

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.¹

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.²

Since people in Egypt worship the pharaoh Ramesses II as a god,³ 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.⁴

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.⁵ Thus, he demonstrated his power and authority over the universe.⁶ First, he created light and separated it from darkness, establishing periods of time.⁷ Then the Lord split the primordial waters into vapor in the heavens above and

¹John A. Wilson, trans., “Theology of Memphis,” in *ANET*, lines 53–4, 4–6.

²E. 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.

³W. 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>.

⁴John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 73.

⁵Meredith 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>.

⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 71–2.

⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 79.

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.⁸

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.⁹ Among these were “the great sea monsters.”¹⁰ You previously associated these with the forces of anarchy who ruled the cosmic waters in ANE creation epics.¹¹ However, these monsters were not chaotic rivals of God but merely creatures whom he made,¹² living under their his command.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ People believed that an image placed in a temple did the work of a god and wielded his authority.¹⁶ Therefore, God’s intention for you—as his image-bearer—is to serve as his representative.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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 keeping it. This beautiful park full of trees produced wonderful food, including the tree of life

⁸Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 20.

⁹Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 129.

¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

¹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 126–7.

¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

¹³Dietrich 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.

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

¹⁵“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 6.1–36, 68.

¹⁶James 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>.

¹⁷Ian 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.

¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

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,¹⁹ 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!²⁰

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.²¹ Meanwhile, the serpent sought to thwart the expansion of the kingdom of God through the disqualification of the Lord’s vice-regents.²²

In contrast to the man and woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*), the snake was shrewd (*arum*).²³ Aside from the fact that the serpent spoke,²⁴ the text gives no hint that the snake was anything more than an animal made by God.²⁵ Moses did not state why the serpent addressed Eve,²⁶ why she misunderstood what the Lord had said, or why Adam failed to assist her in countering the snake’s assertions.²⁷ 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

¹⁹Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 75.

²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70. Translation by Wenham.

²¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

²²Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (IVPBBCOT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen 3:1, electronic ed.

²³Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

²⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

²⁵Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

told the truth. Their eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery. They were naked!²⁸ 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.”²⁹ Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment and went into hiding.³⁰ 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.³¹

Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither interrogated the serpent nor allowed him an opportunity to explain his behavior.³² Instead, the one who was crafty (*arum*) became cursed (*arur*).³³ By being forced to crawl on his belly and eat dust, God reined in the snake’s aggression and hinted at his demise.³⁴ The serpent and his seed would engage in battle with the seed of the woman,³⁵ corporately and, eventually, in single combat.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ Creation fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair.³⁹ In a great reversal, the ground from which God created Adam would resist his efforts and eventually swallow him into itself.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ 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.⁴² Despite the Lord’s pronouncement of death, Adam named his wife in terms of life.⁴³

Finally, God clothed the couple with leather tunics. This signified that he would not

²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

²⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:8.

³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

³⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

³⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

³⁹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

⁴¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 72.

⁴²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 205–7.

⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 216.

disinherit them but instead would graciously reinstate his covenant with humanity.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the former priests of Eden became intruders.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ He drove them out of the only home they had ever known.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹ No longer do we automatically enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 141.

⁴⁶ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 137.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

⁴⁸ Holladay, “shalakh,” *CHALOT*, 372.

⁴⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 232.

⁵⁰ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 132.

Chapter 1: A Tale of Two Brothers (Genesis 4:1–16)

Just as with the earlier sections in Genesis, Chapter 4 exhibits awareness of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) traditions but often assesses entirely different interpretations to them. The over-arching theme of Gen 4–11 depicts the horrific results of Adam and Eve’s disobedience (Gen 3).⁵¹ Furthermore, striking parallels of theme and structure occur between the story of Cain and Abel and that of their parents.⁵² Rather than the fall of humanity via the infiltration of sin, here Moses depicted the fall of the family due to the alienation which sin produces.⁵³

Genesis characteristically traces the human race’s descent from Adam by a series of divisions in the family tree (eg. Gen 5; Gen 10).⁵⁴ As frequently occurs in Genesis, here God granted the favor due to the firstborn son to the younger brother. The text always delivers an explanation for this change in status (Gen 4:4–5; Gen 17:18–21; Gen 25:21–26; Gen 49:1–12, 22–26).⁵⁵ Since the older brothers remained the firstborn, genealogies in Genesis list the descendants of the line falling outside the Lord’s blessing prior to the line of the son treated as the primary heir. Ishmael and Isaac provide a prime example in Gen 25:12–23.⁵⁶ These older brothers experienced life with a lesser share of God’s blessing.⁵⁷

