/2up>.

¹⁶²¹Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 235.

¹⁶²²Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 235.

¹⁶²³Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 211.

in forming Eve.¹⁶²⁴ He never asserted that the Lord created the woman in the man’s image, for God made both in his image (Gen 1:27).¹⁶²⁵ Later in this letter, Paul claimed that all the Corinthians bore the image of the earthly man and would soon bear the image of the heavenly one (1 Cor 15:49). The Lord created only Adam directly in his image. Everyone else inherits God’s image from him and from our biological parents (Gen 5:3; Gen 9:6).¹⁶²⁶

Throughout the Ancient Near East, people placed an image of a god in a temple. It represented not only the authority of the deity but also its luminous glory.¹⁶²⁷ For this reason, craftsmen made such idols from precious metals to reflect the light of the gods they represented (Cf. 2 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 4:3–6).¹⁶²⁸ Consequently, Paul contended that Eve completed both Adam’s and God’s creation (Cf. Gen 2:19 with Gen 1:27–31).¹⁶²⁹ The Greek term “glory” (*doxa*) connotes “reflected radiance.”¹⁶³⁰

Ancient Greeks believed that hair contained semen.¹⁶³¹ Therefore, in the Greco-Roman culture, a woman’s uncovered head produced shame (1 Cor 11:4–6).¹⁶³² However, God intended her to mirror the honor of a man,¹⁶³³ as the Greek translation of Prov 11:16 indicates. Contrary to how many people today understand these verses, they contain no hint of a woman’s subordination.¹⁶³⁴

As suggested by 2 Cor 3–4, Paul wanted women to cover their heads to prevent others from focusing upon the grandeur of men during church services.¹⁶³⁵ Nothing should prevent all glory being directed to God during worship.¹⁶³⁶ It should go neither to women nor their husbands.¹⁶³⁷ Bolstering the idea that Paul intended the word “head” (*kephalē*) in 1 Cor 11:3 to refer to the source of women, the apostle argued that the first woman was created from a man for his sake.

Greek manuscripts of this section say, “For this reason, a woman ought to have authority over her head” without mentioning any kind of symbol.¹⁶³⁸ Typically, the phrase “authority over” (*exousian epi*) conveys having “the right over something” (Matt 9:6; Rev 11:6; Rev 14:18).¹⁶³⁹ When Paul used the word “authority” in the context of the church, he emphasized freedom balanced with moderation (1 Cor 6:12; 1 Cor 8:9; 1 Cor 10:23).¹⁶⁴⁰

The puzzling phrase “because of the angels” likely refers to the Old Testament injunction against indecent exposure in worship (Exod 20:24–26; Exod 28:40–43).¹⁶⁴¹ According to a Dead

¹⁶²⁴Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 524.

¹⁶²⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 570.

¹⁶²⁶Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 524.

¹⁶²⁷Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 88.

¹⁶²⁸Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 526.

¹⁶²⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 523.

¹⁶³⁰Arndt et. al., “δόξα” (*doxa*) BDAG, 3rd ed., 256–8, 257.

¹⁶³¹Hippocrates, *On Intercourse and Pregnancy: An English Translation of On Semen and on the Development of the Child*, 68–70, <https://archive.org/details/HippocratesOnIntercourseAndPregnancy/page/n33>.

¹⁶³²Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 522–3.

¹⁶³³Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 211.

¹⁶³⁴Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 523.

¹⁶³⁵Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 526.

¹⁶³⁶Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 237.

¹⁶³⁷Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 523.

¹⁶³⁸Also note that the word is *exousian*, a form which reflects a direct object. This means “authority,” not “of authority.”

¹⁶³⁹Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 212.

¹⁶⁴⁰Werner Foerster, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *TDNT* 2:560–74, 562, 570.

¹⁶⁴¹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 530.

Sea Scroll, “No man shall go down with them on the day of battle who is impure because of his ‘fount,’ for the holy angels shall be with their hosts. And there shall be a space of about two thousand cubits between all their camps for the place serving as a latrine, so that no indecent nakedness may be seen in the surroundings of their camps” (1QM).¹⁶⁴²

Impropriety in worship offends both the Lord and the angels who stand in his presence.¹⁶⁴³ By respecting the proper decorum expected in the presence of God and his angels, women in Corinth could pray and speak words of encouragement and exhortation in worship without shame or disgrace,¹⁶⁴⁴ just as the men of the congregation did (1 Cor 11:4–6).¹⁶⁴⁵

Read 1 Cor 11:7–10. How do women reflect the glory of men? Why did Paul command that the women of Corinth should cover their heads during worship? What does wielding authority over her own head enable a woman to do? How do you or the women in your life practice this?

Interdependence

d) 1 Cor 11:11–12: In this instance, “woman” can be translated as “wife” (*gynē*),¹⁶⁴⁶ while “man” (*anēr*) can also be translated as “husband.”¹⁶⁴⁷ Note that the Greek words used here for a male (*anēr* and *andros*) differ from the more common term “*anthrōpos*.” That word can be translated as “man” but usually refers to all of humanity, both male and female.¹⁶⁴⁸

Unfortunately, a failure to recognize this distinction has resulted in an unnecessary furor over some Bible translations.

Paul proclaimed the fundamental interdependence of husbands and wives, as well as of men and women. Procreation mitigates the order of creation. Since everything originates from God—our ultimate authority—he significantly restrains any sense of hierarchy (1 Cor 11:3–10; Gal 3:26–28).¹⁶⁴⁹

Therefore, in this new era of life in Christ, men and women cannot function without depending upon each other. While distinctions remain between the genders, there is no subordination.¹⁶⁵⁰ Furthermore, in the age to come, marriage shall no longer exist (Mark 12:25).

Read 1 Cor 11:11–12. What are the implications of the first woman coming from a man and all subsequent men coming from women?

¹⁶⁴²Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th Ed.*, 132, https://archive.org/stream/pdf-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n209/mode/2up.

¹⁶⁴³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 530.

¹⁶⁴⁴Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 531.

¹⁶⁴⁵Timothy J. Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” *EvQ* 62: 335–52, 343–4, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1990-4_335.pdf.

¹⁶⁴⁶Danker, et al., “γυνή” (*gynē*), *BDAG*, 208–9.

¹⁶⁴⁷Danker et. al., “άνηρ” (*anēr*), 79–80.

¹⁶⁴⁸Danker et. al., “άνθρωπος” (*anthrōpos*), 81–2.

¹⁶⁴⁹Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 212–3.

¹⁶⁵⁰Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 523–4.

Partners in Ministry

6) Acts 18:1–3, 18–20, 24–26 and 2 Ki 22:11–23:4: Paul used the formal name Prisca to depict this woman in his letters, while Luke informally called her Priscilla.¹⁶⁵¹ In five of the seven times the New Testament mentions Priscilla and Aquila, her name comes before his (Cf. Rom 16:3–4; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).¹⁶⁵² That was quite rare in the Greco-Roman era, pointing to her prominence in ministry.¹⁶⁵³

In 1894, A. J. Gordon wrote, “Here a woman is actually taking the lead as a theological teacher to Apollos, an eminent minister of the gospel, and so far setting up her authority as to tell him that he is not thoroughly qualified for his work!”¹⁶⁵⁴

The Bible cites another “power couple.” Huldah and Shallum provide a sterling example of a wife and husband both serving the Lord in the Old Testament era. Here, too, her ministry garnered greater attention by the biblical author than that of her husband.

While repairing the temple, the high priest Hilkiah discovered the long-lost scroll of the Book of the Law,¹⁶⁵⁵ which was most likely Deuteronomy (Deut 31:9–13).¹⁶⁵⁶ He read it to the king. In anguish, Josiah directed him “Go inquire of Yahweh on my behalf.”

To accomplish that task, Hilkiah led a delegation to the female prophet Huldah, even though Shallum’s nephew Jeremiah and Zephaniah actively ministered during that time (Jer 1:2–3; Jer 32:7; Zeph 1:1).¹⁶⁵⁷ She pronounced God’s judgment upon Jerusalem in keeping with Deut 28:58–68, but promised that the Lord would relent until after the king’s death.¹⁶⁵⁸ In response, Josiah enacted immediate reforms which applied to both the civil and religious arenas of life in Judah.¹⁶⁵⁹

Read Acts 18:1–3, 18–20, 24–26 and 2 Ki 22:11–23:4. How did Priscilla and Aquila work together to serve the Lord? What did Huldah do? How did King Josiah respond to her pronouncement? What encouragement does these examples of faithful ministers give to you?

The Cult of Artemis

7) False Teaching in Ephesus: After considering spousal and congregational relationships as Christians should engage in them (Acts 18:1–3, 18–20, 24–26; Rom 16:1–12; 1 Cor 11:3–12; and Eph 5:18–30), we will now examine how New Testament writers sought to resolve difficult relational situations. Since the Bible is a historically-oriented revelation, we must consider the

¹⁶⁵¹F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 348.

¹⁶⁵²Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 651.

¹⁶⁵³Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 301.

¹⁶⁵⁴Gordon, “The Ministry of Women,” 917,

<http://www.biblesnet.com/AJ%20Gordon%20The%20Ministry%20of%20Women.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵⁵Roger W. Uitti, “Hilkiah (Person),” *ABD* 3:201.

¹⁶⁵⁶August H. Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 635.

¹⁶⁵⁷T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1985), 327.

¹⁶⁵⁸Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 385.

¹⁶⁵⁹Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, 635–6.

socio-cultural context of each passage to avoid misinterpretation.¹⁶⁶⁰ For example, the Cult of Artemis had a huge impact upon Ephesus, resulting in great tensions for the church in that city (Acts 19:17–34).¹⁶⁶¹

The shrine dedicated to the goddess Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.¹⁶⁶² According to Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD), “The entire length of the temple is four hundred and twenty-five feet, and the breadth two hundred and twenty-five. The columns are one hundred and twenty-seven in number, and sixty feet in height.”¹⁶⁶³ Four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens,¹⁶⁶⁴ it covered twenty-one times the area of Solomon’s temple.

Early in the history of the cult of Artemis, religious prostitution with a priestess comprised an important feature of worship.¹⁶⁶⁵ However, the Roman government abolished those practices throughout their empire by the time of Paul.¹⁶⁶⁶ Once an Anatolian fertility goddess,¹⁶⁶⁷ Artemis of Ephesus morphed into a tomboy virgin,¹⁶⁶⁸ pure and inviolable with a retinue of dancing nymphs.

Depicted in Ephesus as a “multi-mammary grotesque,”¹⁶⁶⁹ people considered Artemis the protector of human children. Nevertheless, the goddess Hera lambasted her as “a lion among women,” with the right to kill them at will.¹⁶⁷⁰ Presumably this occurred while they gave birth.¹⁶⁷¹

Ancient inscriptions indicate that young virgins from elite families served as priestesses for one-year terms.¹⁶⁷² According to an account of one of these women: “When we came to the age of fourteen years, by the law—which calls such as us to the office of priesthood—I was maid priest to Artemis...But, as this honor lasts but for a year and our time was expired, we prepared to go to Delos with our sacred attire, and there to make certain games of music and gymnastic, and give over our priesthood.”¹⁶⁷³

¹⁶⁶⁰Douglas K. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors, 4th Ed.* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 52.

¹⁶⁶¹Wikimedia Commons, “Ephesos,” <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Ephesos>. This site has some good photos. All that remains of the temple of Artemis is one marble column.

¹⁶⁶²Clinton E. Arnold, “Ephesus,” *DPL* 249–52, 250.

¹⁶⁶³Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley; London: Taylor & Francis, 1855), 36.21, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D36%3Achapter%3D21>.

¹⁶⁶⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 31.

¹⁶⁶⁵Chris Church, “Fertility Cult,” *HolBD*, 566.

¹⁶⁶⁶S. M. Baugh, “Cultic Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” *JETS* 42, no. 3, September 1999: 443–60, 446, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/42/42-3/42-3-pp443-460_JETS.pdf.

¹⁶⁶⁷Baugh, “Cultic Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” 452, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/42/42-3/42-3-pp443-460_JETS.pdf.

¹⁶⁶⁸Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* (vol. 2 of *The Complete Greek Drama*; trans. Jr. Eugene O’Neill; New York: Random House, 1938), 115–9, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0042%3Acard%3D101>.

¹⁶⁶⁹Hubert M. Martin Jr., “Artemis (Deity),” *ABD* 1:464–5, 464.

¹⁶⁷⁰Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Samuel Butler; London: Longmans Green, 1898), 21.475–84,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0134%3Abook%3D21%3Acard%3D468>.

¹⁶⁷¹Martin Jr., “Artemis (Deity),” *ABD* 1:465.

¹⁶⁷²Baugh, “Cult Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” 456, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/42/42-3/42-3-pp443-460_JETS.pdf.

¹⁶⁷³Heliodorus, *An Aethiopian Romance* (trans. Thomas Underdowne, revised by F. Wright and S. Rhoads; London: New York: Routledge; Dutton, 2006), 1.34–5, <http://www.elfinspell.com/HeliodorusBk1.html>.

Some proponents of this cult spoke of the first woman as the conduit of light and life who brought divine enlightenment to humanity. They asserted that Eve existed before creation, consorting with celestial beings.¹⁶⁷⁴ Consequently, these priestesses wielded tremendous power, were considered superior to men, and dominated over them.

Plutarch (46–122 AD) affirmed Cato the Elder’s (234–149 BC) severe criticism of the prevalent domination by women by quoting him as saying, “All mankind rules its women, and we rule all mankind, but our women rule us.”¹⁶⁷⁵ For example, Plancia Magna, a priestess of Artemis in Perge during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (117–138 AD), held the highest civic office in that city.¹⁶⁷⁶

In his last meeting with the Ephesian elders, Paul warned them that “savage wolves” would emerge, even from among them (Acts 20:28–30). Sure enough, within a few years false teachers gained significant influence upon the congregation, particularly among widows and wealthy women (1 Tim 5:14–15; 2 Tim 3:6).¹⁶⁷⁷ Therefore, Paul sent Timothy there to restore health to this church, serving as his delegate (1 Tim 1:3–7).¹⁶⁷⁸

Paul never specifically described the nature of the false teaching. However, it appears to have involved a form of strict Jewish asceticism designed to promote ecstatic visions, much as in nearby Colossae (Col 2:16–23).¹⁶⁷⁹ Internal evidence suggests these dissident leaders promoted abstention from marriage (1 Tim 4:3; 1 Tim 5:14) as well as a misreading of Old Testament texts regarding creation and the fall (1 Tim 2:13–14).¹⁶⁸⁰

a) How did the Cult of Artemis change by the time Paul arrived in Ephesus? What role did women play in that religion? How did false teachers affect the Ephesian church?

Prayer without Anger

b) **1 Tim 2:8:** Paul wrote, “I desire that men in every place lift up holy hands free of anger and dispute.” Anger and dissension block effective prayer (Matt 5:21–24; Eph 4:29–32; 1 Pet 3:7).¹⁶⁸¹ As in Judaism and other Ancient Near Eastern cultures, people in the Greco-Roman world typically stood with their hands raised while praying (Exod 17:8–13; 1 Ki 8:22–26).¹⁶⁸²

Elsewhere in Paul’s letters, *anēr/andros* (“man, male, husband”) and *gynē* (“woman, female, wife”) usually occur together in the context of marriage (Rom 7:2–3; 1 Cor 7:1–4, 10–

¹⁶⁷⁴H. M. Conn, “The Effect of Sin upon Covenant Mutuality,” *NDT*, 258.

¹⁶⁷⁵Plutarch, *Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL; Cambridge: London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1931), 81.3,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0193%3Achapter%3D81%3Asection%3D3>.

¹⁶⁷⁶W. Ward Gasque, “Perge (Place),” *ABD* 5:228.

¹⁶⁷⁷Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 44.

¹⁶⁷⁸Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 220.

¹⁶⁷⁹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxix–lxx.

¹⁶⁸⁰Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 198.

¹⁶⁸¹I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; London; New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 445.

¹⁶⁸²Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 605.

16, 32–34; 1 Cor 14:34–35; Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19; Tit 1:6). The exception to this appears in 1 Cor 11:3–13.¹⁶⁸³ Therefore, 1 Tim 2:8–15 may apply to spousal relationships, rather than to congregations.¹⁶⁸⁴ Whichever is correct, the doctrinal disputes concerning women in Ephesus engulfed even the men in the church.¹⁶⁸⁵

b) Read 1 Tim 2:8. What makes anger while praying inappropriate? Do you think this verse applies to marriage or to relationships within congregations? Why do you believe that?

Adorned with Good Works

c) 1 Tim 2:9–10: Paul wrote this letter to his lieutenant serving in Ephesus, a city with one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Temple of Artemis. One description of a priestess of Artemis says, “Her apparel wrought with gold glistened against the sun, and her hair under the garland, blown about with the wind, covered a great part of her back. The thieves were greatly afraid...Some of them said indeed it was a goddess—Artemis or Isis—others declared it was a priestess of the gods.”¹⁶⁸⁶

The gospel inherently provoked Greco-Roman society (1 Cor 1:21–31). Therefore, Paul expressed great concern over how outsiders viewed the exercise of freedom by members of the church (1 Cor 10:23–33; Gal 5:13–14). This made modesty and sexual morality among believers especially critical.¹⁶⁸⁷

Wealthy women in the Roman Empire loved to display elaborately adorned hair, sometimes braided with gold.¹⁶⁸⁸ Early congregations included fashionable women who could afford the costliest materials (1 Pet 3:3–4).¹⁶⁸⁹ Due to the scarcity of pearls, some cost the equivalent of millions of dollars (Matt 13:45–46).¹⁶⁹⁰ Such ostentation slighted the poor. Expensive embellishment also provided temptation for the men in the congregation.¹⁶⁹¹ Greco-Roman and Jewish authors equated the flaunting of wealth through external adornment with seduction.¹⁶⁹²

Regarding women, the Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) wrote this: “For we confess that our sex is in danger of being defeated, because our enemies are better provided with all the appliances of war and necessities for battle; but your sex is more completely armed, and you will gain the greatest of all advantages, namely the victory... “[W]ithout even a struggle, you will overpower the enemy at the first sight of you, merely by being beheld by him. When they heard this, they ceased to think of or to pay the very slightest

¹⁶⁸³Result of Logos 8 word study on *gynē*.

¹⁶⁸⁴Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis. A Survey of Approaches to 1Tim 2:8–15,” *JETS* 35, no. 3, September 1992: 341–60, 354, <http://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/hugenberger%20women%20in%20church%20office%20re%20husbands%20and%20wive%20issue%20in%201%20timothy%202.pdf>.

¹⁶⁸⁵Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

¹⁶⁸⁶Heliiodorus, *An Aethiopian Romance*, 1.10, <Http://www.elfinspell.com/HeliiodorusBk1.html>.

¹⁶⁸⁷Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 213

¹⁶⁸⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 605.

¹⁶⁸⁹Douglas R. Edwards, “Dress and Ornamentation,” *ABD* 2:232–8, 237.

¹⁶⁹⁰Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 81.

¹⁶⁹¹Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 605.

¹⁶⁹²Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 449–50.

regard to their character for purity of life...though during all the rest of their lives they had put on a hypocritical appearance of modesty, and so now they adorned themselves with costly garments, and necklaces, and all those other appendages with which women are accustomed to set themselves off, and they devoted all their attention to enhancing their natural beauty, and making it more brilliant (for the object of their pursuit was not an unimportant one, being the alluring of the young men who were well inclined to be seduced), and so they went forth into public.”¹⁶⁹³

Likewise, the Roman satirist Juvenal (ca. 115) charged: “There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds, and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears: there is nothing more intolerable than a wealthy woman...Her lover she will meet with a clean-washed skin, but when does she ever care to look nice at home?”¹⁶⁹⁴

During the Greco-Roman era, people considered elaborate clothing, expensive jewelry, and intricate hair styles inconsistent with moral behavior.¹⁶⁹⁵ Consequently, Paul exhorted the wealthy Christian women in Ephesus to exhibit the decorum appropriate for a follower of Christ.¹⁶⁹⁶ He urged them to live in such a way that others associated them with good deeds, rather than with their physical appearance.¹⁶⁹⁷ While nothing is inherently wrong with dressing nicely in our culture, God commands us to focus upon inner beauty, not external allure.¹⁶⁹⁸

Read 1 Tim 2:9–10. Why was Paul concerned about how Christian women appeared in public? What does adorning ourselves with good works mean? How can we practice this today?