Eve Acquires a Man

1) Gen 4:1: Moses began Gen 4 by writing, “And the man had known (*yada*) his wife,”⁵⁸ a Hebrew idiom for a sexual relationship.⁵⁹ The verb indicates that the couple experienced a deep personal involvement culminating in a hallowed act,⁶⁰ an intimate communion they received through their physical senses.⁶¹ More than fulfilling a hormonal desire, this refers to a non-exploitative, profound understanding of the other.⁶²

Hebrew authors never employed this verb when describing the mating of animals, which comprises an instinctual behavior.⁶³ When human sexuality did not involve reciprocal enjoyment but reproduction or lust, Scripture instead employs the phrases “go into” (*bo*) (Gen 16:2; Ruth

⁵¹Desmond T. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 117.

⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 96.

⁵³Walton, *Genesis*, 273.

⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 96–7.

⁵⁵Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed*, 105.

⁵⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 96–7.

⁵⁷ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 117.

⁵⁸John C. Collins, “The Wayiqqtol as ‘Pluperfect’: When and Why,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1995): 117–40, 135. Wherever Scripture appears in quotation marks, this represents my translation from the Hebrew (*BHS*) or Greek (*NA²⁸*) text. Since both languages utilize word order for emphasis, with the most important points coming first, I maintain the original word order wherever feasible.

⁵⁹William L. Holladay, “יָדָה” (*yada*), *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (CHALOT)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 128–9.

⁶⁰Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 96.

⁶¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100–1.

⁶²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 220.

⁶³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

4:5, 13)⁶⁴ or “lie with” (*shakav*) (Gen 39:7–12; 2 Sam 11:4).⁶⁵ This verb exonerates Bathsheba as an unwilling participant in David’s sin.⁶⁶

Whether the “knowing” between Adam and Eve occurred prior to or after the fall cannot be determined from the text.⁶⁷ The remainder of verse one says, “and she conceived and gave birth to Cain (*Qayin*), and she said, ‘I have acquired (*qaniti*) a man, the Lord.’”⁶⁸

The Old Testament often contains wordplay between a person’s name and birth circumstances (e.g. Gen 25:24–26; Gen 29:31–35; Gen 38:27–30). Although the verb associated with Cain’s name occasionally carries the nuance “I created,” far more often the word means “I gained, acquired, or purchased.”⁶⁹ In this context, either sense of the word fits.⁷⁰ While Gen 1–3 focused upon God creating,⁷¹ other Ancient Near Eastern cultures attest names such as “I acquired him from the gods.”

Scholars debate whether Eve regarded herself as creating with God, or whether she saw Cain as one whom the Lord provided for her.⁷² Attempting to acquire for one’s own the blessings which God can give does occur repeatedly in Genesis (Cf. Gen 3:1–7; Gen 16:1–2; Gen 17:15–21). This lends credence to the notion that Eve’s words reflect her belief that she replicated what the Lord had done by creating a man.⁷³

On the other hand, God frequently promised “to be with” the patriarchs to help them (Gen 21:20; Gen 26:3, 24; Gen 28:15; Gen 31:3; and Gen 39:2). Thus, Eve may have exclaimed, “I have acquired a man with the [help of the] Lord.” Possibly, she erroneously thought Cain would function as the promised one who would defeat the serpent (Cf. Gen 3:15).⁷⁴ Unfortunately, her proclamation remains too ambiguous for us to confidently choose one option over the other.⁷⁵

Note that Eve—not Adam—performed the authoritative act of naming her son (Gen 3:20).⁷⁶ By calling him a “man” rather than a baby, she ironically alluded to Adam’s statement that “she will be called woman because from man she was taken” (Gen 2:23). Now a man had come from a woman. As a result, both genders must depend upon each other and ultimately upon God (1 Cor 11:11–12).⁷⁷

⁶⁴Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “בֹּשֶׁט׃” (*bo*), *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 98.

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/98/mode/2up>.

⁶⁵ Holladay, “שָׁכַב” (*shakav*), *CHALOT*, 368.

⁶⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 220.

⁶⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 260.

⁶⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 221.

⁶⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “קָנָה” (*qanah*), *BDB*, 888–9,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/888/mode/2up>.

⁷⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 261.

⁷¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 101.

⁷² Walton, *Genesis*, 261.

⁷³John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 111.

⁷⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 221.

⁷⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 102.

⁷⁶Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (IVPBBCOT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen 3:20.

⁷⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

Read Gen 4:1. How does the term “to know” reflect more than a physical action? What are the two possibilities regarding Eve’s view of Cain’s birth? How are men and women dependent upon each other? In what ways do you express your reliance on God?