She Must Learn

d) 1 Tim 2:11: Earlier in this chapter Paul used the same word frequently translated here as “silent” (*hēsychia*) to mean “free of outward disturbance” (1 Tim 2:1–2).¹⁶⁹⁹ He urged the entire congregation to pray so that they could lead lives characterized by a lack of noticeable agitation.¹⁷⁰⁰

Verse 11 contains the only command in all of 1 Tim 2:8–15,¹⁷⁰¹ where Paul ordered, “A woman...must learn” (*manthanō*).¹⁷⁰² This shocking admonition came from a man who had been thoroughly grounded in Pharisaic Judaism (Phil 3:4–6). While some rabbis taught that men should teach the Mosaic law to their daughters, others asserted that doing so amounted to

¹⁶⁹³Philo, “On the Virtues,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, Vol. 3* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 421–2, <https://archive.org/stream/theworksofphiloj03yonguoft#page/420/mode/2up>.

¹⁶⁹⁴Juvenal, “Satire 6,” in *Juvenal and Persius* (trans. G. G. Ramsay; London; New York: Heinemann; Putnam, 1928), 6:457–68, 121, <https://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft#page/120/mode/2up>.

¹⁶⁹⁵Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 95.

¹⁶⁹⁶Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

¹⁶⁹⁷Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 96.

¹⁶⁹⁸Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 113.

¹⁶⁹⁹Verbrugge, “ἡσυχία” (*hēsychia*), *TDNTWA*, 235.

¹⁷⁰⁰Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve's Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett's Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” 340, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1990-4_335.pdf.

¹⁷⁰¹Nestle et al, *NA²⁸*, 1 Tim 2:8–15.

¹⁷⁰²Danker, et al., “μανθάνω” (*manthanō*), *BDAG*, 615.

debauchery (*m. Sotah* 3.4). The Jerusalem Talmud went further, contending, “Let the words of the law be burned rather than committed to women” (*y. Sotah* 3:19).¹⁷⁰³

Eve had not been created when Adam received the command to abstain from the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16–22), nor had she been properly educated before she succumbed to deception (Gen 3:2–6). Paul taught against the prevailing culture of his era by insisting that women should receive religious instruction. Few Jewish women were trained in the law,¹⁷⁰⁴ although they did acquire some basic instruction to enable them to teach their children. Prior to Jesus’s ministry, women in Israel could never travel with or even study under a religious instructor (Luke 8:1–3; Luke 10:38–42).¹⁷⁰⁵

While praising one woman, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) claimed, “The minds of women are, in some degree, weaker than those of men and are not so well able to comprehend a thing which is appreciable only by the intellect...but she, as she surpassed all her sex in other particulars, so also was she superior to them in this, by reason of the pure learning and wisdom which had been implanted in her, both by nature and by study; so that, *having a masculine intellect*, she was so sharp sighted and profound.”¹⁷⁰⁶

In terms of basic education, women in Rome and in Asia Minor—where Ephesus is located—fared better than those in Judea or Greece.¹⁷⁰⁷ The literacy rate for Greco-Roman women averaged 10% of that for men in the same social class.¹⁷⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the primary rationale for educating Greco-Roman women appeared to be so they could teach their young sons.¹⁷⁰⁹ Once children reached seven years of age, the influence upon them officially shifted to their fathers.¹⁷¹⁰

Quintilian, a great scholar of rhetoric who lived from 35–100 AD, wrote: “I would, therefore, have a father conceive the highest hopes of his son from the moment of his birth. If he does so, he will be more careful about the groundwork of his education...Above all see that the child’s nurse speaks correctly...Do not therefore allow the boy to become accustomed even in infancy to a style of speech which he will subsequently have to unlearn...As regards parents, I should like to see them as highly educated as possible, and I do not restrict this remark to fathers alone...And even those who have not had the fortune to receive a good education should not for that reason devote less care to their son’s education.”¹⁷¹¹

However, many Greco-Roman men denounced highly educated women as promiscuous, for in their society, a bold demeanor in a woman implied her sexual availability.¹⁷¹² In 115 AD, Juvenal satirized educated women by writing the following:

“But most intolerable of all is the woman who as soon as she has sat down to dinner commends Virgil, pardons the dying Dido, and pits the poets against each other, putting Virgil in the one scale and Homer in the other. The grammarians make way before her; the rhetoricians give in;

¹⁷⁰³Lightfoot, *From the Talmud and Hebraica: A Commentary on the New Testament*, 580, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/lightfoot/talmud.vii.iii.html>.

¹⁷⁰⁴Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 605.

¹⁷⁰⁵Ben Witherington III, “Women: New Testament,” *ABD* 6: 957–61, 957.

¹⁷⁰⁶Philo, “On the Embassy to Gaius,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, Vol. 4 (Trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 99–180, 169, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilofjudaea04phil#page/168/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

¹⁷⁰⁷Witherington III, “Women: New Testament,” 6:958.

¹⁷⁰⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 605.

¹⁷⁰⁹Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 144.

¹⁷¹⁰Craig S. Keener, “Family and Household,” *DNTB* 353–68, 358.

¹⁷¹¹Quintilian, *Institutes* (trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1922), 1.1.1–7, 19–23, <https://archive.org/stream/institutioorator00quin#page/18/mode/2up>.

¹⁷¹²Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 243.

the whole crowd is silenced...so torrential is her speech that you would think that all the pots and bells were being clashed together...She lays down definitions, and discourses on morals, like a philosopher...Let not the wife of your bosom possess a special style of her own...

“Let her not know all history; let there be some things in her reading which she does not understand. I hate a woman who...who observes all the rules and laws of language, who quotes from ancient poets that I never heard of and corrects her unlettered female friends for slips of speech that no man need trouble about: let husbands at least be permitted to make slips in grammar! There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds, and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears: there is nothing more intolerable than a wealthy woman.”¹⁷¹³

In Paul’s era, instructors expected every male student to learn submissively and quietly.¹⁷¹⁴ Philo (30 BC–40 AD) asserted, “Silence, then, is a desirable thing for those who are ignorant, but for those who desire knowledge, and who have at the same time a love for their master’s freedom of speech, is a most necessary possession...it is proper for those persons to be silent who can say nothing worthy of being listened to.”¹⁷¹⁵

Read 1 Tim 2:11. What makes Paul’s command to the Ephesian church so surprising? Based upon what we have read, why would he order that women learn with deference to their teachers?

Domineering Women

e) 1 Tim 2:12–14: Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, successfully taught Apollos in Corinth. Therefore, Paul did not endorse a universal ban on women teaching (Acts 18:24–28).¹⁷¹⁶ We must consider whether the low level of women’s religious education prompted Paul’s command for them to learn as well as the imposition of restrictions upon their ministry (1 Tim 2:11).¹⁷¹⁷

The apostle’s instructions elsewhere indicate that the issue arose with these specific women in Ephesus (Acts 18:26; 1 Cor 14:26; Tit 2:3).¹⁷¹⁸ When Paul reminded Timothy of what he already knew, he typically wrote “we know” (*eidon*) (1 Tim 1:8), referred to “a trustworthy statement” (*pistos ho*) (1 Tim 1:15), or pointed to Timothy’s recollection of Paul’s experience (2 Tim 3:10–11). Instead, the apostle’s instruction indicates that Timothy was not already aware that the women of Ephesus should not teach others.¹⁷¹⁹ Paul wrote, “But to teach, I am not permitting a woman, nor to dominate a man, but to be in quietness.”

The Ephesian women’s ignorance of the Scriptures coupled with their social influence enabled teachers to spread false doctrines (1 Tim 4:3; 1 Tim 5:14; 2 Tim 3:6–7).¹⁷²⁰ Paul had

¹⁷¹³Juvenal, “Satire 6,” 6:434–61, 119–21,

<https://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft#page/118/mode/2up>.

¹⁷¹⁴Keener, *IVPBBNT2*, 605.

¹⁷¹⁵Philo, “Who is the Heir?” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, vol. 2 (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1854), 4, 96, <https://archive.org/stream/workphilojudaeu02philuoft#page/96/mode/2up>.

¹⁷¹⁶Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 123.

¹⁷¹⁷Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 104.

¹⁷¹⁸Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 455.

¹⁷¹⁹Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul*, 112.

¹⁷²⁰Keener, *IVPBBNT2*, 606.

already compared the entire church in Corinth with Eve due to their potential for being misled (2 Cor 11:3–4).¹⁷²¹

According to Greco-Roman mythology, the birth of Artemis occurred nine days before that of her twin brother. She then acted as her mother’s midwife to deliver Apollo.¹⁷²² This may provide the rationale for Paul’s reminder that “Adam first was formed, then Eve.”

The verb typically used for “having authority” (*exousiazō*) appears four times in the New Testament (NT),¹⁷²³ the related noun *exousia* has 103 occurrences.¹⁷²⁴ One of these instances of the verb *exousiazō* concerns a wife’s authority over her husband’s body (1 Cor 7:4).¹⁷²⁵ With the exception of 1 Tim 2:12, whenever “to teach” and “to have authority” appear together in the NT, the word employed for wielding authority is or *exousia* (Matt 7:29; Matt 21:23; Mark 1:22, 27; and Luke 4:32). However, in this passage Paul dictated the word *authentēin*, the infinitive of *authentēō*, a verb which occurs only here in the NT.¹⁷²⁶ It has the connotation in extra-biblical sources from that era of domineering and violence,¹⁷²⁷ such as “to murder” or “to perpetrate a crime.”¹⁷²⁸

For example, Philo (30 BC–40 AD) used a noun related to *authentēō* to describe someone who committed suicide, noting, “It is of yourself that you have become the *murderer* (*authentēs*).”¹⁷²⁹ Josephus (<http://www.theopedia.com/josephus>) (37–100 AD) also employed the term when he wrote, “The Samaritans were the beginners of the disturbance, on account of that murder they had committed...Cumanus had given occasion to what had happened, by his unwillingness to punish the original *authors of that murder* (*authentas*).”¹⁷³⁰

According to the second century AD astrologer Ptolemy, “If Saturn alone is ruler of the soul and *dominates* (*authentēin*) Mercury and the moon...he makes his subjects lovers of the body, strong-minded, deep thinkers, austere, of a single purpose, laborious, dictatorial, ready to punish, lovers of property, avaricious, violent, amassing treasure, and jealous.”¹⁷³¹

¹⁷²¹John Jefferson Davis, “First Timothy 2:12, the Ordination of Women, and Paul’s Use of Creation Narratives,” *Priscilla Papers* 31, no. 4 (1 September 2017): 17, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/PP314-web.pdf>.

¹⁷²²Apollodorus, *The Library*, 2 Vols. (trans. James George Frazer; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1921), 1.4.1, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0022%3Atext%3DLibrary%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D4>.

¹⁷²³Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 3rd Ed., 50.

¹⁷²⁴Result of Logos 8 word study on “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*).

¹⁷²⁵Danker et al., “ἐξουσίαζω” (*exousiazō*), *BDAG*, 353–4.

¹⁷²⁶Leland Edward Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1Timothy 2:12,” *NTS* 34, no. 1 (January 1988):120–34, 130–1, <http://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Wilshire-authentew-TLG.pdf>.

¹⁷²⁷Ben Witherington III, “Literal Renderings of Texts of Contention--1 Tim 2:8–15,” <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2006/02/literal-renderings-of-texts-of.html>.

¹⁷²⁸Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1Timothy 2:12,” 130, <http://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Wilshire-authentew-TLG.pdf>.

¹⁷²⁹Philo, “That the Worse Attacks the Better,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, Vol. 1 (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1854), 21, 261, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojudaeu01philuoft#page/260/mode/2up>.

¹⁷³⁰Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, 2.240, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D2%3Asection%3D236>. Italics mine.

¹⁷³¹Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* (trans. F. E. Robbins; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1940), 3.13.137–9, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ptolemy/Tetrabiblos/3D*.html#13. Italics mine.

Leland Wilshire conducted important research which examined 314 references to *authentēin* and its cognates from the Classical Period (4th–5th century BC) into the Byzantine Era (4th–15th century AD). He discovered that not until after Paul’s lifetime did the term lose a violent, abusive aspect,¹⁷³² and come to mean “hold authority”.¹⁷³³

In a rigorous semantic study of *authentēō*, Cynthia Westfall identified the closest parallel to this verse. It appears in a homily from John Chrysostom (347–407).¹⁷³⁴ Concerning Col 3:19, he wrote to husbands, “Do not therefore, because thy wife is subject to thee, act the despot (*authentēō*).”¹⁷³⁵ That great preacher forbade even men to behave in the way prohibited by Paul.

Consequently, it appears that some Ephesian women were domineering over men when engaging in forms of instruction permitted in other congregations (Eph 4:29–5:2; 1 Cor 11:5; 1 Cor 14:1–4; Rom 16:1–12). Hence, Paul resorted to drastic measures to combat their tendency.¹⁷³⁶

Read 1 Tim 2:12–14. What made Paul’s choice of the verb *authentēō*—rather than *exousiazō*—significant? Why aren’t women to domineer over men? How were even the men in Corinth like the Ephesian women? Given what we have read regarding the women of Ephesus in *The Cult of Artemis* (pp. 150–152) and *She Must Learn* (pp. 154–156), why do you think Paul forbade them from teaching? How can you apply this passage to your life?

Saved Through Childbearing

f) 1 Tim 2:15: One expert called this sentence “certainly one of the strangest verses in the New Testament.”¹⁷³⁷ Consequently, scholars have offered numerous interpretations of this verse.

Some assert that it serves as an admonition to live as a traditional wife and mother, making childbearing a means of “working out salvation” via a woman’s God-given role.¹⁷³⁸

Others translate the definite article (“the”) to identify “the childbearing” as the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:18–25).¹⁷³⁹

¹⁷³² Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1Timothy 2:12,” 123–4, <http://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Wilshire-authentew-TLG.pdf>.

¹⁷³³ Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1Timothy 2,” 342, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1990-4_335.pdf.

¹⁷³⁴ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of Αὐθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *JGRChJ* 10 (2014):138–73, 162, http://www.jgrchj.net/volume10/JGRChJ10-7_Westfall.pdf.

¹⁷³⁵ John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Oxford; London: Parker; Rivington, 1843), 294, <https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc14john#page/294/mode/2up>.

¹⁷³⁶ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 459, 466.

¹⁷³⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 143.

¹⁷³⁸ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 235.

¹⁷³⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 145.

Major difficulties beset those views. Paul advised virgins to remain unmarried, so he did not consider giving birth and raising children a necessary condition for women to receive salvation (1 Cor 7:32–38). The second explanation involves an obscure reference to the nativity. Other Scripture emphasizes the death and resurrection of Christ—not his birth—as the means of salvation (Acts 26:22–23; Rom 6:8–11; 1 Cor 15:3–4; Phil 3:10–11).¹⁷⁴⁰

Paul employed a medical term (*teknogonia*) for the physical act of giving birth.¹⁷⁴¹ In this instance, the preposition he chose also makes a critical difference. He wrote, “But they shall be saved *through* (*dia*) childbearing, if they remain in faith and in love and in holiness with self-control.” In this instance, he referred to coming through a prevailing circumstance, such as labor.¹⁷⁴²

Childbirth during the Greco-Roman era remained a frightening prospect. For example, the wife of a centurion married at the age of eleven. She died while giving birth to her sixth child at the age of twenty-seven. Only one of those children survived to adulthood, a sadly common statistic.¹⁷⁴³

Interpreting this passage while considering the cultural context of the cult of Artemis in Ephesus resolves much of the confusion. Women nearing childbirth often prayed and sacrificed to Artemis for protection during delivery.¹⁷⁴⁴ In the Hymn to Artemis, the goddess told Zeus, “The cities of men I will visit only when women vexed by the sharp pang of childbirth call me to their aid.”¹⁷⁴⁵

Even a man prayed to her, saying, “Queen of heaven, whether you are Phoebus’ (Apollo’s) sister, who by relieving women in labor with your soothing remedies have raised up many peoples, and now are venerated at your shrine in Ephesus...help me in this extremity of tribulation.”¹⁷⁴⁶

Paul wrote against these practices. Godly women must direct their devotion and prayers to the Lord, not to Artemis (1 Cor 12:2; Gal 5:19–21; Rev 21:8). “Faith, love, and holiness with self-control” do not constitute good works but characterize God’s people (Gal 5:22–25; Eph 3:14–21; 1 Tim 6:11–12).¹⁷⁴⁷

“Shall be saved” (*sōzō*) can refer to physical deliverance in Scripture (e.g. Matt 9:20–22).¹⁷⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the nuance of “salvation” throughout Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus connotes our ultimate redemption in the age to come (1 Tim 1:15; 1 Tim 2:1–6; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 1:8–12; 2 Tim 2:10; 2 Tim 3:14–15; Tit 2:11–14; Tit 3:4–7).¹⁷⁴⁹ God never promises that a woman shall live through childbirth.¹⁷⁵⁰ Yet, a believer who approaches her time of delivery can

¹⁷⁴⁰Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 103.

¹⁷⁴¹Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 468.

¹⁷⁴²Danker, et al., “*δια*” (*dia*), *BDAG*, 223–6, 224.

¹⁷⁴³Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 135.

¹⁷⁴⁴Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women*, 2 Vols. (Herbert Weir Smyth; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 674, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0016%3Acard%3D667>.

¹⁷⁴⁵Callimachus, “Hymn III: To Artemis,” in *Callimachus Hymns and Epigrams. Lycophron. Aratus*. (ed. G. R. Mair; trans. A. W. Mair; LCL; London: New York: Heinemann; Putnam, 1921), 20–22, 63, <https://archive.org/stream/callimachuslycop00calluoft#page/62/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁴⁶Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (trans. E. J. Kenney; London; New York: Penguin Books; Penguin Putnam, 2004), 11.2, 170–1, https://archive.org/stream/TheGoldenAss_201509/TheGoldenAsspenguinClassics-Apuleius#page/n219/mode/2up.

¹⁷⁴⁷Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 103.

¹⁷⁴⁸Danker, et al., “*σώζω*” (*sōzō*), *BDAG*, 982–3.

¹⁷⁴⁹Werner Foerster and Georg Fohrer, “*σώζω*” (*sōzō*), *TDNT*, 965–1024, 994–5.

¹⁷⁵⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 144.

rest in the assurance of the salvation of her soul and the resurrection of her body after the return of Christ. Indeed, when Paul described his impending death in 2 Tim 4:6–8, 16–18, he used the same verbal root to depict his expectation of salvation.

Read 1 Tim 2:15. How did Paul advise the women of Ephesus to spiritually prepare themselves for childbirth? What made his declaration counter-cultural? How can we apply this in our culture?

A Minority Religion

8) 1 Pet 3:1–2: First Peter 3:1–9 features many similarities to 1 Tim 2:8–15.¹⁷⁵¹ In the early church, Christianity spread faster among women than among men. Converting to a despised minority religion proved more costly to males in terms of their social status.¹⁷⁵² Noting the great discrepancy in numbers, Celsus, a 2nd century AD Greek philosopher, complained, “[Christians] desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children.”¹⁷⁵³

Greco-Roman husbands held the authoritative position within a marriage.¹⁷⁵⁴ “To submit” (*hypotassō*) involves placing oneself under someone else. Yet, it does not necessarily include compliance.¹⁷⁵⁵ In contrast, the obedience expected of wives in Greco-Roman antiquity included allegiance to their husbands’ religions.¹⁷⁵⁶ Most households included shrines containing figures of the gods.¹⁷⁵⁷

Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD) gave this Advice to a Bride and Groom: “A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor.”¹⁷⁵⁸

Polytheistic husbands regarded Christian women as highly insubordinate solely by virtue of their religious commitment. Peter commanded these wives not to compound the difficulty by

¹⁷⁵¹Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis. A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8–15,” 355, <http://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/hugenberger%20women%20in%20church%20office%20re%20husbands%20and%20wive%20issue%20in%201%20timothy%202.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵²Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 692.