It Is Good Not to Touch

Please note that this section carries a trigger warning for very disturbing historical information.

2) 1 Cor 7:1–5: Paul began this section by writing, “It is good for a man a woman not to touch” (*haptō*), which appears to contradict what he stated in the very next verses. While commonly considered a euphemism for sexual intercourse,⁷⁸ the term “to touch” did not refer to a married couple enjoying sex together. Instead, the phrase describes what a man did to the object of his desire: penetrating another for his sexual gratification.⁷⁹

Concerning Sarah’s experience in Gen 12:12–20, the Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote:

“Now, as soon as he came into Egypt, it happened to Abram as he supposed it would; for the fame of his wife's beauty was greatly talked of; for which reason Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, would not be satisfied with what was reported of her, but would needs see her himself, and was preparing to enjoy (*haptō*) her; but God put a stop to his unjust inclinations, by sending upon him a distemper, and a sedition against his government. And when he inquired of the priests how he might be freed from these calamities, they told him that this his miserable condition was derived from the wrath of God, upon account of his inclinations to abuse the stranger's wife.”⁸⁰

In 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.⁸¹

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.”⁸²

⁷⁸Roy E. Ciampa, “Revisiting the Euphemism in 1 Corinthians 7.1,” *JSNT* 31, no. 3 (2009): 325–38, 325.

⁷⁹Ciampa, “Revisiting the Euphemism in 1 Corinthians 7.1,” 327.

⁸⁰Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (trans. William Whiston; The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 1.163, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8>.

⁸¹Ciampa, “Revisiting the Euphemism in 1 Corinthians 7.1,” 326.

⁸²Demosthenes, “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,

Greco-Romans expected wives to assent to their husband’s extramarital affairs with good will.⁸³ In contrast, Paul wrote, “The wife over her own body does not have authority, but the husband [does]. And likewise, the husband also over his own body does not have authority, but the wife [does].”

Typically, when women reached 14–15 years of age, they married men close to thirty years old.⁸⁴ The sexual abuse of slaves occurred so rampantly that Jewish rabbis ruled that female slaves must have been released by the age of three in order to marry as virgins. Otherwise, they were “amenable to the accusation of non-virginity” (*m. Ketuboth* 1:2)⁸⁵ 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.

Within the Jewish community, rabbis applied the obligations of a man to a slave whom he married to both partners (Exod 21:10–11). They reasoned that if slaves and war captives had material and conjugal rights, then so should all men and women (*m. Ketuboth* 5:6–8).⁸⁶ However, Paul went beyond legalistic accounting to a focus on pleasing each other.⁸⁷

Consequently, the idea that wives possessed jurisdiction over their husbands’ bodies was revolutionary in Paul’s time.⁸⁸ Few Greco-Romans could have conceived that a man’s body belonged to his wife.⁸⁹ This implied a full right of both partners to initiate sex within marriage, as well as an expectation of monogamy.⁹⁰

Paul then wrote, “Do not continuously deprive one another, except when agreeing for a time, in order to devote yourselves to prayer, and may again be together in order that Satan might not tempt you on account of your lack of self-control.” Many translations omit that Paul employed a verb form (present active imperative) to forbid a continual or habitual depriving one’s spouse of sexual relations, not an occasional refusal.

Imagine a thirty-year old man, accustomed to satisfying his sexual desire at will, suddenly being expected to limit himself to his teenage wife. Making an important distinction, Paul wrote of an obligation to give—not the license to demand—physical love.⁹¹ He expected both marriage partners to concentrate upon how to please each other in their sexual relationship and in other areas of life (1 Cor 7:32–34).

Read 1 Cor 7:1–5. Why was Paul’s command revolutionary in his era? What does “having authority over” each other’s bodies mean? How does this apply today?

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0080%3Aspeech%3D59%3Asection%3D122>.

⁸³Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

⁸⁴S. M. Baugh, “Cultic Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” *JETS* 42, no. 3 (1999): 443–60, 456, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/42/42-3/42-3-pp443-460_JETS.pdf.

⁸⁵ *Mishnah*, Ketubot 1:1–3, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm120.htm>.

⁸⁶ Instone-Brewer, David, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 196, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm124.htm>.

⁸⁷David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 196.

⁸⁸Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 280–1.

⁸⁹Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 175.

⁹⁰Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 311.

⁹¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 280–1.