¹⁷⁵³Origen, “Against Celsus,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second*, vol. 4 (ed. A. Cleveland Coxe; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; ANF; New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1926), 3.44, 482, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenfathe00menzgoog#page/n458/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁵⁴Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 692.

¹⁷⁵⁵Gerhard Dellling, “υποτάσσω” (*hypotassō*), *TDNT* 8:39–46, 41.

¹⁷⁵⁶Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 692.

¹⁷⁵⁷Laura Hutchinson, “The Roman House at Hopkins: Household Gods.” John Hopkins Archaeological Museum, <http://archaeologicalmuseum.jhu.edu/the-collection/object-stories/the-roman-house-at-hopkins/household-gods/>.

¹⁷⁵⁸Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom (Conjugalia Praecepta)*, 19,

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D19](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D19).

abrasive or unseemly behavior.¹⁷⁵⁹ Thus, he directed wives to submit in order to influence their non-Christian husbands toward embracing the faith, consistent with his teaching that Christians must live such holy lives that those who malign the gospel would see their error (1 Pet 2:11–12).¹⁷⁶⁰ Nevertheless, a believer’s reverence belongs to God, not to one’s spouse (Acts 4:18–20; Acts 5:27–32).¹⁷⁶¹

a) Read 1 Pet 3:1–2. What made the gospel more attractive to women than to men in Peter’s era? Why would people consider the women whom Peter addressed subversive? How could living in submission to an unbelieving husband win him over to the gospel? In what ways can people living in those circumstances today apply Peter’s teaching?

In the Spirit of Sarah

b) 1 Pet 3:3–6: Peter’s admonition to develop “a gentle and quiet spirit” does not apply to women alone (Matt 5:5; Matt 11:28–30; 1 Pet 3:8, 15). While Sarah did call Abraham her “lord” (*adon*) (Gen 18:12) and typically deferred to him (Gen 12:10–15; Gen 20:1–2), she ordered Abraham to send his son Ishmael away, making her husband “very displeased.” According to Ancient Near Eastern cultural values, Abraham held the right to determine family policy. Yet, because Sarah’s demand corresponded with God’s plans, the Lord told Abraham to listen to his wife and do what she said (Gen 21:9–14).¹⁷⁶² Note that the word translated as “listen to” (*shema*) also means “obey” in Hebrew.¹⁷⁶³

Thus, these words from Peter gave Christian women more freedom and power in their repressive world than their polytheistic friends enjoyed. Due to the differences between Greco-Roman culture and ours, people now tend to view these verses as more restrictive for believers than for non-Christian women.¹⁷⁶⁴ Going to Christian meetings and refusing to worship the family gods would have almost certainly upset the unbelieving husbands of Greco-Roman women.¹⁷⁶⁵ Such men likely would have employed various types of intimidation—physical, emotional, and social—to try to force Christian women to align themselves with their religious beliefs.¹⁷⁶⁶

Therefore, Peter called these wives to practice gentleness, inner tranquility, and subordination to their husbands in areas which did not negatively affect their Christian faith.¹⁷⁶⁷

¹⁷⁵⁹David L. Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” *USQR* 39, no. 3, January 1, 1984: 161–73, 166.

¹⁷⁶⁰Scott McKnight, *1 Peter* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 183.

¹⁷⁶¹J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 157.

¹⁷⁶²Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 83.

¹⁷⁶³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*shema*”, *BDB*, 1033–4, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1032/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁶⁴Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” 169.

¹⁷⁶⁵Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” 166.

¹⁷⁶⁶Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 121.

¹⁷⁶⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 153.

However, he also exhorted them to stand firm by calmly refusing to give in to the threats and sanctions of their spouses.¹⁷⁶⁸ Given the cultural context, it is startling that no penalty for a wife’s failure to submit appears anywhere in Scripture.

Read 1 Pet 3:3–6. How did Peter encourage wives to adorn themselves? What made Sarah a great example of what Peter was seeking to teach these women? How can women married to unbelievers avoid giving in to fear in living out their faith?

Living Together with Understanding

Please note that this post carries a trigger warning

c) **1 Pet 3:7–9:** In this letter primarily concerned with how to interact with authority figures prone to oppressing others, Peter addressed husbands last and in only one verse (1 Pet 2:13–3:6).¹⁷⁶⁹ People in Greco-Roman society expected a wife to automatically adopt her husband’s religion.¹⁷⁷⁰ However, a woman may have appeared to embrace her husband’s new faith without experiencing true conversion.¹⁷⁷¹ Christian husbands could enforce external conformity, such as outlawing the worship of household gods. However, Peter charged them to live counter-culturally, in submission to the needs of their wives (Cf. Eph 5:25–30).¹⁷⁷²

The apostle wrote, “Husbands, likewise, live together with understanding—as with a weaker vessel—with your wife, paying her respect even as co-heirs of the gracious gift of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” A “vessel” (*skeuos*) can refer to a container, object, or implement (John 19:29; Acts 10:11; 2 Tim 2:20–21). Figuratively, it can mean a person’s body as a housing for the spirit (2 Cor 4:5–10; 1 Thess 4:4).¹⁷⁷³

The Shepherd of Hermas (ca. 100–160 AD) admonished: “Be...long-suffering and prudent and you shall have power over all evil deeds and shalt do all righteousness. For if you are courageous, the Holy Spirit which dwells in you will be pure, not obscured by another evil spirit, but will dwell at large and rejoice and be glad with the body (*skeuos*) in which it dwells.”¹⁷⁷⁴

The term “weak” (*asthenēs*) can refer to illness, to emotional inadequacy, or to physical frailty.¹⁷⁷⁵ Greco-Roman law and social codes enforced the subordination of women to men, as people considered males inherently superior to females.¹⁷⁷⁶

According to Aristotle (384–322 BC): “Divine Providence has fashioned the nature of man and of woman for different purposes. For they are distinguished from each other by the possession of faculties not adapted to the same

¹⁷⁶⁸ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 121.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 159.

¹⁷⁷⁰ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 169.

¹⁷⁷¹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 207–8.

¹⁷⁷² Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 122.

¹⁷⁷³ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “σκευός” (*skeuos*), *BDAG*, 927–8.

¹⁷⁷⁴ John Lightfoot, trans., “The Shepherd of Hermas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. 2* (ed. J. R. Harmer; London; New York: MacMillan, 1891), 5.1–2, 87, <https://archive.org/details/apostolicfathers02lakeuoft/page/86>.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀσθενής” (*asthenēs*), *BDAG*, 142.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 67.

purposes but, in some cases, for opposite ones, though contributing to the same ends. For Providence made man stronger and woman weaker (*asthenes*), so that, in virtue of his manly prowess, he may be ready to defend the home, and she, by reason of her timid nature, may be ready to keep watch over it.”¹⁷⁷⁷

While praising one woman, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) claimed:

“The minds of women are, in some degree, weaker than those of men, and are not so well able to comprehend a thing which is appreciable only by the intellect...but she, as she surpassed all her sex in other particulars, so also was she superior to them in this, by reason of the pure learning and wisdom which had been implanted in her, both by nature and by study; so that, having a masculine intellect, she was so sharp-sighted and profound.”¹⁷⁷⁸

Despite that cultural background, New Testament authors give no hint of women as intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually weaker than men (Cf. Acts 16:13–15; Acts 18:24–28; Rom 16:1–12).¹⁷⁷⁹ Paul employed an entirely different word in 2 Tim 3:6–7. He used the diminutive term “little women” (*gynaikarion*) to describe specific people in Ephesus whom false teachers led astray (1 Tim 2:8–15).¹⁷⁸⁰

Furthermore, in the preceding verses, Peter exhorted women married to unbelievers to exhibit strength of character as they adhered to God’s commands. He called them to yield to their husbands’ desires when they could yet live in a manner contrary to Greco-Roman cultural expectations (1 Pet 3:1–6).¹⁷⁸¹ Consequently, “weaker” (*asthenēs*) in this context most likely refers to physical strength.¹⁷⁸²

The Greek philosopher Xenophon (430–354 BC) wrote:

“Since all work, both indoors and out, demands labor and diligent attention, Heaven, I think, so ordered our nature as to fit the woman for things demanding labor and diligent attention within, and the man for such things as demand them without. Heaven so made their bodies, and set their lives, as to render man strong to endure cold and heat, journeyings and warfare, so laying on him the works of the field; but to the woman, he gave less strength for such endurance, so laying, I think, on her the works of the house...

“It was made the duty of the woman to guard the things brought into the house; so Heaven, knowing that for the guarding of goods a fearful heart is nothing ill, gave to the woman a larger share of fearfulness than to the man; whilst in the knowledge that he who works in the field must defend himself against all injury, there was given to the man the greater share of courage.”¹⁷⁸³

“Weaker” may also allude to a lack of social standing in a civilization which devalued

¹⁷⁷⁷Aristotle, “Oeconomica,” Pages 323–426 in *Metaphysics: Books 10–14* (trans. Hugh Tredennick and G. Cyril Armstrong; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1.1343b, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0048%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D1343b>.

¹⁷⁷⁸Philo, “On the Embassy to Gaius,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, Vol. 4, 99–180, 169, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda04phil#page/168/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁷⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 160.

¹⁷⁸⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “γυναικάριον” (*gynaikarion*), *BDAG*, 208.

¹⁷⁸¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 123.

¹⁷⁸²Danker, et al., “ἀσθενεία” (*astheneia*), *BDAG*, 142.

¹⁷⁸³Xenophon, *The Economist of Xenophon* (ed. John Ruskin; trans. Alexander D. O. Wedderburn and W. Gershom Collingwood; Bibliotheca Pastorum; London; Kent: Ellis and White; George Allen, 1876), 7:22–5, 47, <https://archive.org/details/economistofxenop01xenouoft/page/n46>.

women (Cf. 1 Cor 1:26–29).¹⁷⁸⁴ Women in the Greco-Roman world—as in ours—remained vulnerable to exploitation.¹⁷⁸⁵ In that culture, the head of a family (*paterfamilias*) held absolute power over his household, even determining whether a member of it should die or be permitted to live.¹⁷⁸⁶

Therefore, Peter commanded Christian husbands to treat their wives with respect (*timē*) (Cf. Eph 5:33). In fact, he may have expanded that admonition.¹⁷⁸⁷ By writing “live together with understanding...with the female” (*gynaikeios*), rather than the typical term for a wife (*gynē*), the apostle likely included all women in the household.¹⁷⁸⁸ In the Greco-Roman culture, the male head of a household was free to seek sex for pleasure with his male and female slaves, prostitutes, or any unmarried woman. He reserved sex with his wife primarily for procreation.¹⁷⁸⁹

Demosthenes (384–322 BC) asserted this:

“For this is what living with a woman as one's wife mean: to have children by her and to introduce the sons to the members of the clan and of the [city], and to betroth the daughters to husbands as one's own. Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households.”¹⁷⁹⁰

Greco-Romans expected wives to assent to their husband's extramarital affairs with good will.¹⁷⁹¹ Typically, when women reached 14–15 years of age they married men close to thirty years old.¹⁷⁹² The sexual abuse of slaves occurred so rampantly that Jewish rabbis ruled that female slaves must have been released by the age of three to marry as virgins. Otherwise, they were “amenable to the accusation of non-virginity” (*m. Ketuboth 1:2*)¹⁷⁹³ These religious leaders believed that enough time would pass for the bodies of such women to return to a state as if they had never been violated. They took for granted that a female slave in a Greco-Roman household experienced rape by the age of three.

Men who claim to know Christ must treat those around them with the respect due to people they love.¹⁷⁹⁴ Peter stated that a Christian husband must not be demanding or selfish in his marital relationship. Instead, he should practice consideration and sensitivity as he serves his wife,¹⁷⁹⁵ rendering appropriate honor (*aponemō timos*) to her.¹⁷⁹⁶ This includes expressing respect verbally and exhibiting appropriate deference due to her increased physical and societal vulnerability as “a weaker vessel.”¹⁷⁹⁷

¹⁷⁸⁴Silva, “ἄσθενής” (*ashtenēs*), *NIDNTTE*, 1:420–4, 423.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 123.

¹⁷⁸⁶ J. Ryan Davidson, “Family Relations in the First Century,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, no pages.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 160–1.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 207.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Roy E. Ciampa, “Revisiting the Euphemism in 1 Corinthians 7.1,” *JSNT* 31, no. 3 (1 March 2009): 325–38, 326, [Http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0142064X08101527](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0142064X08101527).

¹⁷⁹⁰ Demosthenes, “Against Neaera,” in *Demosthenes with an English Translation* (trans. Norman W. DeWitt and Norman J. DeWitt; LCL; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 59.122, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0080%3Aspeech%3D59%3Asection%3D122>.

¹⁷⁹¹ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 71.

¹⁷⁹² Baugh, “Cultic Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” 456, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/42/42-3/42-3-pp443-460_JETS.pdf.

¹⁷⁹³ *Mishnah*, Ketubot 1:1–3, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm120.htm>.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:7.

¹⁷⁹⁵ McKnight, *1 Peter*, 186.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀπονέμω” (*aponemō*), *BDAG*, 118.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 122.

Christian men who fail to treat their wives lovingly—even where cultural expectations permit authoritarianism—cannot expect God to hear their prayers.¹⁷⁹⁸ Similarly, Paul asserted that abusive behavior is incompatible with a true relationship with the Lord.¹⁷⁹⁹ One of the terms he employed in 1 Cor 6:9–10 (*loidoros*) means “reviler, abusive person.”¹⁸⁰⁰ Peter described both partners as “co-heirs of the gracious gift of life.” In God’s eyes, a husband and wife share equal standing (1 Cor 7:1–5; Gal 3:28).¹⁸⁰¹ A man who desires a close connection with God must cultivate a healthy relationship with his wife (Cf. Matt 5:23–24; Matt 6:12–15; James 4:1–12).¹⁸⁰² The Lord shuts his ears to the prayers of abusive people.¹⁸⁰³ Greco-Romans believed that the well-being of a household depended upon the prayers of the paterfamilias to the family gods.¹⁸⁰⁴ Xenophon recalled this statement by Socrates (469–399 BC):

“Heaven is lord of agriculture as much as of war. And in war, I think, you see men propitiating Heaven before setting forth on any warlike enterprise and inquiring there with sacrifices and oracles what they must do and what avoid. And in agriculture, think you there is less necessity to win the favor of Heaven? For, know this well, he added, that good men offer prayer about every kind of produce—about oxen and horses and sheep—yes, about all that they have.”¹⁸⁰⁵ Peter alluded to that cultural thought while forbidding domestic violence.¹⁸⁰⁶ According to the apostle, access to God is both the goal and the test of a man’s faith.¹⁸⁰⁷

Read 1 Pet 3:7–9. Why would Peter write this corrective to Greco-Roman Christian husbands? What makes Peter’s threat to men who fail to treat their wives with proper honor and understanding so severe? Compare the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence’s Equality Wheel to the Power and Control Wheel How can you identify a healthy relationship (summary on pp. 85–86)? What constitutes abusive behavior?¹⁸⁰⁸

¹⁷⁹⁸Jobs, *1 Peter*, 209.

¹⁷⁹⁹ An official statement of the theologically-conservative Presbyterian Church of America states, “The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threatens the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the [elders], or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the [elders] should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by ‘hating’ the abused spouse and not ‘nourishing and cherishing’ this one (Eph. 5:28–29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the [elders] that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:12–16].” (PCA Digest, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage.” (To the Twentieth General Assembly, 1992), Appendix 0, <http://pcahistory.org/pca/studies/divorce-remarriage.pdf>, 291–2.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Danker et al., “λοιδωρος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602.

¹⁸⁰¹ Silva, “γυνή” (*gynē*), *NIDNTTE*, 624.

¹⁸⁰² Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 123.

¹⁸⁰³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 161.

¹⁸⁰⁴ Jobs, *1 Peter*, 209.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Xenophon, *The Economist of Xenophon*, 5.19–20, 34–35, <https://archive.org/details/economistofxenop01xenouoft/page/34>.

¹⁸⁰⁶ Jobs, *1 Peter*, 209.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter, 2nd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 188.

¹⁸⁰⁸ <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/EqualitywheelNOSHADING.pdf>;

<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_about.html).

Marriage throughout Redemptive History

9) How would you summarize what God has done for spousal relationships through the process of creation, sin, exile, and redemption? These are the pertinent links:

Creation:

Made in the Image of God (Gen 1:26) through Male and Female He Created Them (Gen 1:27)

Not Good! (Gen 2:18) through A Transfer of Loyalty (Gen 2:24)

Naked and Not Ashamed (Gen 2:25)

God Evaluates His Creation (Gen 1:31)

Your summary:

Sin:

A World-Altering Conversation (Gen 3:2–5) through Their Eyes Are Opened (Gen 3:7)

A Day of Reckoning (Gen 3:9–13)

The First Good News (Gen 3:15)

An Anguishing Process (Gen 3:16) through Slaves and War Brides (Exod 21:10–11 and Deut 21:10–14)

Your summary:

Exile:

God Hates Violence (Mal 2:13–16)

Your summary:

Redemption:

Effects of the Fall Reversed (Rom 5:12–21 and Rom 16:1–12) through Living Together with Understanding (1 Pet 3:7–9)

Marital Separation (1 Cor 7:10–11) through Dissolution of Marriage (1 Cor 7:15–16)

Adopted as Sons (Eph 1:5–6)

Your summary:

Chapter 9: Painful Toil (Genesis 3:17–21)

In the aftermath of eating the forbidden fruit, the arrival of the seed which Eve would conceive would cause her agony (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–6, 16).¹⁸⁰⁹ In addition, she would long for the intimate co-equal relationship she had previously experienced with her husband (Gen 2:18–25). Instead, Adam would rule over her (Gen 3:16, 20). However, the Lord had already promised the arrival of the “seed of the woman” who would overcome the “seed of the serpent” (Gen 3:15). This redeemer would ultimately overturn the results of the fall. After informing Eve of the results of her sin, the Lord shifted his focus to Adam.

Thorns and Thistles

1) Gen 3:17–18: According to the Babylonian creation story *Enuma Elish*, the gods created people as slaves to do the work that they had tired of doing for themselves, principally to provide them with food. Marduk announced, “Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage, ‘man’ shall be his name...He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!”¹⁸¹⁰ Based upon Ancient Near Eastern views, humanity exists to toil to relieve the gods.¹⁸¹¹ In contrast, the Lord gave people their sustenance (Gen 1:29; Gen 2:8–9).

God put Adam in the garden to “work,” “serve,” and “cultivate” (*avadh*) it (Gen 2:15).¹⁸¹² That occurred before the fall (Gen 3:1–7). Work does not result from sin but comprises a fundamental aspect of reflecting God’s image (John 5:17).¹⁸¹³ Adam’s fundamental error was “listening to (*shamar*) the voice of” his wife rather than obeying (*shamar*) the Lord’s command (Gen 3:1–6).

Just as with Eve (Gen 3:16), the Lord did not curse Adam but instead spoke of the outcome of his rebellion.¹⁸¹⁴ Since Adam’s sin involved eating, God chose a fitting judgment.¹⁸¹⁵ The toil behind the preparation of every meal reminded him of his guilt, making the memory of the abundant supply of food within the garden even more painful (Gen 2:9).¹⁸¹⁶ Frustration replaced human mastery over creation (Gen 1:27–30),¹⁸¹⁷ resulting in alienation from our environment.¹⁸¹⁸

God blesses land with abundant water and fertility (Deut 33:13–16). When he curses the ground, it becomes dry and unproductive (Deut 11:13–17).¹⁸¹⁹ Since the Lord removed his protection and favor, the soil would yield produce only through hard labor.¹⁸²⁰ The same Hebrew

¹⁸⁰⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

¹⁸¹⁰“Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines 6:5–8, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

¹⁸¹¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:17.