A Servant of the Ground and a Shepherd of a Flock

3) Gen 4:2–5: The story of Cain and Abel forms an A-B-C-B-A chiasm, with the first and fifth scene paralleling each other (Cf. Gen 4:2b–5 with Gen 4:15–16), as do the second and fourth (Cf. Gen 4:6–7 with Gen 4:9–14). Scene three, in which Cain murders his brother, gains the central focus (Gen 4:8).⁹²

In God’s words of judgment against the snake after the fall, he declared that people would align themselves with the serpent or with the Lord as his “seed” (Gen 3:14–15). Those who opposed the Lord’s reign over them would pit themselves against the faithful followers of God. The battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman began here.⁹³

Moses opened verse two by writing, “She again bore, his brother Abel.” In contrast with the birth of Cain (Gen 4:1), Eve made no recorded comment regarding the name of her second son. This may be because its significance was—in retrospect—too painful.⁹⁴ “Abel” means “vapor, breath, futility,”⁹⁵ an appropriately ominous moniker given the fleeting nature of his life (Ps 144:4; Job 7:7, 16; Ecc 1:2–3).⁹⁶

In agrarian societies like Israel’s (Deut 21:15–17), the firstborn son enjoyed preeminence over his brothers (Gen 49:3; Ps 89:27).⁹⁷ However, as occurs throughout Genesis, here the principle of favoritism failed to hold true.⁹⁸ God frequently chose the younger brother (Gen 21:8–9; Gen 25:21–26; Gen 48:17–20; Gen 49:1–3, 22–26).⁹⁹

Despite the fall, both of Adam’s sons worked to fulfill the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26–28 by stewarding the planet’s natural resources.¹⁰⁰ Cain continued in the profession of his father, as “a servant of the ground” (Gen 2:15; Gen 3:23), while Abel shepherded domesticated animals. This work took place far from Eden’s pleasures (Gen 3:24).¹⁰¹

But God never restricted his presence to Eden.¹⁰² Therefore, after an indefinite amount of time,¹⁰³ Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. Moses’s original readers would have likened this to a vassal king bringing tribute as a sign of deference and respect to his suzerain overlord (2 Ki 17:3–4).¹⁰⁴

A king who reigned in an era close to Moses’s wrote this to his underling:¹⁰⁵
 “Aziras was the grandfather of you, Duppi-Tessub. He rebelled against my father but submitted again to my father...As he was bound by treaty, he remained bound by treaty. As my father fought against his enemies, in the same manner fought Aziras. Aziras remained loyal toward my

⁹² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 99.

⁹³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

⁹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 102.

⁹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “הָבֵל” (*hebel*), *BDB*, 210–1, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/210/mode/2up>.

⁹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 102.

⁹⁷ Wilhelm Michaelis, “πρωτοτοκος” (*prōtotokos*), *TDNT* 6:871–82, 871.

⁹⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

⁹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 102.

¹⁰⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 222.

¹⁰² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 222.

¹⁰³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 103.

¹⁰⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 262.

¹⁰⁵ Pritchard, James B., ed., *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd. ed. (ANET) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 203, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n227/mode/2up.

father [as his overlord] and did not incite my father’s anger. My father was loyal toward Aziras and his country; he did not undertake any unjust action against him or incite his or his country’s anger in any way. 300 (shekels of) refined and first-class gold, the tribute which my father had imposed upon your father, he brought year for year; he never refused it.”¹⁰⁶

In contrast to Cain, who “brought an offering (*minkhah*) of the fruit of the ground to the Lord,” Abel “brought from the firstborn of his flock and from their fat.” This type of offering refers to a gift of thanks to God for his generosity toward them, rather than to atone for sin.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, one would anticipate that a tiller of soil would bring produce, and a shepherd would deliver a gift from his flock.¹⁰⁸

In fact, this type of “offering” usually refers to flour or grain (Lev 2:1–3, 14–16).¹⁰⁹ At this point in time, God had not specifically set apart first fruits for the Lord’s priests (Exod 23:19; Num 18:12–13). Furthermore, people could make legitimate offerings from later in the harvest (Lev 27:30; Num 18:21; Neh 10:37).¹¹⁰

Therefore, Cain’s offering of produce was quite proper.¹¹¹ It does not explain his failure.¹¹² A lack of blood did not constitute a problem. In fact, Abel’s gift never refers to blood,¹¹³ but to “their fat” (*khēlev*).¹¹⁴ Cain’s fault fell elsewhere.¹¹⁵

Prior to the establishment of the Levitical priesthood after the exodus, God gave no restrictions upon offering a sacrifice of one’s own as Abel did (Lev 1:1–6).¹¹⁶ It appears that both Cain and Abel served as priests, worshiping God and desiring his acceptance.¹¹⁷ Genesis does not mention the Lord asking for such gifts. Yet when given unenthusiastically, such offerings fail to express true gratitude.¹¹⁸ Many years later, David would refuse to offer a sacrifice which cost him nothing to end a plague ravaging Jerusalem (2 Sam 24:23–25). He regarded it as a form of what we today call “re-gifting.”