¹⁸¹²Holladay, “עָבַד” (*avadh*), *CHALOT*, 261.

¹⁸¹³Jon C. Laansma, “Rest,” *NDBT* 727–32, 727.

¹⁸¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81–2.

¹⁸¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202.

¹⁸¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹⁸¹⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹⁸¹⁸Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 133–4.

¹⁸¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹⁸²⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

word describes what Eve and Adam each experienced: “pain” (Gen 3:16),¹⁸²¹ resulting in anguishing brokenness.¹⁸²² Moses likely chose the word for pain used here (*etseb*) for its resemblance to the word for a tree (*ets*), rather than using the typical term. Ultimately, a tree led to their trauma,¹⁸²³ hardship, pain, and distress.¹⁸²⁴

No longer a delight, work became an enemy.¹⁸²⁵ Inedible growth replaced plants needed for food, requiring constant toil (Prov 24:30–34).¹⁸²⁶ Creation itself rebelled against humanity. Even the creatures over which people had ruled fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair. That is our earth.¹⁸²⁷

The version of the Epic of Gilgamesh found in Nineveh reminisces over former times. It describes a garden paradise which Gilgamesh passed through during his quest for immortality. There lapis lazuli grew as foliage on fruit-bearing trees, while rubies, carnelians, emeralds, and hematite sprouted, rather than thorns and thistles.¹⁸²⁸

a) Read Gen 3:17–18. How do we know that work itself is not an affliction? What effect did God’s curse have upon nature? How does that affect people? What made Adam’s experience like Eve’s?

Co-Heirs with Christ

2) Rom 8:16–18: After announcing that believers are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if we suffer the same thing, in order that also we may share [his] glory,” Paul immediately minimized the severity of those travails.¹⁸²⁹

We encounter torment resulting from our own sins, from those of others, or as a result of living in an imperfect world.¹⁸³⁰ Jesus experienced many of the travails we undergo simply by coming to our fallen planet, rather than reaping the consequences of his own transgressions (Matt 4:1–11; Heb 4:15). In that respect, the suffering borne by believers comprises a participation in the affliction of Christ. Since Paul compared our woes to those encountered by nature, they encompass more than persecution (Phil 1:29–30).¹⁸³¹

As we experience various distresses, our longing to participate in the resurrection increases.¹⁸³² For the remainder of Chapter 8, Paul elucidated our hope (Rom 8:19–39).¹⁸³³ The

¹⁸²¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֵצָבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *BDB*, 781, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

¹⁸²² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202–3.

¹⁸²³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

¹⁸²⁴ Holladay, “עֵצָבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *CHALOT*, 280.

¹⁸²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹⁸²⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁸²⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹⁸²⁸ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, tablet 8.5.47–51, comments on damaged column vi, 88, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n113/mode/2up.

¹⁸²⁹ Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 341.

¹⁸³⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 319.

¹⁸³¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 511.

¹⁸³² Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 115.

¹⁸³³ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

promise the Lord made to Abraham that he would be heir of the world shall someday come to full fruition (Rom 4:13).¹⁸³⁴

This future glory applies not only to God’s people. All of creation will receive transformation.¹⁸³⁵ The process began with the resurrection of Christ.¹⁸³⁶ It will culminate in the long-anticipated ultimate return from exile accompanied by God’s blessing of the land.¹⁸³⁷ Paul’s phrase “of the present time” denotes the unique character of these days. We live in the period between Jesus’s resurrection and his return. Thus, we experience the overlap between this evil age and our full restoration in the age to come (Dan 7:21–23).¹⁸³⁸

“The glory that is about to be revealed” refers to the certainty of a future event which is on the verge of occurring.¹⁸³⁹ This phrase carries a sense of the final vindication of God’s strategy, a blueprint currently obscured by earthly conditions.¹⁸⁴⁰ Since it will merely be “revealed” (*apokaluptō*), this glory already exists in some form (1 Pet 5:1),¹⁸⁴¹ maintaining the “now and not yet” character of Paul’s theology.¹⁸⁴² The revelation of this glory shall be “unto us,”¹⁸⁴³ which means it will both overtake and be bestowed upon God’s people.¹⁸⁴⁴ We shall undergo an internal transformation which shall have an external manifestation (1 Cor 15:50–58).¹⁸⁴⁵

a) **Read Rom 8:16–18.** How do Paul’s words help you to endure the difficulties of this life?

Creation’s Eager Expectation

b) **Rom 8:19:** Paul wrote, “For the eager expectation of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God.” “Eager expectation,”¹⁸⁴⁶ which literally means “stretching the head forward,”¹⁸⁴⁷ does not appear in pre-Christian literature. Elsewhere in the New Testament (NT), it occurs only in Phil 1:20.¹⁸⁴⁸ Josephus ((37–100 AD) described a great warrior anticipating battle, writing, “for all those who brought ladders to the other places, he took no notice of them, but earnestly waited

¹⁸³⁴J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 152.

¹⁸³⁵ Osborne, *Romans*, 210

¹⁸³⁶ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

¹⁸³⁷ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 451, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁸³⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 468.

¹⁸³⁹ Danker, et al., “μελλω” (*mellō*), *BDAG*, 627.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 468.

¹⁸⁴¹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 320.

¹⁸⁴² Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 153.

¹⁸⁴³ Maximillian Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2010), 476.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 434.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Danker et al., “ἀποκαρδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *BDAG*, 112.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Gerhard Delling, ἀποκαρδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *TDNT*, 393.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 469.

(*apokaradokia*) for the shower of arrows that was coming.”¹⁸⁴⁹ Despite the few usages of the word, the term clearly depicts an intense longing in confident expectation of fulfillment.¹⁸⁵⁰

Scholars have debated the scope of “the creation” for centuries, with various experts arguing for some or all of the following: everything God created, including all of humanity and the angels (Origen, 185–256 AD);¹⁸⁵¹ angels (Pelagius, ca. 360–418 AD);¹⁸⁵² and the sub-human natural world (Chrysostom),¹⁸⁵³ 347–407 AD, among many others.¹⁸⁵⁴ Due to the Second Adam motif in Rom 5:12–21, the sub-human creation fits best in this context.¹⁸⁵⁵ God’s reversal of the fall must include the overturning of his curse of the ground (Gen 3:17–18).¹⁸⁵⁶ This personification of nature also appears in some Old Testament (OT) writings (eg. Ps 65:12–13; Ps 96:9–13). Paul depicted both the gravity of human sin and the wonder of our restoration to cosmic glory.¹⁸⁵⁷

The term “revelation” (*apokaluptō*) has the force of an end-time unveiling from heaven, as if someone drew the curtain back to reveal those already on stage.¹⁸⁵⁸ When that happens, everyone shall recognize our current status as God’s vice-regents —the sons and daughters of God (Eph 1:5–6).¹⁸⁵⁹ Sonship bears a strong link to image-bearing (Gen 5:3). For example, an ancient hymn describes the Son of God as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15).¹⁸⁶⁰ In the covenant which the Lord made with David, God promised, “I shall be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:14). Later in Israel’s history, the Lord expanded those designated as his sons from only the messiah to the end-time people of God (Hos 1:10).¹⁸⁶¹

According to a Jewish apocryphal book:
 “And after this they will turn to Me in all uprightness and with all [their] heart and with all [their] soul, and I shall circumcise the foreskin of their heart and...the heart of their seed, and I shall create in them a holy spirit, and I shall cleanse them...And their souls will cleave to me...and they will fulfill my commandments, and I shall be their Father...And they will all be called children of the living God, and every angel and every spirit will know, yea, they will know that these are my children...and that I love them.”¹⁸⁶²

¹⁸⁴⁹Flavius Josephus, William Whiston, trans., *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Auburn and Buffalo, NY: Beardsley, 1895), 3.264,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D3%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D7%3Awhiston%20section%3D26>.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Verbrugge, “ἀποκαράδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *TDNTWA*, 62.

¹⁸⁵¹Origen, *The Writings of Origen* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; trans. Frederick Crombie; ANF; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), 53–9, <https://archive.org/stream/writingsoforigen01orig#page/n9/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁵²Pelagius, *Pelagius’s Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul: Introduction* (TS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 191, <https://archive.org/stream/writingsoforigen01orig#page/52/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁵³Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 244–5, <https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc07john#page/244/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 452, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 469.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 470.

¹⁸⁵⁹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

¹⁸⁶¹J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 104.

¹⁸⁶²Charles, “The Book of Jubilees, or The Little Genesis,” 1:23–5, 6–7, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofjubileesor00char#page/6/mode/2up>.

Note that the concept of being a son or daughter of God was not a NT innovation. The Lord had promised to redeem righteous Jews from their exile in a second exodus, joining the gentiles with Israel as God’s people (Isa 2:1–4; Zech 8:20–23).¹⁸⁶³ Although Jews in the Old Testament (OT) era recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel, in reality God welcomed and included gentiles who called upon him in faith (Josh 6:25; Ruth 4:9–12; 2 Sam 11:6–11).¹⁸⁶⁴ By applying several OT texts to gentiles (Isa 52:11; 2 Sam 7:14), with an overt expansion to include women, Paul demonstrated that all believers comprise the people of God (2 Cor 6:16–18).¹⁸⁶⁵

Read Rom 8:19. What is all of creation anticipating? Who are the sons of God? How does this knowledge encourage you?

Subjected to Futility

c) Rom 8:20: Paul now turned his attention to why all of creation waits eagerly (Rom 8:19).¹⁸⁶⁶ He wrote, “For creation not willingly was subjected to futility because of the one who subjected it, in hope.” Although “futility” (*mataiotēs*) occurs in only two other New Testament references (Eph 4:17 and 2 Pet 2:18), the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses it fifty-three times, with thirty-nine citations in Ecclesiastes.¹⁸⁶⁷ The term connotes lack of value, emptiness, purposelessness, and a transitory state (Ecc 1:1–11).¹⁸⁶⁸

Many Greco-Roman philosophers viewed matter as inherently corrupt.¹⁸⁶⁹ For example, Plotinus (ca. 204–270 AD) contended, “Cut off as we are by the nature of the body, God has yet given us, in the midst of all this evil, virtue the unconquerable.”¹⁸⁷⁰

Contrary to that view, nature is not diabolical but the innocent victim of humanity’s disobedience (Gen 3:17–18; Deut 11:13–17).¹⁸⁷¹ Since Adam and Eve obeyed the creature rather than the creator (Gen 3:1–7), their actions profoundly affected the mandate and promise of Gen 1:26–29. As a result, creation no longer functions as the Lord originally intended.¹⁸⁷² “Not willingly” (*hekōn*) emphasizes the unjust and involuntary servitude of creation in this state.

The passive voice of “was subjected” (*hypotassō*) connotes an authoritative action,¹⁸⁷³ removing any suspicion that creatures now reign over humans.¹⁸⁷⁴ That this condition was “on

¹⁸⁶³Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 272.

¹⁸⁶⁴Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 269–70.

¹⁸⁶⁵Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 771.

¹⁸⁶⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

¹⁸⁶⁷Logos 7 word search on “ματαιότης” (*mataiotēs*) in Swete’s version of the Septuagint.

¹⁸⁶⁸Danker, et al., “ματαιότης” (*mataiotēs*), *BDAG*, 621.

¹⁸⁶⁹Harry Alan Hahne, “The Whole Creation Has Been Groaning,” in *Apocalyptic Vision* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 19–26, 19, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁸⁷⁰Plotinus, *The Six Enneads, 2nd Ed.* (trans. Stephen Mackenna, revised by B. S. Page; London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 2.3.9,97, <https://archive.org/stream/plotinustheennea033190mbp#page/n9/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁷¹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 8:20

¹⁸⁷²Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 470.

¹⁸⁷³Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 21, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁸⁷⁴Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 109.

account of him who subjected it” indicates that God functions as the agent of this state.¹⁸⁷⁵ By succumbing to temptation, Adam lost rather than gained control over the created order (Gen 3:4–7, 17–19).¹⁸⁷⁶ In keeping with the threats of Deut 28:15–24, Isa 24:3–7 eloquently expresses the consequences of breaking the covenant.

But all is not lost. Countering the pessimistic view of the first century that death and decay reign supreme,¹⁸⁷⁷ Paul concluded this verse with “in hope” due to the condition under which the curse took place.¹⁸⁷⁸ The apostle likely alluded to the promise of Gen 3:15,¹⁸⁷⁹ invoking the right and responsibility of God to judge and dispense with evil.¹⁸⁸⁰

Read Rom 8:20. Why doesn’t nature function as had been intended? How does God’s promise in Gen 3:15 provide hope to the created order?

Set Free from the Slavery of Corruption

d) Rom 8:21–22: After noting that nature has been subjected to futility due to human sin (Rom 8:20), Paul continued, “Even creation itself will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails together until the present time.” Paul declared the content of creation’s hope: that it “itself will be set free.” God has set his people free from the slavery of sin and death (Rom 6:18, 22; Rom 8:2; Eph 1:3–11). So shall he liberate creation from its bondage.¹⁸⁸¹ Christ’s death and resurrection ensures this eventuality (Col 1:15–20; 1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–58).

Even nature shall undergo redemption. God will not rescue us from it.¹⁸⁸² The apostle’s choice of “will be set free” (*eleutheroō*)¹⁸⁸³—rather than “undone” (*luō*)¹⁸⁸⁴ or “destroyed” (*apollumi*)¹⁸⁸⁵—counters the notion that the world shall end in destruction. Thus, this passage contradicts the Greek dualism and the spirit/matter dichotomy which remain prevalent in our churches.¹⁸⁸⁶ Note that in 2 Pet 3:6–7, “the world” (*kosmos*) which God annihilated by the flood refers to the ungodly people inhabiting the earth during the time of Noah, not to the planet itself (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43).¹⁸⁸⁷ We await the renovation of the earth when the new Jerusalem descends (Rev 21:1–2), not its replacement.¹⁸⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷⁵Mounce Robert H., *Romans* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 184.

¹⁸⁷⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 435.

¹⁸⁷⁷Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 8:20

¹⁸⁷⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 516.

¹⁸⁷⁹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:414.

¹⁸⁸⁰N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 22.

¹⁸⁸¹Osborne, *Romans*, 212.

¹⁸⁸²Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

¹⁸⁸³Danker, et al., “ἐλευθεροῶ” (*eleutheroō*), *BDAG*, 317.

¹⁸⁸⁴Danker et. al., “λυω” (*luō*), 607.

¹⁸⁸⁵Danker, et. al., “ἀπολλύμι” (*apollumi*), 117.

¹⁸⁸⁶Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 450, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁸⁸⁷Danker et al., “κόσμος” (*kosmos*), 562.

¹⁸⁸⁸Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 455, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

“The slavery (*douleia*) of corruption (*phthora*)” alludes to the inevitable decay of all created things.¹⁸⁸⁹ This is consistent with Greek thought, with Paul’s earlier writing in 1 Cor 15:50,¹⁸⁹⁰ and with the Second Law of Thermodynamics. John Calvin noted, “We may...infer from this how dreadful is the curse which we have deserved, since all innocent creatures from earth to heaven are punished for our sins (Jer 12:4). It is our fault that they struggle in corruption.”¹⁸⁹¹ In Greco-Roman society, the strict dichotomy between slavery and freedom accentuated the radical nature of the transformation envisioned by Paul.¹⁸⁹² The Old Testament (OT) depicts Israel’s exile as a reversal of creation order into chaos (Jer 4:23–27).¹⁸⁹³

However, due to the Lord’s justice,¹⁸⁹⁴ he assures us of a return to the conditions of Eden in the new Adam (Gen 2:8–14; Gen 1:31; Rom 5:12–21).¹⁸⁹⁵ God will overturn creation’s systemic deficiencies due to the curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17–18), so that nature may enter “into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Ps 96:7–13; Jer 31:10–14; Hos 2:18–23).¹⁸⁹⁶ Then

people will say, “This land which was desolate has become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek 36:35).¹⁸⁹⁷ The Lord shall banish evil and his elect will enter into complete harmony with our creator.¹⁸⁹⁸ At that time, God shall at last achieve his original intention for our planet (Gen 1:28).¹⁸⁹⁹ This

theme of the spread of God’s kingdom throughout all of creation appears in the Assumption of Moses, a Jewish apocryphal book dating from the time of Christ’s birth:

“And then his [God’s] kingdom will appear throughout all his creation, and then Satan will be no more, and sorrow will depart with him...For the Heavenly One will arise from his royal throne, and he will go forth from his holy habitation and his wrath will burn on account of his sons. And the earth will tremble: to its confines will it be shaken. And the high mountains will be made low and the hills will be shaken and fall...For the Most High will arise...and he will appear to punish the gentiles, and he will destroy all their idols. Then thou, Israel, wilt be happy, and thou wilt mount upon the neck[s and wings] of the eagle, and (the days of thy mourning) will be ended. And God will exalt thee, and he will cause thee to approach to the heaven of the stars, and he will establish thy habitation among them.”¹⁹⁰⁰

Of all the OT prophets, Isaiah delivered the most complete picture of the state of the universe after Christ announces, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5). Isaiah 11

¹⁸⁸⁹Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (PCNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 201.

¹⁸⁹⁰Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 452, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁸⁹¹John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. Ross MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 174. <https://archive.org/stream/commentaryonepis00calv#page/330/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁹²Ceslas Spicq, “δοῦλος” (*doulos*), *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament (TLNT)*, Vol. 1, (James D. Ernest, trans., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 380.

¹⁸⁹³Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 273.

¹⁸⁹⁴Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 25.

¹⁸⁹⁵Matera, *Romans*, 201.

¹⁸⁹⁶Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 273.

¹⁸⁹⁷Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 34.

¹⁸⁹⁸Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 456, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁸⁹⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 81–2.

¹⁹⁰⁰R. H. Charles, trans., “The Assumption of Moses,” in *The Assumption of Moses* (Edinburgh; London: Black, 1897), 10.1–9, 38–43, <https://archive.org/stream/assumptionofmose00unknuoft#page/38/mode/2up>.

describes “the root of Jesse” (v. 1) who shall destroy all evil (v. 4), leaving even a little child to lead a lion who will lie down with a lamb (v. 6). God said, “For they shall not cause evil nor ruin in all my holy mountain because the earth [shall be] filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters cover the sea” (v. 11). Other passages with such end-time promises include Isa 51:3–11;¹⁹⁰¹ Isa 55:6–13; Isa 65:17–25 and Isa 66:22–23.¹⁹⁰²

Since redeemed people must inhabit a fitting environment,¹⁹⁰³ the reclamation anticipated by believers shall extend to the created order.¹⁹⁰⁴ Indeed, the resurrection of people without the restoration of creation bears little resemblance to the gospel preached by the apostle (Eph 1:9–10; Col 1:15–20).¹⁹⁰⁵ The God-focused perspective of the mandate in Gen 1:26–28 states our commission not in terms of domination but of stewardship. It does not give people license to abuse the environment.

In fact, we should fashion the model for our own rule of the earth after Jesus’s charge to his disciples (Mark 10:45). When a man asked Christ to name the greatest commandment, he responded with two of them (Matt 22:34–40). Currently, we face ecological crises all around us. Can we adhere to the command to “love our neighbors as ourselves” without caring for the environment in which they live?¹⁹⁰⁶

Our desire to love and honor the Lord affects the way we interact with what he created. God calls his people to align ourselves with his plans (Rom 12:1–2; Col 1:9–10).¹⁹⁰⁷ Since the Lord intends to redeem creation rather than to annihilate it, this has profound implications for how we view and care for the environment. We must seek to limit the damage we inflict upon both the inorganic and the living creation by behaving in ways which anticipate the age to come.¹⁹⁰⁸

As co-heirs with Christ, our destiny conforms to his image (Rom 8:29). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord calls and enables us to live as he originally intended for those created in his image (Gal 5:13–25).¹⁹⁰⁹ Thus, we must seek that his “will [be done] on earth as [it is] in heaven” (Matt 6:9–10). God commissioned Adam and Eve with cultivating and serving what he had created (Gen 2:15, 18). Now that charge extends to us (Ps 8:5–10).¹⁹¹⁰

Even as in first century Rome, we see the effects of sin almost everywhere we look: destruction, decay, and despair. As those who wait expectantly for the ushering in of the new age, we must fully engage ourselves in the advancement of the cause of Christ, seeking the righteousness, justice, and true life which God intended from the beginning.¹⁹¹¹

¹⁹⁰¹John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 564–5.

¹⁹⁰²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 16.

¹⁹⁰³Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

¹⁹⁰⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 437.

¹⁹⁰⁵Ciampa Roy E., “Paul’s Theology of the Gospel,” in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner; London: T & T Clark, 2011), 187.

¹⁹⁰⁶Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 458–60, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁹⁰⁷Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 460, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁹⁰⁸Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 24–5, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁹⁰⁹Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 459, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁹¹⁰Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 25, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁹¹¹Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 113.

Nevertheless, we must remain cognizant that, although they are not in vain, our own efforts cannot bring an end to the groaning around us: the Lord himself will accomplish that at the dawning of the age to come (Ps 96:7–16; Ps 98:4–9).¹⁹¹²

Read Rom 8:21–22. What clues did Paul give to indicate that the Lord will not destroy this world? Why does God plan to renew our planet? How does knowing that the Lord desires to renew the earth affect the way you live? What are some specific things you can do differently to enhance your care for the environment?

Return to the Ground

3) Gen 3:19: Great reversals have occurred since God formed Adam from the ground and caused food to grow (Gen 1:29–30; Gen 2:7–9). The pure joy and satisfaction from working the ground which God intended no longer exists.¹⁹¹³ Instead, the ground (*adamah*) would resist and eventually swallow Adam back into itself, rather than continuing to submit to his care.¹⁹¹⁴

This struggle would continue until death occurred,¹⁹¹⁵ quite different from the elevated state Adam and Eve expected to attain by trespassing the Lord’s restriction (Gen 3:4–7).¹⁹¹⁶ God’s pronouncement confirms the curse for eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁹¹⁷ However, it also promises respite from the difficulty of living under these conditions. Even repentance cannot free humanity from the toil of labor to provide sustenance for our bodies while this life lasts.¹⁹¹⁸

The Lord’s decree hinted that exclusion from Eden was imminent, for a death sentence implied that he would obstruct the way to the tree of life (Gen 2:9). Only by remaining in the garden could Adam and Eve experience life to the fullest.¹⁹¹⁹ Since the word “die” does not appear here, physical death would not come instantly, as they might have expected (Gen 5:5).¹⁹²⁰ They would inevitably—not immediately—return to dust as a penalty for their sin.¹⁹²¹ In their disobedience, Adam and Eve experienced death before they died. Thus, the serpent had spoken the truth even while lying (Gen 3:1–4).¹⁹²² By desiring to live, being unable to fully live, and being forced to live, humanity without God remains dead (Eph 2:1–3).¹⁹²³

¹⁹¹² Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 460, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁹¹³ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 117.

¹⁹¹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁹¹⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 203.

¹⁹¹⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁹¹⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

¹⁹¹⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 203–4.

¹⁹¹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

¹⁹²⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 204.

¹⁹²¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

¹⁹²² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 135.

¹⁹²³ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 142.

a) Read Gen 3:19. What great reversals did the Lord pronounce? How can people be dead even while living? In what ways have you experienced this?

Clothed by God

c) **Gen 3:21:** According to the Akkadian tale “Adapa,” the protagonist lost the opportunity to eat the bread and water of life. Then the god Anu clad him in mourning garb before sending Adapa away from his presence.¹⁹²⁴ Throughout human history, clothing has served not only to protect against “thorns and thistles” (Gen 3:18) but also as an indicator of one’s role and social status. Replacing their inadequate loincloths of fig leaves (Gen 3:7), God provided Adam and Eve with leather “tunics” (*ketoneth*),¹⁹²⁵ long shirts reaching the knees or ankles.¹⁹²⁶ Similar garments remain the clothing of choice for many Middle Eastern people.¹⁹²⁷

Moses mentioned neither animal death nor blood when God made skin garments for Adam and Eve. The emphasis here does not fall upon sacrifice for their sin. In fact, the skins of sacrificial animals were often burned (Lev 9:7–11). Instead, clothing people in the Ancient Near East comprised an act of investiture, such as for kings and priests during their installation ceremonies (Lev 8:1–10). Moses clothed Aaron and his sons in tunics (*ketoneth*) (Exod 28:4), and Nehemiah donated 530 to the priests who returned to Jerusalem after the exile (Neh 7:70). In Gen 49:26, Jacob called Joseph—who also wore a tunic—“one consecrated among his brothers.”

Ashurbanipal, a 7th century BC king of Assyria wrote:

“Those kings who had repeatedly schemed, they brought alive to me to Nineveh. From all of them, I had only mercy upon Necho and granted him life. I made [a treaty] with him [protected by] oaths which greatly surpassed [those of the former treaty]. I clad him in a garment with multicolored trimmings, placed a golden chain on him [as the] insignia of his kingship, put golden rings on his hands; I wrote my name [phonetically] upon an iron dagger [to be worn in] the girdle, the mounting of which was golden, and gave it to him.”¹⁹²⁸

While putting a garment on someone usually occurred in conjunction with an elevation of status, Adam and Eve stood on the brink of demotion (Gen 3:8–13).¹⁹²⁹ Clothing a person or removing apparel also functioned as symbols of inheritance or disinheritance.¹⁹³⁰ Hittite Law # 171 states, “If a mother draws her garment away from a son of hers, she is repudiating her sons.”¹⁹³¹ A Ugaritic man’s last will and testament concurs, saying, “And now therefore, my two

¹⁹²⁴ “Adapa,” *ANET*, lines 59–69, 102,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n127/mode/2up.

¹⁹²⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “כֶּתֹנֶת” (*ketoneth*), *BDB*, 509,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/508/mode/2up>.

¹⁹²⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 84.

¹⁹²⁷ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:21.

¹⁹²⁸ Assurbanipal, “Campaigns Against Egypt, Syria, and Palestine,” in *ANET*, trans. Daniel David Luckenbill, section 2, 295,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n319/mode/2up.

¹⁹²⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 229–30.

¹⁹³⁰ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

¹⁹³¹ Albrecht Goetze, trans., “The Hittite Laws,” in *ANET*, 195

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n219/mode/2up.

sons...whichever of them shall bring a lawsuit against...or shall abuse...their mother, shall pay 500 shekels of silver to the king; he shall set his cloak upon the door bolt, and shall depart into the street.”¹⁹³²

Spreading a garment over a woman indicated a man’s intention to marry her (Ruth 3:7–10).¹⁹³³ Accordingly, nudity comprised the penalty for marital unfaithfulness (Hos 2:2–3). An Akkadian text says, “If my wife would follow a strange man, let her place her clothes upon a stool, and go whither she will.”¹⁹³⁴ After repeated calls for Israel and Judah to return to him, the Lord eventually suspended his covenant with them, allowing other nations to strip them naked and take them into exile as a penalty for their spiritual adultery (Ezek 23:24–30).

In contrast, God’s act in Eden pointed to a future for Adam and Eve beyond their misery.¹⁹³⁵ His mercy enabled him to accept them despite their fallen state.¹⁹³⁶ Therefore, he covered them, rather than exposing their shame to him and to one another.¹⁹³⁷ By cladding their naked bodies, the Lord signified his intention to conceal their humiliation, return their dignity,¹⁹³⁸ and bring them back into relationship with himself.¹⁹³⁹

The Lord’s action embodied order and restraint, not breaking the new laws that applied to the earth and people but choosing to participate in them (Gen 3:14–19).¹⁹⁴⁰ He graciously reaffirmed humanity’s inheritance rights over creation (Gen 1:26–28).¹⁹⁴¹ By clothing Adam and Eve, God revealed his plan to restore his covenant with humanity,¹⁹⁴² doing for them what they could not do for themselves.¹⁹⁴³

Read Gen 3:21. Why did the Lord clothe Adam and Eve in animal skins? How does that provide hope to you?

Clothed with Christ

4) Gal 3:26–27: The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to counter the arguments of Christian missionaries from a Jewish background. They sought to have gentile “half-converts” become “full converts” by obeying the law of Moses, specifically through circumcision (Gal 6:12–16). By writing, “For all sons of God you are through your faith in Christ Jesus,” Paul emphasized “all” by placing it first in his sentence.¹⁹⁴⁴ This message infuriated those insisting on

¹⁹³²J. J. Finkelstein, trans., “Additional Mesopotamian Legal Documents: (17) Will and Testament,” in *ANET*, 546, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n577/mode/2up.

¹⁹³³ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

¹⁹³⁴ John Huehnergard, “Biblical Notes on Some New Akkadian Texts from Emar (Syria),” *CBQ* 47, no. 3 (July 1985): 428–34, text 2:18–24, 431.

¹⁹³⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 207.

¹⁹³⁶ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 119.

¹⁹³⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 139.

¹⁹³⁸ Alicia J. Batten, “Clothing and Adornment,” *BTB* 40, no. 3, 2010: 148–59, 149.

¹⁹³⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 150.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 139.

¹⁹⁴¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

¹⁹⁴² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

¹⁹⁴³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 207.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 100. In Koine Greek, the word “for” can never occur first in a sentence or clause. Authors placed their points of emphasis first in a sentence or clause.

circumcision (Gal 2:12; Gal 5:11–12).¹⁹⁴⁵ Jewish people of that era recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel. However, God welcomes and includes gentiles into the covenant community (Eph 1:5–6; Rom 10:8–13).¹⁹⁴⁶

Paul contrasted the status of freedom believers enjoy with the slavery and fear of those under the Mosaic law (Gal 3:23).¹⁹⁴⁷ While Greco-Roman women could become heirs, they faced restrictions regarding how they could use an inheritance.¹⁹⁴⁸ This is probably why Paul designated believers of both genders “sons” (Gal 3:28–29).

Those “in Christ Jesus” experience unity with each other and a new relationship with God as his children,¹⁹⁴⁹ a status achieved by means of faith.¹⁹⁵⁰ Being “in Christ” facilitates communion with Jesus in the most intimate connection imaginable.¹⁹⁵¹ Indeed, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us sets us apart as the people of God (Gal 4:6–7).¹⁹⁵² Yet this neither minimizes nor destroys the Christian’s and Jesus’s distinct personalities; it enhances them.¹⁹⁵³

Most likely, Paul derived Gal 3:27–28 from an early Christian baptismal confession.¹⁹⁵⁴ In the early church, baptism served as the first and necessary response of faith,¹⁹⁵⁵ resulting in the practice becoming identified as a rite of initiation into a new humanity with Christ as its head.¹⁹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, faith and baptism remain distinct so that faith does not negate the need for baptism and baptism fails to make faith unnecessary (Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 12:13).¹⁹⁵⁷

Paul wrote, “All of you who into Christ have been baptized, [with] Christ have clothed yourselves.” Enveloping ourselves with Jesus as our garment symbolizes a new spiritual existence (Job 29:14). By stripping off sin and putting on the virtues of Christ (Eph 4:20–24; Rom 13:12–14),¹⁹⁵⁸ we have died to our old evil ways, stepping into new life (Rom 6:1–14; Rev 3:5–6).¹⁹⁵⁹

In the early church, converts disrobed just prior to baptism and put on white clothing after receiving the rite.¹⁹⁶⁰ According to Hippolytus ca. 170–235 AD):

“Let the candidates stand in the water, *naked*, a deacon going with them...He who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say thus, ‘Dost thou believe in God, the Father Almighty?’ And he who is being baptized shall say, ‘I believe.’ Then holding his hand placed on his head, he shall baptize him once.

“And then he shall say, ‘Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right

¹⁹⁴⁵Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 197.

¹⁹⁴⁶Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 269–70.

¹⁹⁴⁷Brendan Byrne, “Sons of God,” *ABD* 6:156–9, 158.

¹⁹⁴⁸Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 43.

¹⁹⁴⁹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 152.

¹⁹⁵⁰Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 171–2.

¹⁹⁵¹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154.

¹⁹⁵²Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 270.

¹⁹⁵³Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154.

¹⁹⁵⁴Longenecker, *Galatians*, 155.

¹⁹⁵⁵McKnight, *Galatians*, 198.

¹⁹⁵⁶Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 172.

¹⁹⁵⁷Longenecker, *Galatians*, 155–6.

¹⁹⁵⁸McKnight, *Galatians*, 198–9.

¹⁹⁵⁹Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical and Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 380.

¹⁹⁶⁰Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156. See <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310120.htm>.

hand of the Father, and will come to judge the quick (living) and the dead?’ And when he says, ‘I believe,’ he is baptized again.

“And again he shall say, ‘Dost thou believe in [the] Holy Ghost, and the holy church, and the resurrection of the flesh?’ He who is being baptized shall say accordingly, ‘I believe,’ and so he is baptized a third time... And so each one...is immediately *clothed*, and then is brought into the church.”¹⁹⁶¹

This explains why baptism took place away from the congregation.¹⁹⁶² A third century AD document describes female deacons administering baptism to women converts to prevent men from seeing their nudity.¹⁹⁶³

Read Gal 3:26–27. What is the significance of being a son of God? How does the ancient form of Christian baptism reflect the transformation we experience through our identification with Jesus? Specifically, how does clothing yourself with Christ affect the way you live?

¹⁹⁶¹Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (trans. Burton Scott Easton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 46–7, [Http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibliotheque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/1934-burton_scott_easton-tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_\(1934\).pdf](http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibliotheque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/1934-burton_scott_easton-tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_(1934).pdf). Italics mine.

¹⁹⁶² Geoffrey Wainwright, “Baptism, Baptismal Rites,” *DLNT*, 112–25, 121.

¹⁹⁶³Margaret Dunlop Gibson, trans., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English* (HSem; London; Cambridge: Clay; Cambridge University Press, 1903), 16, 79–80, <https://archive.org/stream/didascaliaaposto00gibsuoft#page/78/mode/2up>.

Chapter 10: The Tree of Life (Gen 3:22–24)

Since Adam had disobeyed the Lord by eating of the forbidden fruit, God cursed the ground (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:6, 17–19). He made it dry and unfruitful by withholding his blessing.¹⁹⁶⁴ Thus, the toil behind the preparation of every meal reminded Adam and Eve of their guilt.¹⁹⁶⁵ Creation fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair.¹⁹⁶⁶ In a great reversal, the ground from which Adam had been created would resist his efforts and eventually swallow him into itself.¹⁹⁶⁷

After the Lord completed his pronouncements of judgment, Adam named his wife as both a sign of his new rule over her and a re-inauguration of their covenant of marriage (Gen 3:20).¹⁹⁶⁸ In calling her “Eve”—which means “the mother of all the living”—Adam spoke in faith that God’s promise of progeny would come to pass (Gen 3:15).¹⁹⁶⁹ Despite the Lord’s pronouncement of death, Adam named his wife in terms of life.¹⁹⁷⁰

Finally, God clothed the couple with leather tunics (Gen 3:21). This signified that he was not disinheriting them but would graciously reinstate his covenant with humanity.¹⁹⁷¹ Clothing also provided protection from the thorns and thistles which awaited Adam and Eve as they cultivated the ground which the Lord had cursed.

Access to the Tree of Life

1) Gen 3:22: Here the Lord spoke to himself, observing, “The human has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.” Thus, what the serpent had promised was partially fulfilled (Gen 3:1–5).¹⁹⁷² However, the snake had hidden the result of their disobedience:¹⁹⁷³ the inevitability of death (Gen 3:19).¹⁹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Adam did not die until reaching 930 years of age (Gen 5:5).¹⁹⁷⁵ That Adam might “send forth his hand and take from the tree of life” implies that he could have chosen to eat fruit from that tree but did not do so (Gen 2:8–9, 15–17).¹⁹⁷⁶

a) Read Gen 3:22. Why were Adam and Eve in such a precarious position?

¹⁹⁶⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹⁹⁶⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 72.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 205–7.

¹⁹⁷⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 216.

¹⁹⁷¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 150.

¹⁹⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

¹⁹⁷³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 208.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 75.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

Driven Out

b) Gen 3:23–24: The creation epic concludes with these verses.¹⁹⁷⁷ Eden abounded with symbols of the life-giving presence of God: trees, gold, rivers, and jewels (Gen 2:8–14).¹⁹⁷⁸ Yet suddenly Moses amplified the preeminence of the tree of life. Unrecognized by us until now, the whole story has really been about this tree.¹⁹⁷⁹

Although sin greatly impacts each of us, the Old Testament (OT) emphasizes the effect of our transgressions upon the Lord (e.g., Lev 1–7). Sin defiles and dishonors God’s holy presence (Gen 20:6; Gen 39:7–9, Exod 10:16). Therefore, the most despicable aspect of human wrongdoing is not what it does to us but to the Lord.¹⁹⁸⁰ For a holy God to remain present among people, sacrifices had to remove the defilement resulting from sin.¹⁹⁸¹ Consequently, a significant percentage of the Pentateuch consists of sacrificial legislation.¹⁹⁸²

Lest Adam “stretch out” (*shalakh*) his hand to take from the tree of life,¹⁹⁸³ the Lord made a preemptive strike against any further attempt of his to become like God and “sent him out” (*shalakh*).¹⁹⁸⁴ According to Gen 2:15, the Lord placed Adam in the garden “to cultivate (*avadh*) and keep (*shamar*) it.”¹⁹⁸⁵ However, God exiled him from Eden “to work (*avadh*) the ground from which he was taken” (Gen 2:7), and “a flaming sword turned this way and that to preserve (*shamar*) the way of the tree of life.”¹⁹⁸⁶

The former priests of Eden had become intruders (Gen 2:18–23).¹⁹⁸⁷ They did not leave of their own will, nor were they gently escorted away.¹⁹⁸⁸ Instead, God abruptly drove (*garash*) Adam and Eve out of the only home they had ever known.¹⁹⁸⁹ No longer would people automatically enjoy a personal relationship with their creator (Gen 3:8).¹⁹⁹⁰

Since the antidote to death grew in the center of the garden (Gen 3:9), God enforced the threatened penalty by cutting off access to it (Gen 2:16–17). Thus, he made death inevitable.¹⁹⁹¹ However, even worse than the end of their physical lives (Gen 3:19),¹⁹⁹² Adam and Eve suffered the loss of the pure fellowship they had enjoyed with God.¹⁹⁹³ Similarly, those who undergo the divorce of their parents miss the availability of both parents far more than being deprived of their former home.¹⁹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁷⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 141.

¹⁹⁷⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 74.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 141.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 231.

¹⁹⁸¹ Richard E. Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices,” *EDBT*, 574–81, 574.

¹⁹⁸² Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings,” *ABD* 5:870–86, 871.

¹⁹⁸³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁלַח” (*shalakh*), *BDB*, 1018–9, 1018,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1018/mode/2up>.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עָבַד” (*avadh*) and “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *BDB*, 712, 1036,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/712/mode/2up>;

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1036/mode/2up>.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 110.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 137.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 210.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Holladay, “שָׁלַח” (*shalakh*), *CHALOT*, 372.

¹⁹⁹⁰ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 132.

¹⁹⁹¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 230.

¹⁹⁹² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 90.

¹⁹⁹³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 208.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 231.

Israel's people regarded expulsion from their wilderness camp as a living death, resulting in gestures of mourning (Lev 13:45–46). Rejection by God evoked the same reaction (1 Sam 15:26–31, 34–35).¹⁹⁹⁵ In fact, the paramount focus of the rest of the OT concerns how to regain access to the presence of the Lord.¹⁹⁹⁶ Adam lost the responsibility to guard the garden temple, a task which God transferred to the cherubim.¹⁹⁹⁷ Ironically, they kept Adam out.¹⁹⁹⁸ Reminiscent of the entrance to the garden on the east side of Eden, both the tabernacle and Israel's temple were constructed with their access points to the east.¹⁹⁹⁹

Cherubim do not resemble the chubby babies with wings we often picture. Instead, they functioned as sentinels of death (Ezek 10:2).²⁰⁰⁰ In the Akkadian Vision of the Netherworld, the concubine who accompanied the ruler of the dead “was provided with the head of a *kurību*.”²⁰⁰¹ Some Hebrew scholars believe this word linguistically precedes the Hebrew term.²⁰⁰² This type of angel resembles a winged lion with four faces (Ezek 10:9–14). Cherubim traditionally guarded Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) sacred spaces.²⁰⁰³

The OT mentions them over ninety times, usually in the context of guarding the Lord's holy presence (2 Kgs 19:15; Ezek 10:3–5).²⁰⁰⁴ After Israel constructed the tabernacle, the Levites fulfilled a similar role. They stationed themselves as guards to strike down any unauthorized person who encroached upon God's sanctuary (Num 1:50–54).²⁰⁰⁵

Representations of cherubim were stationed around the Most Holy Place, where God's presence dwelt (Exod 25:18–22; 1 Kgs 6:23–28). They were also carved into the doors and the walls of the Holy Place of the temple (1 Kgs 6:29). Significantly, the lampstand which symbolized the tree of life stood in the Holy Place (Exod 40:17–25; 1 Kgs 7:48–49).²⁰⁰⁶ Statues of cherubim often flanked the thrones of ANE rulers.²⁰⁰⁷ One Phoenician king's sarcophagus features them surrounding his throne.²⁰⁰⁸

After Jesus withstood the serpent's temptations, “angels came and ministered to him” (Matt 4:11; Luke 22:40–43).²⁰⁰⁹ Due to Adam's sin, he experienced a starkly different relationship with the angels. “The flame of a sword turning this way and that” blocked any attempt to return to eat from the tree of life.²⁰¹⁰ Such a weapon would bring death (Num 22:22–23, 31–33).²⁰¹¹

¹⁹⁹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 90.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 231.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 70.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85–6.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 74.

²⁰⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 144.

²⁰⁰¹ E. A. Speiser, trans., “A Vision of the Nether World,” in *ANET*, rev., 109,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n133/mode/2up. Note that this spelling differs from the older edition available online.

²⁰⁰² Stephen F. Noll, “כְּרֻבִים” (*kerub*), *NIDOTTE*, 2:717–8, 717.

²⁰⁰³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85–6.

²⁰⁰⁴ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:24.

²⁰⁰⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 210.

²⁰⁰⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 70–1.

²⁰⁰⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 230.

²⁰⁰⁸ Ancient History Encyclopedia Ltd., “Sarcophagus of Ahrim (Illustration),” <http://www.ancient.eu/image/174/>.

²⁰⁰⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 172.

²⁰¹⁰ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 137

²⁰¹¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 86.

By learning the mysteries of good and evil, Adam and Eve lost the paradise they had received (Gen 3:7–13). Consequently, all of us have been born outside of Eden, with our natural inclinations and thoughts confirming our status as outsiders.²⁰¹² The gate remains shut.²⁰¹³

Read Gen 3:23–24. Why were Adam and Eve evicted from Eden? What roles do cherubim fulfill? How do we remain shut out of Eden?

Seeking Death but Not Finding It

2) Rev 9:1–6: This passage concerns a future event. Thinking about this vision, do you think Adam and Eve’s exile (Gen 3:17–24) was a punishment or an act of grace? Why?

Our Certificate of Debt

3) Col 2:13–14: In this letter, Paul drew a sharp contrast between his readers’ unbelieving past and their new life in Christ.²⁰¹⁴ He asserted that they had been morally and spiritually dead due to their trespasses and sins.²⁰¹⁵ The phrase “un-circumcision of your flesh” reflects the Jewish view of gentiles as people outside of God’s covenant (Gen 17:12–14). Just like Adam, the Colossians were once alienated from God due to their sinful nature, which manifested itself in deliberate disobedience.²⁰¹⁶

As a result of union with Christ in his death, the physical un-circumcision of believing gentiles signifies neither spiritual death nor future condemnation. God gave us a spiritual circumcision,²⁰¹⁷ one “not made with hands” (Deut 30:6; Col 2:11). Therefore, he has made us alive with the life Jesus received when he rose from the dead (Rom 6:1–11; 1 Cor 15:12–21).²⁰¹⁸

Note that Paul switched from “you” to “us,” saying, “He made you alive together with him, forgiving for us all our sins.” Thus, Paul included Jews who placed their faith in Christ in the same category as gentiles.²⁰¹⁹ All people need God’s forgiving grace, for everyone commits willful disobedience.²⁰²⁰ When encountering the law of God, its author does not grade on a curve: 99.99% obedience counts as failure worthy of a death sentence (Gal 3:10–11).²⁰²¹

However, Christ gives us a clean slate, wiping out the “certificate (*cheirographon*) of death.” In the Greco-Roman era, this consisted of a promissory note penned in one’s own

²⁰¹² Walton, *Genesis*, 232.

²⁰¹³ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 144.

²⁰¹⁴ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 121.

²⁰¹⁵ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 108.

²⁰¹⁶ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 121–2.

²⁰¹⁷ Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 150.

²⁰¹⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 123.

²⁰¹⁹ Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 151.

²⁰²⁰ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 108.

²⁰²¹ Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 151.

handwriting as a proof of indebtedness.²⁰²² Although the word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, it appears frequently in Jewish literature.²⁰²³

The term describes a heavenly record of people’s misdeeds, as depicted in this text (ca. 100 BC–70 AD).²⁰²⁴

“Then I looked, and I saw him with a scroll in his hand. He began to unroll it...I found that all my sins which I had done were written in it, those which I had done from my youth until this day. They were all written upon that scroll of mine without there being a false word in them. If I did not go to visit a sick man or a widow, I found it written down as a shortcoming upon my manuscript. If I did not visit an orphan, it was found written down as a shortcoming on my scroll. A day on which I did not fast (or) pray in the time of prayer I found written down as a failing upon my scroll...so that I threw myself upon my face and prayed before the Lord Almighty, ‘May thy mercy reach me and may thou wipe out my scroll because Thy mercy hath come to be in every place and hath filled every place.’”²⁰²⁵

According to the Mishnah, “[With God] all is given against a pledge and the net is cast over all living. The shop stands open and the shopkeeper gives credit and the account book lies open and the hand writes” (m. Avot 3:20).²⁰²⁶ Paul used a similar metaphor in Philemon 19.²⁰²⁷ Jesus took that certificate of debt, blotted out the record against us as if it were a papyrus note of financial obligation,²⁰²⁸ and nailed it to the tree (Gal 3:13–14, a quotation of Deut 21:23). Paul likely alluded to the act of Pontius Pilate, who affixed the charges against Jesus to his cross (John 19:19–22).²⁰²⁹

God has forgiven all our sins and utterly removed any sign of our indebtedness, for the tense of “having removed it” (*airō*) indicates permanent abolition (Mic 7:18–19).²⁰³⁰ King David made this analogy, “According to how far [it is] from the east to the west, he (God) has made our sins far from us” (Ps 103:12). A person can travel to the northern or the southern ends of the earth, but one can never reach the end of the east or west.

As a result, any attempt to atone for our own sins through ritual or penance remains feebly inept and prevents us from receiving salvation (Gal 5:2–4).²⁰³¹ No longer do we live in bondage. Those who place their trust completely in Christ’s sacrifice to blot out our sins are free.²⁰³²

²⁰²²Eduard Lohse, “χειρόγραφον” (*cheirophon*), *NIDOTTE*, 9:435–6.

²⁰²³Danker, et al., “χειρόγραφον” (*cheirophon*), *BDAG*, 1083.

²⁰²⁴Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 158.

²⁰²⁵James H. Charlesworth, ed., “The Apocalypse of Zephaniah,” in *OTP*, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 7.1–8,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20100330084339/http://userpages.burgoynne.com/bdespain/progress/progzeph.htm>.

²⁰²⁶Student, Gil (ed.), “Ethics of the Fathers: Mishnah Tractate Avot,”

<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/talmud/avot.html#chap3>.

²⁰²⁷Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 158.

²⁰²⁸O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 126.

²⁰²⁹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 158.

²⁰³⁰O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 126. Per NA²⁸, the verb is in the perfect tense. This indicates a past act with consequences extending through the present time into the future.

²⁰³¹Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 150.

²⁰³²Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 110.

Read Col 2:13–14. What has Jesus done for us? How should we respond to what he has accomplished? What do any attempts to atone for our sins or earn our salvation reveal about where we have placed our trust? Why can't such faith save us?

Delivered from this Body of Death

4) Rom 7:14–25: An enormous debate rages in modern New Testament scholarship over the identity of the speaker (“I”) in these verses.²⁰³³ The bulk of the evidence supports that “I” refers to an unbeliever who is still “in the flesh,”²⁰³⁴ participating in the sinful orientation of Adam (Gen 3:6, 17; Rom 5:12–21; Rom 7:5–6).²⁰³⁵ Paul’s contention in Phil 3 indicates that did not speak about his own life here.²⁰³⁶ Therefore, the experience of the person in this passage does not apply to believers, as the passages book-ending this one attest (Rom 6:1–18; Rom 8:1–13).²⁰³⁷

Instead, the apostle adopted the argument of an observant Jew without the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 2:17–29; Gal 5:16–24).²⁰³⁸ This rhetorical device—in which one employs the claim of an imaginary opponent—appears frequently in Greco-Roman literature. The great orator Quintilian (35–100 AD) wrote about this type of rhetoric, which he called “impersonation”:²⁰³⁹ “By this means we display the inner thoughts of our adversaries as though they were talking with themselves (but we shall only carry conviction if we represent them as uttering what they may reasonably be supposed to have had in their minds); or without sacrifice of credibility we may introduce conversations between ourselves and others, or of others among themselves, and put words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise or pity into the mouths of appropriate persons.”²⁰⁴⁰

Significant parallels occur between this passage and the Greek translation of Isa 49:24–50:2.²⁰⁴¹ Israel’s behavior brought shame upon God even while the nation remained in exile (Isa 52:5). That dishonor continued in Paul’s day.²⁰⁴² As the apostle noted in Rom 7:6, those without the Spirit can grasp only the letter of the law, yet the letter without the Spirit kills (2 Cor 3:4–6).²⁰⁴³ The rhetorical and theological importance of the phrase “sold under sin” intensifies the desperation of the speaker. It depicts his plight as not only an internal torment but also as a marker of his status before God.²⁰⁴⁴

²⁰³³John K. Goodrich, “Sold Under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7:14–25,” *NTS* 59, no. 4 (October 2013): 476–95, 476, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-testament-studies/article/sold-under-sin-echoes-of-exile-in-romans-714-25/2D0E378062E63B1D425654FCDA9308B9>.

²⁰³⁴Douglas Moo J., *The Epistle to the Romans*, 237.

²⁰³⁵Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Paul: The Early Christian Worldview of the Letter to the Romans*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 115.

²⁰³⁶John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 55.

²⁰³⁷Goodrich, “Sold under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7:14–25,” 490.

²⁰³⁸Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 124.

²⁰³⁹Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 179–80.

²⁰⁴⁰Quintilian, *Institutes*, 9.2.29–30, <https://archive.org/stream/institutioorator03quinuoft#page/390/mode/2up>.

²⁰⁴¹Goodrich, “Sold under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7:14–25,” 477.

²⁰⁴²Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 607–94, 613.

²⁰⁴³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:356.

²⁰⁴⁴Goodrich, “Sold under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7:14–25,” 477.

Christians continue to be influenced by sin, and we will never completely overcome its influence in this life (2 Tim 2:19–22).²⁰⁴⁵ However, “sold” (*pipraskō*) refers to being taken into slavery (Matt 18:25). Furthermore, Paul earlier used the phrase “under sin” to describe the condition of all those without Christ (Rom 3:9).²⁰⁴⁶ Although many non-Christians genuinely strive to do right (Rom 2:14–15), the unbroken power of sin prevents them from succeeding.²⁰⁴⁷

a) Read Rom 7:14–25. What evidence do we have that Paul was not referring to a struggle he experienced as a believer? How does this understanding undercut any attempts to excuse our sin? Why can’t those who do not have the power of the Holy Spirit within them keep the law? When will our struggle against sin reach its end?

Set Free from Sin’s Dominion

b) Rom 8:1–14: Earlier in this letter, Paul wrote, “All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.” Therefore, we can already live righteously in newness of life (Rom 6:1–7).²⁰⁴⁸ The Spirit within us has stripped sin of its power, freeing us from the dominion it exercises over all those who are still “in the flesh.”²⁰⁴⁹ Since the Mosaic law is spiritual, we can grasp its meaning and obey it only by the aid of the Spirit who inspired it (1 Cor 2:14–16).²⁰⁵⁰

Romans 6–8 elucidates the difference between someone struggling hopelessly against sin and a person who has embraced the once-for-all-time work of Christ. Those in Christ cannot continue to live in a pattern of sinning (1 John 3:1–10). Freedom from condemnation, living by the Spirit, and future participation in the resurrection remain distinct aspects of salvation, yet they inseparably intertwine (Phil 3:7–21; Tit 3:11–14).²⁰⁵¹

This ability to obey fulfills the Old Testament promise of a new covenant in Deut 30:6, Jer 31:31–34, and Ezek 36:25–27. As we internalize God’s commands in our hearts, we must consciously choose to live for God and resist any sinful impulses.²⁰⁵² Since the Lord rescued us from slavery to sin and death—making us slaves of righteousness—we must avoid the tendency to pursue moral transformation by our own power (Rom 6:16–23).²⁰⁵³

When encountering God’s Word, those living by the Spirit do not regard the Lord’s commands as the unwanted imposition of obligations which we must obey. Instead, they provide an opportunity to react joyfully to what God has done for us. Therefore, godly behavior follows as a natural response to our relationship with the Lord.²⁰⁵⁴ Tensions with desires of the flesh remain. Yet, as we live with sensitivity to the leading and power of the Spirit, he enables us to

²⁰⁴⁵ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 454.

²⁰⁴⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 236.

²⁰⁴⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 459.

²⁰⁴⁸ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 130.

²⁰⁴⁹ Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 258.

²⁰⁵⁰ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:356.

²⁰⁵¹ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 125–6.

²⁰⁵² Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 258.

²⁰⁵³ Goodrich, “Sold under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7:14–25,” 495, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-testament-studies/article/sold-under-sin-echoes-of-exile-in-romans-714-25/2D0E378062E63B1D425654FCDA9308B9>.

²⁰⁵⁴ Westerholm, *Understanding Paul: The Early Christian Worldview of the Letter to the Romans*, 123–4.

overcome sinful impulses (Gal 5:13–26). The definition of what constitutes sin becomes more refined as we mature in faith to include thoughts, attitudes, and motives, rather than merely actions. Regrettably, we shall not completely overcome those sins until we live in the presence of Christ (1 John 3:2–3).

Read Rom 8:1–14. What does the Holy Spirit do in us as we fight against temptation and sin? Why can we see God’s commands as a joyful opportunity? Knowing that Christ has paid the penalty for all your sin, how do we react when you fail?

Passed from Death into Life

5) John 5:24–27: Whenever Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you,” he called his audience to listen closely. He was about to say something of utmost importance:²⁰⁵⁵ a proclamation coming from the one wielding the authority to make it.²⁰⁵⁶ In John 5:21, Christ stated, “The Son gives life to those whom he wishes.” Here he asserted, “The one who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not enter into judgment.” The group of people whom Christ chooses completely overlaps with those who receive eternal life (John 6:37–40; Eph 1:3–13).²⁰⁵⁷ In this case, Jesus’s “word” (*logos*) consists of his entire message.²⁰⁵⁸ Since the Father’s word and Christ’s are the same, to embrace one means to accept the other (John 14:6–11).²⁰⁵⁹ One cannot believe what the Father says and reject the Son (John 8:42; John 16:23–32; 1 John 5:1).²⁰⁶⁰ However, the one who hears and believes experiences eternal salvation. Those who belong to Christ have already crossed over from the realm of condemnation and death into life (Col 1:13–14).²⁰⁶¹ Likewise, God’s judgment begins here and now (John 3:16–18).²⁰⁶² Believers leave the courtroom acquitted to participate in the resurrection life (Col 2:13–14).²⁰⁶³ As a result, we can live without fear of judgment at the last day, for Christ guarantees our eternal security (John 10:27–30;²⁰⁶⁴ Rev 20:11–15).²⁰⁶⁵

In this passage, Jesus began to distinguish between what already is and what has not yet occurred.²⁰⁶⁶ By emphatically stating that the raising of the dead “has come and now is,” he pronounced the rousing of the spiritually dead from their slumber.²⁰⁶⁷ To “hear” (*akouō*) in this

²⁰⁵⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 148.

²⁰⁵⁶ Osborne, *Matthew*, 182.

²⁰⁵⁷ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 255–6.

²⁰⁵⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 279–80.

²⁰⁵⁹ Burge, *John*, 178.

²⁰⁶⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 280.

²⁰⁶¹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 76.

²⁰⁶² Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 280.

²⁰⁶³ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 256.

²⁰⁶⁴ Note that per Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd. Ed, 197–8, there are serious text critical problems with translating John 10:29 as, “My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all.” Since the United Bible Society Committee has given the italicized portion a “D” in terms of the likelihood that it represents John’s original words, this verse must not be used to claim that Jesus has been subordinate to the Father throughout eternity.

²⁰⁶⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 280.

²⁰⁶⁶ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 256.

²⁰⁶⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 76–7.

instance means “to give careful attention to,” “listen to,” or “heed.”²⁰⁶⁸ Those who accept the message of Christ foreshadow the resurrection of their bodies by the awakening of their souls (1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–55; 2 Cor 5:1–10; 1 Thess 4:13–18). The one in whom life always existed imparts his own life to his people (John 1:1–4).²⁰⁶⁹

Consequently, the final verdict upon every member of the human race rests in the hands of Christ alone.²⁰⁷⁰ Jesus performs the work which the Old Testament attributes to God (Gen 2:7; Ps 16:8–11; Gen 18:25; Judg 11:27).²⁰⁷¹ Christ qualifies to judge all people not only because he is human but also because the Son of Man “has been given dominion, and honor, and royal authority, for all people and nations and languages shall pay him reverence; his dominion [is] an everlasting dominion” (Dan 7:13–14; Phil 2:5–11).²⁰⁷²

a) Read John 5:24–27. Who is included among the people of God? In what ways do we already experience eternal life? Why is Jesus the one who gives life to those who believe and who judges those who refuse to accept him?

A Second Resurrection

b) John 5:28–29: Despite the benefits of eternal life which we currently enjoy (John 5:24), the best is yet to come. According to the Son of Man, “The hour shall come when all those in their graves shall hear his voice, and the ones who did good things shall come out into resurrection of life.”²⁰⁷³ Contrary to the surface appearance of Christ’s pronouncement, this does not comprise salvation by works. Soon after this, Jesus attested, “This is the work of God: that you should believe in that one he has sent” (John 6:29).²⁰⁷⁴

The Lord raises to life the spiritually dead who heed the call of God and place their faith in Christ for their salvation even while they remain here on earth (Eph 2:1–10). They shall experience a second resurrection after physical death, when Christ ushers in his kingdom in all its glory (Job 19:25–27; 1 Cor 15:42–58; 1 Thess 4:13–18).²⁰⁷⁵ On the other hand, those who have done evil shall rise only to suffer condemnation (Matt 25:31–46; Luke 11:31–32).²⁰⁷⁶ When the day of judgment arrives, Jesus shall reveal the decision each person has made (1 Tim 5:24–25; Heb 9:27–28; Rev 20:11–15).²⁰⁷⁷

Read John 5:28–29. Consider the contrasting fates of those who belong to Christ and those who reject his authority over them. What motivation does this give to us who believe?

²⁰⁶⁸ Danker et al., “ἀκούω” (*akouō*), *BDAG*, 38.

²⁰⁶⁹ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 256–7.

²⁰⁷⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 283.

²⁰⁷¹ Burge, *John*, 178.

²⁰⁷² Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 257.

²⁰⁷³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 77.

²⁰⁷⁴ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 258.

²⁰⁷⁵ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 77.

²⁰⁷⁶ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 285.

²⁰⁷⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 77.

Christ's Resurrected Body

6) Luke 24:31, 35–44: This passage describes two post-resurrection appearances of Christ. What abilities did Jesus exhibit to his disciples? How did he describe himself?

Dead in Adam but Alive in Christ

7) 1 Cor 15:20–23: In this passage, Paul presented an extremely concise story of redemption: by rising from the dead, Jesus vanquished death, the archetypal effect of sin (Gen 3:19; Rom 5:12–21).²⁰⁷⁸ To ensure no one missed his point, the apostle utilized perfect double parallelism, demonstrating that Christ's resurrection makes the raising of those who die in Christ inevitable.²⁰⁷⁹

Paul employed the metaphor of first fruits to depict the similarity and difference between Adam and Jesus (Lev 23:9–14; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18). As the two people who represent humanity, we find our identity and our destiny in one or the other.²⁰⁸⁰ The first Adam caused death to enter the human world.²⁰⁸¹ He represents all his descendants (Rom 5:12–14). Sin has disseminated throughout the earth,²⁰⁸² resulting in death for all, for we share Adam's sinfulness (Rom 3:9–18, 23).²⁰⁸³

Only those of us in Christ find our identity and destiny in Jesus. We await the ultimate restoration of our resurrected bodies (John 5:28–29, 1 Thess 4:13–18). Christ's redeeming work shall continue until he has destroyed the reign of sin and death (1 Cor 3:10–15).²⁰⁸⁴

Read 1 Cor 15:20–23. What does it mean to be “in Adam” versus “in Christ?” How have you experienced those conditions?

Perishable Flesh and Blood

8) 1 Cor 15:50: Paul began this verse with an emphatic, “I say this, brothers [and sisters],”²⁰⁸⁵ followed by two parallel statements for additional stress.²⁰⁸⁶ He wrote, “Flesh (*sarx*) and blood

²⁰⁷⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 763.

²⁰⁷⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 830.

²⁰⁸⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 762–3.

²⁰⁸¹ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 304.

²⁰⁸² Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 298.

²⁰⁸³ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 832.

²⁰⁸⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 763–4.

²⁰⁸⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 828. Note that the masculine plural in Greek can refer either to men or to a mixed group of men and women.

²⁰⁸⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 883.

(*haima*) is not able to inherit the kingdom of God, nor [is] the perishable able to inherit the imperishable.” In this case, “flesh and blood” refers to our physical substance.²⁰⁸⁷ This phrase is particularly apropos given our fleeting, frail lives,²⁰⁸⁸ which are ill-suited for our future existence due to their tendency to death and decay (Isa 40:7–8).²⁰⁸⁹

During the Old Testament era, God’s people focused upon gaining the promised land (Exod 12:23–27; Deut 6:3; Isa 40:1–11). However, Jesus preached that his followers would expand from inhabiting primarily Israel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:45–47; Acts 1:1–11). Only then shall the Lord complete the restoration of the conditions of Eden through the resurrection and renewal of all creation into a new heaven and a new earth (Gen 2:8–14; Matt 24:14; Rev 5:6–10; Rom 8:19–23; Rev 21:1–3).²⁰⁹⁰

a) Read 1 Cor 15:50. Why can’t flesh and blood inherit the kingdom of God? How far shall the Lord’s realm extend?

We Shall Be Changed

b) 1 Cor 15:51–52: In these verses, Paul described how God shall overcome the seemingly insurmountable difficulty inherent with our physicality (1 Cor 15:50).²⁰⁹¹ New Testament authors used the word “mystery” (*mystērion*) to refer to something compelling which God hid in the past but now discloses (1 Cor 4:1; Eph 6:19).²⁰⁹² Yet, such secrets remain unknowable apart from divine revelation (Eph 3:1–5; Col 1:25–27).²⁰⁹³

Paul announced, “All shall not fall asleep in death,²⁰⁹⁴ but all shall be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” The apostle assumed that some of the recipients of his letter would still live when Christ returned.²⁰⁹⁵ In fact, Paul expected Jesus to come back during his lifetime (1 Thess 4:13–18).²⁰⁹⁶ However, for believers who die prior to Christ’s return, death is no more harmful or long-lasting than sleep.²⁰⁹⁷

This passage does not provide a contrast between the corpses of believers and their reanimated bodies. Instead, the emphasis falls upon the difference between our present earthly forms and the glorified bodies like Christ’s which we shall receive at our resurrection (Luke 24:31, 35–44; John 5:28–29; Heb 11:35, 39–40; Heb 12:22–23).²⁰⁹⁸ “In a moment” (*atomōs*) refers to a unit of time so small that it cannot be further divided.²⁰⁹⁹ “The twinkling (*ripē*) of an

²⁰⁸⁷Eduard Schweizer, “σάρξ” (*sarx*), *NIDOTTE* 7:98–151, 128–9.

²⁰⁸⁸Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 828.

²⁰⁸⁹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 885.

²⁰⁹⁰Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 828–9.

²⁰⁹¹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 829.

²⁰⁹²Verbrugge, “μυστηριον” (*mystērion*), *TDNTWA*, 379.

²⁰⁹³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 829.

²⁰⁹⁴Danker et al., “κοιμᾶω” (*koimaō*), *BDAG*, 551.

²⁰⁹⁵Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 310.

²⁰⁹⁶Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed. 885–6.

²⁰⁹⁷Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 310.

²⁰⁹⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 888.

²⁰⁹⁹Danker et al., “ἄτομος” (*atomos*), *BDAG*, 149.

eye” alludes to the rapidity of casting a glance.²¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Jesus shall instantly transform those who have died and those who remain alive when he returns (Isa 29:5–6; Mal 3:1–2; Luke 21:34–36).²¹⁰¹

Musicians played trumpets to announce the coronation of kings (2 Sam 15:10; 1 Ki 1:39), to rally and to communicate with military forces (Judg 3:26–29), to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of the rebuilt temple (Ezra 3:10–11),²¹⁰² to summon the tribes of Israel to gather together, to break camp, and “to be to you a memorial (*zikaron*) before your God” on appointed feast days (Num 10:1–10).²¹⁰³ Israel’s prophets and Jesus recognized the blowing of a trumpet as a sign of the arrival of the end of this age (Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14–17; Isa 27:12–13; Matt 24:30–31).²¹⁰⁴ The metaphor of putting on new garments to describe the change which shall overtake us and the entire creation likely originates from Ps 102:25–28.²¹⁰⁵

Read 1 Cor 15:51–52. What will happen when Christ returns? How is each of the Old Testament uses of a trumpet appropriate to that event?

Victory over Death

c) 1 Cor 15:53–55: Jewish people in Paul’s era would have recognized the concept of being clothed with immortality. According to a Jewish apocryphal book called 1 Enoch (ca. first century BC–first century AD):

“The righteous and elect shall be saved on that day, and they shall never thence forward see the face of the sinners and unrighteous. And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them, and with the Son of Man [Dan 7:13–14] shall they eat and lie down and rise up forever and ever. And the righteous and elect shall have risen from the earth and ceased to be of downcast countenance. And they shall have been clothed with garments of glory, and these shall be the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits: and your garments shall not grow old, nor your glory pass away before the Lord of Spirits.”²¹⁰⁶

²¹⁰⁰ Danker et al., “רִפְעָה” (*ripē*), *BDAG*, 906.

²¹⁰¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 830.

²¹⁰² Victor H. Matthews, “Music and Musical Instruments: Music in the Bible,” *ABD* 4:930–4, 931–3.

²¹⁰³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “זִכָּרוֹן” (*zikaron*), *BDB*, 272,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/272/mode/2up>.

²¹⁰⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *Rev. Ed.*, 886–7.

²¹⁰⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 831.

²¹⁰⁶ R. H. Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 62:13–6, 125,

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n239/mode/2up>.

Similarly, in 2 Enoch 22:8–10, the Lord told the angel Michael to remove Enoch’s earthly apparel and clothe him with garments of God’s glory. This transfigured Enoch into the appearance of one of the Lord’s “glorious ones.”²¹⁰⁷

Thus, to “be clothed imperishable” means to be remade into the likeness of Christ,²¹⁰⁸ receiving the same inheritance which God gave to him (Rom 8:28–30; Gal 3:26–29; Phil 3:20–21).²¹⁰⁹ The second Adam shall irrevocably demolish the fetters of decay and death affixed by the first Adam (Rom 5:12–21; Rom 8:18–23; 1 Cor 15:35–49).²¹¹⁰

This passage contains the only prophecy not yet fulfilled which Paul cites in his letters. In 1 Cor 15:54–55, the apostle appeared to fuse the Greek translations of Isa 25:8 and Hos 13:14 and to substitute “victory” (*nikē*) for “penalty” (*dike*) in the latter verse.²¹¹¹ Thus, he converted these two Old Testament (OT) passages into a taunt of death.²¹¹² On the other hand, a 3rd century AD compilation of four versions of the Greek OT indicates that some translations of Hos 13:14 closely resemble what Paul wrote.²¹¹³ He may have utilized one of those, rather than taking liberty with the Hebrew text.

Due to Jesus’s resurrection, he has forever vanquished the alien, destructive power of death. It “was swallowed up in victory.” In Christ, death has more than met its match (John 5:24–29; Acts 2:22–36; Rom 8:1–11).²¹¹⁴ Jesus has already set the end in motion. Although we live in the “now” rather than in the “not yet,” ultimately death remains powerless over believers.²¹¹⁵ Paul closed this chapter by saying, “Therefore, my beloved brothers [and sisters], be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).²¹¹⁶

As C. S. Lewis preached:

“The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor’s glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it...It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal...it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”²¹¹⁷

²¹⁰⁷W. R. Morfill, trans., *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), 22:8–9, 28, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofsecretsofe00morf/page/28/mode/2up>.

²¹⁰⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 888.

²¹⁰⁹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 832.

²¹¹⁰Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 888.

²¹¹¹Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 310.

²¹¹²Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 888.

²¹¹³Origen, *Hexapla*, (ed. Frederick Field; Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 2: 962 (Hos 13:14), <https://archive.org/stream/origenhexapla02unknuoft/page/962/mode/2up>.

²¹¹⁴Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 833.

²¹¹⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 890.

²¹¹⁶In Koine Greek, the masculine plural term “brothers” can apply to either men or a group of mixed gender.

²¹¹⁷C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” *Theology*, November 1941; 8 June 1942, *The Weight of Glory*, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, [Http://www.verber.com/mark/xian/weight-of-glory.pdf](http://www.verber.com/mark/xian/weight-of-glory.pdf).

Read 1 Cor 15:53–55. How does the promise of victory over death equip you with the hope and courage to carry on in the face of difficulties? Why does the way we treat others matter?

The New Holy City

9) Rev 21:10–11: Most of the book of Revelation consists of the apostle John’s vision of the end of this age and the inauguration of the age to come. In the final two chapters, he depicted the restoration of the conditions of Eden. This renewal shall include the restoration of perfect fellowship between God and his people (Gen 3:6–12; Rev 21:6–7; Rev 22:3–5).²¹¹⁸ The first paradise covered only a small portion of the earth (Gen 2:8–14). However, the future garden temple shall encompass all the new creation (Rev 21:1–5).²¹¹⁹

John wrote, “And he carried me in the Spirit to a mountain great and high.”

Appropriately, this sentence resembles the Greek translation of Ezek 43:5 and of Ezek 40:1–2. In fact, Ezek 40–48 concerns the end-time temple. Other important texts which describe the new Jerusalem upon a high mountain include Isa 2:2–3; Isa 4:4–5; Isa 25:6–9; and Mic 4:1–2.²¹²⁰ Significantly, Ezek 28:14 calls Eden “the holy mountain of God.”²¹²¹

Throughout Jewish theological history, mountains have held a prominent place. The Lord first appeared to Moses at “the mountain of God” (Exod 3:1–2). Later, Moses received the Ten Commandments and the book of the covenant on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:20; Exod 20–24).²¹²² Just before his death, Moses viewed all the promised land from Mount Nebo (Deut 34:1–3). Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah (2 Chron 3:1).

The book of 1 Enoch (2nd century BC–1st century AD) reports that the angel Michael said, “This high mountain which thou hast seen, whose summit is like the throne of God, is his throne, where the Holy Great One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit, when he shall come down to visit the earth with goodness.”²¹²³

According to John, “And he (the angel) showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from the heaven of God.” That event will inaugurate the age to come, an eternity of blessing.²¹²⁴ A close parallel to this prophecy occurs in an apocryphal text,²¹²⁵ which appears to have been written during the same era as Revelation.²¹²⁶ Concerning the Son of Man, it says, “But he shall stand on the top of Mount Zion. And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands” (4 Ezra 13:35–36, RSV).

²¹¹⁸Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 379.

²¹¹⁹G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1106.

²¹²⁰G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1151.

²¹²¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1065.

²¹²²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 389.

²¹²³Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” 25.3, 53, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n167/mode/2up>.

²¹²⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 390.

²¹²⁵David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1153.

²¹²⁶Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes*

(Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013), 1,

[Http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9780800699680Intro.pdf](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9780800699680Intro.pdf). An alternate name for 4 Ezra is 2 Esdras.

The author of Hebrews wrote that Abraham had been “expectantly waiting for...the city whose architect and builder [is] God” (Heb 10:11). As believers, we too seek that city (Heb 13:14). Jewish people of John’s era also had this expectation:

“And so when ye return to the Lord ye shall obtain mercy, and he shall bring you into his sanctuary, and he shall give you peace...And the saints shall rest in Eden, and in the new Jerusalem shall the righteous rejoice, and it shall be unto the glory of God forever. And no longer shall Jerusalem endure desolation, nor Israel be led captive; for the Lord shall be in the midst of it [living amongst men], and the Holy One of Israel shall reign over it.”²¹²⁷

Even John’s Greco-Roman readers would have been familiar with this concept. The fourth century BC philosopher Plato recorded this conversation regarding the ideal city:²¹²⁸ “I understand,” he said; “you mean the city whose establishment we have described, the city whose home is in the ideal; for I think that it can be found nowhere on earth.” “Well,” said I, “perhaps there is a pattern of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen.”²¹²⁹

The new Jerusalem shall descend with a shimmering radiance, reflecting the glorious habitation of the Lord (Isa 60:1–3).²¹³⁰ Elsewhere in Revelation, John described God as “like jasper” (Rev 4:3).²¹³¹ In the first Jerusalem, God limited his presence to the temple, where a barrier prevented full access to him (Exod 25:21–22; Exod 26:21–34; 1 Ki 8:6–13; Heb 9:1–10). However, this shall not occur in the new Jerusalem (Heb 9:11–28; Heb 10:19–25). When the Lord’s people enter that city, God will envelop us in his dazzling presence (Rev 21:22–27).²¹³²

a) Read Rev 21:10–11. How does the depiction here hint at a return to the conditions of Eden? What hope does this give you?

A Return to Paradise

b) Rev 22:1–5, 20: The beginning of Rev 22 continues John’s vision of a return to the conditions of Eden (Gen 1:26–31; Gen 2:8–15).²¹³³ The apostle’s original audience understood this association of the age to come with paradise. According to the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas (80–120 AD), “In the last days [the Son] made a second creation; and the Lord says, ‘See, I make the last things as the first.’”²¹³⁴

²¹²⁷R. H. Charles, trans., “The Testament of Dan,” in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, vol.2 (APOT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 130–1, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/130/mode/2up>.

²¹²⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1153.

²¹²⁹Plato, *Republic* (vol. 5 and 6 of *Plato in Twelve Volumes*; trans. Paul Shorey; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 413–7, <https://archive.org/stream/republicshorey02platuoft#page/414/mode/2up>.

²¹³⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 390.

²¹³¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1153–4.

²¹³²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1066.

²¹³³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 398.

²¹³⁴Kirsopp Lake, trans., “Epistle of Barnabas,” in *Apostolic Fathers* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), 6:13, 361–3, <https://archive.org/stream/theapostolicfath00unknuoft#page/360/mode/2up>.

John wrote, “And [the angel] showed to me a river of living water, shining like crystal.” Several Old Testament passages feature this same imagery, such as Gen 2:10; Joel 3:16–18; Zech 14:8; and Ezek 47:1–9. This purifying living water symbolizes eternal life (Jer 2:13; Rev 22:17),²¹³⁵ for it shall be “coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Just as the vision of Ezek 40–48 depicts God dwelling among his people,²¹³⁶ the living water may also serve as a symbol for the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).²¹³⁷ This harmonizes with the Christian confession from the Council of Toledo in 589 AD. Theologians attending that meeting added the nuance that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to the Nicene Creed (cf. John 14:26; John 16:7, 13–15). Continued insistence that the Son also sent the Spirit divided the Western Church from Eastern Orthodoxy in 1054.²¹³⁸ That rift remains to this day.

Since the new Jerusalem does not contain a temple (Rev 21:22), the throne of God serves as the river’s origin.²¹³⁹ Due to Christ’s death on our behalf, he now shares the place of greatest honor with the Father (Rev 5:8–14).²¹⁴⁰ That the Father and the Son share a single throne points to their unity and joint sovereignty (Ps 110:1; Rev 3:21).²¹⁴¹

Our understanding of the placement of the river in relation to the main street of the new Jerusalem depends upon whether “in the middle of its street” belongs at the end of v. 1 or at the beginning of v. 2 (Rev 22:1–2).²¹⁴² If the river comes from the throne in the middle of the street, we have a situation like that in Ezekiel, where God’s people must ford the river and the trees grow on both sides (Ezek 47:3–4, 12; Isa 35:6–9).²¹⁴³ On the other hand, if we read this passage as, “In the middle of its street on either side of the river was the tree of life,” then the street and river would run parallel to each other.²¹⁴⁴

Just at the river flowing from God’s presence in Ezekiel’s vision caused the trees to bear fruit, so it does in Revelation.²¹⁴⁵ The community of Essenes in Qumran had a similar depiction: “[For Thou didst set] a plantation of cypress, pine, and cedar for thy glory, trees of life beside a mysterious fountain hidden among the trees by the water, and they put out a shoot of the everlasting plant. But before they did so, they took root and sent out their roots to the watercourse that its stem might be open to the living waters and be one with the everlasting spring.”²¹⁴⁶

Since the word “paradise” (*paradeisos*) actually meant a garden,²¹⁴⁷ one would expect the new Jerusalem to resemble a park full of rivers and fruitful trees (Rev 21:1–2).²¹⁴⁸ While Ezek

²¹³⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1103–4.

²¹³⁶Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 110–1.

²¹³⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 398.

²¹³⁸Philip Schaff, “*The Controversy on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*,” in *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 4:476–89, 476, 481, 484, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc4.i.xi.ii.html>.

²¹³⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1177.

²¹⁴⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 398–9.

²¹⁴¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1177.

²¹⁴²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 399. Ancient Greek manuscripts do not contain punctuation.

²¹⁴³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1104.

²¹⁴⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 399.

²¹⁴⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1106–7.

²¹⁴⁶Vermes, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th Ed*, 1QH18, 334, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n331/mode/2up.

²¹⁴⁷Joachim Jeremias, “*παράδεισος*” (*paradeisos*), *TDNT* 5:765–73, 765.

²¹⁴⁸Craig S. Keener, *Revelation* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 500.

47:12 denotes “all kinds of trees,” John appears to refer to a single tree (Rev 2:7).²¹⁴⁹ However, “a tree of life” likely means a group of trees, especially since one tree cannot grow on both sides of a river.²¹⁵⁰ Using a singular to depict many trees occurs regularly in Scripture, such as in Gen 1:11–12 and in Lev 26:20.²¹⁵¹

In keeping with the escalation in the scope and grandeur of the new creation, the one tree in Eden shall become many trees of the same kind.²¹⁵² Perhaps the designation of only one tree placed emphasis upon faith in Christ being the only source of eternal life (John 6:27–29; John 14:6).²¹⁵³ Early Christian artists frequently merged the cross and the tree of life into one symbol.²¹⁵⁴

Greco-Roman descriptions of the afterlife also included pure water and fruit trees.²¹⁵⁵ The first century BC author designated as Pseudo-Plato wrote, “So, then, all whom a good daimon [a lesser deity] inspired in life go to reside in a place of the pious, where the ungrudging seasons teem with fruits of every kind, where fountains of pure water flow, and where all kinds of meadows bloom with flowers.”²¹⁵⁶

John wrote that these trees would be “producing twelve crops, each month yielding its fruit, and the leaves of the tree [are] for the healing of the people-groups.” As in Ezek 47:12, the new creation shall abound with plentiful crops (Amos 9:13–15).²¹⁵⁷ Christians and polytheists associated miraculous fruitfulness with the new age.²¹⁵⁸

In the fanciful *A True Story* (second century AD), Lucian described his visit to the Isle of the Blessed. He wrote, “The country abounds in flowers and plants of all kinds, cultivated and otherwise. The grape-vines yield twelve vintages a year, bearing every month; the pomegranates, apples and other fruit-trees were said to bear thirteen times a year, for in one month...they bear twice.”²¹⁵⁹

This depiction confirms the figurative nature of the eternal realities in John’s vision, for the phases of the moon determine the length of a month. However, according to the apostle, neither the sun nor the moon shall exist in the new creation (Rev 21:23; Rev 22:5).²¹⁶⁰ The number twelve held tremendous significance in the Bible, and especially in Revelation (Rev 7:5–8; Rev 12:1–2; Rev 21:12–16, 21). As with the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, the number twelve symbolized that God would fulfill his promise to redeem his people.²¹⁶¹

One apocryphal author lamented the sin of Adam (Gen 3:17–19), noting, “a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it, because we have lived in unseemly places” (2 Esd 7:123–124). Eating from one tree brought death and exile (Gen 3:22–23). In contrast, partaking of another shall deliver life

²¹⁴⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1177.

²¹⁵⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1106.

²¹⁵¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1177.

²¹⁵²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1106.

²¹⁵³Keener, *Revelation*, 500.

²¹⁵⁴Johannes Schneider, “ξύλον: (*xulon*), *NIDOTTE*, 5:37–41, 40–1.

²¹⁵⁵Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1176.

²¹⁵⁶Pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus*, trans. Jackson P. Hershbell (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 371C, 47.

²¹⁵⁷Keener, *Revelation*, 500.

²¹⁵⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1178.

²¹⁵⁹Lucian, “*A True Story*,” in *Works, Vol. 1* (trans. A. M. Harmon; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 311, 315, <https://archive.org/stream/lucianha01luciuoft#page/314/mode/2up>.

²¹⁶⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1108.

²¹⁶¹Ryken et al., “Twelve” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 900–1.

and a return to paradise.²¹⁶² Therefore, this healing fruit symbolizes our redemption in Christ (Col 1:3–12), which shall come into all its fullness when he returns (Rev 2:7).²¹⁶³

Note the close parallels between the visions of Ezekiel, the apostle John, and 1 Enoch: “And from thence I went to another place of the earth, and he showed me a mountain range of fire which burnt day and night. And I went beyond it and saw seven magnificent mountains all differing each from the other, and the stones (thereof) were magnificent and beautiful...And the seventh mountain was in the midst of these, and it excelled them in height, resembling the seat of a throne: and fragrant trees encircled the throne. And amongst them a tree such as I had never yet smelt, neither was any amongst them nor were others like it: it had a fragrance beyond all fragrance, and its leaves and blooms and wood wither not for ever: and its fruit is beautiful, and its fruit resembles the dates of a palm.

“Then I said, ‘How beautiful is this tree, and fragrant, and its leaves are fair, and its blooms very delightful in appearance.’ Then answered Michael, one of the holy and honored angels who was with me and was their leader. And he said unto me...’This high mountain which thou hast seen, whose summit is like the throne of God, is his throne, where the Holy Great One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit, when he shall come down to visit the earth with goodness. And as for this fragrant tree no mortal is permitted to touch it till the great judgment, when he shall take vengeance on all and bring (everything) to its consummation forever. It shall then be given to the righteous and holy. Its fruit shall be for food to the elect: it shall be transplanted to the holy place, to the temple of the Lord, the Eternal King.

“‘Then shall they rejoice with joy and be glad, and into the holy place shall they enter; and its fragrance shall be in their bones, and they shall live a long life on earth, such as thy fathers lived: and in their days shall no sorrow or plague or torment or calamity touch them.’ Then blessed I the God of Glory, the Eternal King, who hath prepared such things for the righteous, and hath created them and promised to give to them. And I went from thence to the middle of the earth, and I saw a blessed place in which there were trees with branches abiding and blooming [of a dismembered tree]. And there I saw a holy mountain, and underneath the mountain to the east there was a stream.”²¹⁶⁴

Since the new creation shall be free of death and suffering, the healing from the tree of life must consist of a once for-all-time event. Nevertheless, the tree shall continually produce fruit (Rev 7:16–17; Rev 21:3–4).²¹⁶⁵

Where Adam failed miserably, Jesus proved victorious (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22; Heb 4:14–16). As a result, the glorious temple which the Lord began to create in Eden shall reach its completion in the new creation when the people of God fill the earth (Hab 2:14).²¹⁶⁶ Then we shall experience the intimate communion with God which he intended from the beginning (Exod 28:36–38).²¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, while we remain in this age, we can enter the life of the Trinity by the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13–15; Rom 8:9–17, 26–30). As a result, we experience transformed lives, which lead us to actively seek fellowship with God, pursue justice for our neighbors and the world around us, and spread the good news of the gospel (Eph 1:3–23; Matt

²¹⁶²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 399.

²¹⁶³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1108.

²¹⁶⁴Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” 24–6, 51–4,

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n165/mode/2up>.

²¹⁶⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1108.

²¹⁶⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1111.

²¹⁶⁷Joachim Jeremias, “παράδεισος” (*paradeisos*), *TDNT* 5:765–73, 765.

22:34–40; Matt 28:18–20). As we devote ourselves to these aspects of life, not only do we experience the unity of the Trinity, we anticipate the age to come.²¹⁶⁸

The theologian John Cassian (ca. 360–435 AD) wrote:

“No one will arrive at the fullness of this measure in the world to come except the person who has reflected on it and been initiated in the present and who has tasted it while still living in this world; who, having been designated a most precious member of Christ, possesses in this flesh the pledge of that union through which he is able to be joined to Christ’s body; who desires only one thing, thirsts for one thing, and always directs not only every deed but even every thought to this one thing, so that he may already possess in the present what has been pledged him and what is spoken of with regard to the blessed way of life of the holy in the future—that is, that ‘God may be all in all’ to him.”²¹⁶⁹

Read Rev 22:1–5, 20. What parallels do you see between the visions of Ezekiel, 1 Enoch, and John? How does the promise of the new creation encourage you as you seek to extend God’s kingdom? In what ways do you experience the fellowship of the Trinity?

²¹⁶⁸Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 230–1.

²¹⁶⁹Cassian John, Boniface Ramsey, trans., in *John Cassian: The Conferences* (ACW; Costa Mesa, CA: Paulist Press, 1997), 253–4.

An Overview of Genesis 1–3

Imagine that slavery is all that you, your parents, and your grandparents remember. While living in the New Kingdom of Egypt, you learned that the sun god Re spoke the god Ptah—his Word—into being as the firstborn of all creation. Then Ptah created the rest of the gods and the entire universe out of nothing.²¹⁷⁰

You have heard the Babylonians tell another part of the story. They say that a problem arose: the gods got tired of having to work to provide food for themselves. At that time, the god Kingu chose to align himself with Tiamat, the cosmic sea monster. The hero Marduk split her in two, separating the vapors in the sky from the waters of the seas. Then he executed Kingu and mixed his blood with dirt to create the first people to do the gods' work.²¹⁷¹

Since people in Egypt worship the pharaoh Ramesses II as a god,²¹⁷² you had always known that you existed solely to labor as his slave. About a year ago, a man named Moses emerged from the desert to confront the pharaoh. He claimed that the God of your ancestors had sent him to deliver you from the horrors of Egyptian servitude (Exod 3:7–9; Exod 4:29–31). You watched in awe as the one who called himself “I AM” (Exod 3:14) used Moses to bring judgment upon the gods and goddesses of Egypt: those of the Nile (Exod 7:20–21), the sun (Exod 10:21–23), agriculture (Exod 9:22–26, 31–32), and cattle (Exod 9:1–7).

I AM did not spare even the future god of Egypt, the son of Ramesses the Great (Exod 12:21–30). Amazingly, the region where your people lived remained untouched by most of these plagues. After Ramesses freed you from slavery, he changed his mind, sending chariots to prevent your escape. I AM split the Sea of Reeds so that you could walk through and then destroyed Pharaoh's army as it followed you (Exod 14).

Soon after that, when I AM made a covenant with your nation on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:3–8), Moses called everyone together to learn the history of God's dealings with your ancestors. While much of what you heard sounded like what you had been taught in Egypt, there were shocking differences. This is what you learned:

Moses began by teaching, “In the beginning of God's creating of the heavens and the earth, the earth had been formless and empty.” The cosmos arose from nothing, coming into being by the spoken word of God. Order emerged from disorder. Unlike in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) creation accounts, God did not need to restrain forces of chaos or any personification of evil.²¹⁷³

Even the deep waters obeyed the Lord's commands, for the Spirit of God hovered over them as a witness of and participant in this divine activity. During the first through third days, God created habitations and assigned functions to them.²¹⁷⁴ Thus, he demonstrated his power and authority over the universe.²¹⁷⁵ First, he created light and separated it from darkness, establishing periods of time.²¹⁷⁶ Then the Lord split the primordial waters into vapor in the heavens above

²¹⁷⁰John A. Wilson, trans., “Theology of Memphis,” in *ANET*, lines 53–4, 4–6.

²¹⁷¹E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 4.135–40, 67.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

²¹⁷²W. F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, trans., “The Amarna Letters, RA XIX,” in *ANET*, lines 1–10, 485.

<https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n283/mode/2up>.

²¹⁷³John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 73.

²¹⁷⁴Meredith G. Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *PSCF* 48, no. 1 (March 1996): 2–15.

<http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>.

²¹⁷⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 71–2.

²¹⁷⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 79.

and water in the seas below. He collected the waters below together so that dry land appeared and produced various types of vegetation. This set the framework necessary for living creatures to survive.²¹⁷⁷

In a second set of three days, God created the inhabitants of the cosmos which he formed on the first triad of days. On the fourth day, God spoke to generate the luminaries of the heavens, paralleling the creation of light on the first day. These lights enabled vision and set the secular and religious calendars. People tracked star movement to synchronize the lunar and the solar calendars. In contrast to the ANE focus upon worshiping these lights as gods, the Lord created them to serve.

Day five harmonizes with day two. On the second day, God separated the sky from the waters. Then on the fifth day, God created the inhabitants of those environments: aquatic creatures and birds.²¹⁷⁸ Among these were “the great sea monsters.”²¹⁷⁹ You previously associated these with the forces of anarchy who ruled the cosmic waters in ANE creation epics.²¹⁸⁰ However, these monsters were not chaotic rivals of God but merely creatures whom he made,²¹⁸¹ living under their his command.²¹⁸² God saw that it was good, and he blessed them.

On the sixth day, God brought forth living creatures from the earth. These animals fell into three categories: domestic animals, prey, and predators. Together, the Lord described them as, “every living thing which moves on the earth.” By constructing plants and creatures which self-propagate “according to their kind,” the Creator produced creators.²¹⁸³

Most importantly, you discovered that the gods did not make your ancestors from the blood of a rebellious god. Instead, the one who spoke the entire universe into being made you in his image.²¹⁸⁴ People believed that an image placed in a temple did the work of a god and wielded his authority.²¹⁸⁵ Therefore, God’s intention for you—as his image-bearer—is to serve as his representative.²¹⁸⁶ You can fulfill his purposes through your faithful stewardship in tending, guarding, and governing the earth while displaying the Lord’s glory to other people and extending his kingdom among them.²¹⁸⁷

After creating men and women in his own image, God rested from his work of creating the cosmos as his temple. Therefore, he provided us with an example to follow by ceasing from his labor on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the Lord prepared an eternal place of rest for his people.

The narrative of Gen 2:4–24 reiterated the sixth day of creation from a more intimate perspective: God’s provision for and relationship with those created in his image. After forming Adam from the ground and breathing a living soul into him, the Lord placed him into a well-watered, luxuriant garden to perform the priestly function of serving, working, cultivating, and

²¹⁷⁷Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 20.

²¹⁷⁸Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 129.

²¹⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²¹⁸⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 126–7.

²¹⁸¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

²¹⁸²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3* (ed. Martin Rüter, Ilse Tödt, and John W. De Gruchy; trans. Douglas Stephen Bax; DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 58.

²¹⁸³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

²¹⁸⁴“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 6.1–36, 68.

²¹⁸⁵James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 46, <http://sacred-texts.com/egy/rtae/rtae05.htm>.

²¹⁸⁶Ian Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis.” *TynBul* 46, no. 2 (November 1995): 315–36, 317–9, http://tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

²¹⁸⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

keeping it. This beautiful park full of trees produced wonderful food, including the tree of life which stood at its center. God gave Adam freedom to eat from any of these.

However, he made one prohibition. “The Lord God laid charge upon the man, saying, ‘From all of the trees of the garden you are able to eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, because in the day you eat it, you shall surely die.’” God expected Adam to acquire wisdom through their relationship, rather than seeking it on his own.

Recognizing that the man should not be alone, the Lord sent a parade of animals he had created to Adam. While exercising the authority of an image-bearer of God by naming each animal,²¹⁸⁸ Adam reached a devastating conclusion: every animals had its partner, but an equal and adequate helper did not exist for him. Now that God had awakened Adam’s longing, the Lord placed him into a very deep, supernatural sleep. God took raw material—not from the ground—but from Adam’s side to fashion the first woman. Upon awakening, the man recognized his true counterpart and enthusiastically uttered a covenant of unalterable loyalty:

This, this time,
[is] bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called woman,
for from man was taken this!²¹⁸⁹

In harmonious intimacy, the two became one flesh. Despite their nakedness, they knew no shame.

Adam, as the representative for all of humanity, underwent a time of probation to determine whether he would accept his position of power under God, his emperor. The Lord accomplished this by presenting him with a seemingly arbitrary command.²¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the serpent sought to thwart the expansion of the kingdom of God through the disqualification of the Lord’s vice-regents.²¹⁹¹

In contrast to the man and woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*), the snake was shrewd (*arum*).²¹⁹² Aside from the fact that the serpent spoke,²¹⁹³ the text gives no hint that the snake was anything more than an animal made by God.²¹⁹⁴ Moses did not state why the serpent addressed Eve,²¹⁹⁵ why she misunderstood what the Lord had said, or why Adam failed to assist her in countering the snake’s assertions.²¹⁹⁶ By twisting God’s words, the serpent snared Eve into allying herself with him in her quest for divine wisdom, causing her to covet the forbidden fruit.

Events cascaded rapidly: “And she took of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’s] fruit, and she ate, and she gave [it] also to her husband [who was] with her, and he ate.” Each fell because of the other, in unity yet carrying the entire burden of guilt. In one respect the serpent

²¹⁸⁸Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 75.

²¹⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70. Translation by Wenham.

²¹⁹⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

²¹⁹¹Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (IVPBBOT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen 3:1, electronic ed.

²¹⁹²Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

²¹⁹³Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

²¹⁹⁴Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

²¹⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

²¹⁹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

told the truth. Their eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery. They were naked!²¹⁹⁷ With their innocence replaced by shame, they quickly made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves.

Well-aware of what they had done, the Lord came to Eden in “the wind of the storm.”²¹⁹⁸ Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment and went into hiding.²¹⁹⁹ In his attempt to evade answering God’s question, Adam immediately indicted himself by declaring that he knew he of his nudity. The divisive effects of sin quickly emerged. Adam blamed Eve as well as the Lord for creating her. Eve admitted that she was deceived and pointed to the serpent. Sin had obliterated the harmony between God and humanity, men and women, and people with animals.²²⁰⁰

Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither interrogated the serpent nor allowed him an opportunity to explain his behavior.²²⁰¹ Instead, the one who was crafty (*arum*) became cursed (*arur*).²²⁰² By being forced to crawl on his belly and eat dust, God reined in the snake’s aggression and hinted at his demise.²²⁰³ The serpent and his seed would engage in battle with the seed of the woman,²²⁰⁴ corporately and, eventually, in single combat.²²⁰⁵ Both champions would be mortally wounded.

In the aftermath of eating the forbidden fruit, the arrival of the seed which Eve would conceive would cause her agony.²²⁰⁶ In addition, she would long for the intimate, equal relationship she had previously experienced with her husband. Instead, Adam would rule over her. After informing Eve of the results of her sin, the Lord shifted his focus to Adam.

Since Adam had disobeyed the Lord and eaten of the forbidden fruit, God cursed the ground. He made it dry and unfruitful by withholding his blessing. Thus, the toil behind the preparation of every meal reminded Adam and Eve of their guilt.²²⁰⁷ Creation fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair.²²⁰⁸ In a great reversal, the ground from which God created Adam would resist his efforts and eventually swallow him into itself.²²⁰⁹

After the Lord completed his decrees of judgment, Adam named his wife as both a sign of his new rule over her and a re-inauguration of their covenant of marriage.²²¹⁰ By calling her “Eve”—which means “the mother of all the living”—Adam spoke in faith that God’s promise of progeny would come to pass.²²¹¹ Despite the Lord’s pronouncement of death, Adam named his wife in terms of life.²²¹²

Finally, God clothed the couple with leather tunics. This signified that he would not

²¹⁹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

²¹⁹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

²¹⁹⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:8.

²²⁰⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

²²⁰¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

²²⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

²²⁰³Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

²²⁰⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

²²⁰⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

²²⁰⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

²²⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

²²⁰⁸Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

²²⁰⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

²²¹⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 72.

²²¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 205–7.

²²¹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 216.

disinherit them but instead would graciously reinstate his covenant with humanity.²²¹³ Clothing also provided protection from the thorns and thistles which awaited Adam and Eve as they cultivated the ground which the Lord cursed.

The Tree of Life stood at the center of both the garden of Eden and the story of creation.²²¹⁴ By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the former priests of Eden became intruders.²²¹⁵ Lest Adam and Eve stretch out their hands to take from the tree of life, the Lord made a preemptive strike against any further desire of theirs to become like God.²²¹⁶ He drove them out of the only home they had ever known.²²¹⁷

God placed new protectors at the entrance to the garden: a pair of cherubim and “the flame of a sword turning this way and that.” Consequently, all of us have been born outside of Eden, with our natural inclinations and thoughts confirming our status as outsiders.²²¹⁸ No longer do we automatically enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord.²²¹⁹

Concluding Thoughts

Take some time to reflect upon what you have learned during this Bible study and discuss these questions within your group:

a) **What new insights** have you gained into the process of Creation/Covenant, Sin, Exile, and Restoration as revealed in Scripture?²²²⁰

b) **How has this information affected** your relationship with God, with other people, and with creation?

²²¹³ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

²²¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 141.

²²¹⁵ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 137.

²²¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

²²¹⁷ Holladay, “shalakh,” *CHALOT*, 372.

²²¹⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 232.

²²¹⁹ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 132.

²²²⁰ “The History of Redemption” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, 254–308, 257.