God commanded that the firstborn—seen as the best—¹¹⁹ be set apart for himself (Exod 13:2). One could sacrifice only perfect, unblemished creatures (Lev 22:20–22). As the choicest part of an animal, the priests burned all the fat of each sacrifice, for it belonged to God (Lev 3:16–17).¹²⁰ Thus, the Lord “perceived a soothing aroma” (Gen 8:21).¹²¹

¹⁰⁶Mursilis, “Treaty Between Mursilis and Duppi-Tessub of Amurru,” in *ANET* (Albrecht Goetze (trans) and James B. Pritchard (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 203,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n227/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁷ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:7.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 223.

¹⁰⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מִנְחָה” (*minkhah*), *BDB*, 585,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/584/mode/2up>. Confirmed by a Logos 7 word study, which notes that 134 of 211 occurrences in the Old Testament refer specifically to grain offerings.

¹¹⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 263.

¹¹¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:7.

¹¹² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 223.

¹¹³ Walton, *Genesis*, 263.

¹¹⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “כֶּהֱלֵב” (*khēlev*), *BDB*, 316–7,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/316/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 263.

¹¹⁶Richard L. Pratt Jr, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1990), 259.

¹¹⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.

¹¹⁸ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:7.

¹¹⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.

¹²⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 103–4.

¹²¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 223.

The text in Gen 4 does not specify how people recognized God’s approval.¹²² What we do know is “to Cain and his offering, he did not gaze with favor” (1 Sam 16:7). Moses’ emphasis falls upon the older brother’s reaction to the rejection of his offering.¹²³ When the Lord exposed his failure, the “seed of the serpent” “burned with anger” against the “seed of the woman” (Gen 4:6).¹²⁴

Read Gen 4:2–5. Based upon this text, why does it appear that God rejected Cain’s offering but accepted Abel’s? How does this knowledge affect the way you give offerings to the Lord?

By Faith

4) Heb 11:4: “By faith a better sacrifice Abel than Cain offered to God.” The author of Hebrews assumed that faith produces righteousness (Heb 10:37–39; Heb 11:6).¹²⁵ Therefore, this verse begins a discussion of the spiritual posture of individuals from the book of Genesis who served as exemplars of faith (Heb 11:1–22).¹²⁶

Jewish tradition typically focused upon the deficiency of Cain’s offering, rather than upon the acceptability of Abel’s.¹²⁷ For example, Philo (20 BC–40 AD) noted that Cain brought young, inanimate things, while his brother brought strong and fat living sacrifices.¹²⁸ However, some Jewish writings emphasized the piety of these two men as the differentiating factor.¹²⁹ According to Josephus (37–100 AD), “Abel, the younger, was a lover of righteousness; and believing that God was present in all his actions, he excelled in virtue...but Cain was...very wicked.”¹³⁰

A dichotomy between faith and works cannot exist (James 2:14–26).¹³¹ Thus, Abel expressed his faith by his actions.¹³² The author of Hebrews cited him as the standard for those who desire favor with God (Cf. Prov 15:8–10). Indeed, “Through [faith], being dead, yet he speaks.” This partially occurred due to the written record of Abel’s character.¹³³ Yet, Heb 12:22–

¹²² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 103.

¹²³ Walton, *Genesis*, 263.

¹²⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 182.

¹²⁵ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 335.

¹²⁶ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 375.

¹²⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 333.

¹²⁸ Philo, “A Treatise on the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: H. G. Bohn, 1854), 26–7, 227–8, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft#page/226/mode/2up>.

¹²⁹ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 333.

¹³⁰ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.2.1,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston+chapter%3D2%3Awhiston+section%3D1>.

¹³¹ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 571.

¹³² Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 376.

¹³³ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 335.

24 clearly specifies that Abel’s blood speaks,¹³⁴ but neither in conversation with others nor to himself.¹³⁵ His blood cries out for justice (Gen 4:10).¹³⁶

Read Heb 11:4. According to the author of Hebrews, what made Abel’s offering superior to Cain’s? How does Abel still speak? What difference does knowing that make in your life?

Oh, the Depth of the Riches of God!

5) Rom 11:33–36: Paul wrote this letter to a church struggling to re-incorporate its Jewish members after their return from five years of exile under the emperor Claudius.¹³⁷ Nero repealed the edict upon Claudius’s death in 54 AD (Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3).¹³⁸ Due to the return of Jewish followers of Christ into purely Gentile congregations, conflict erupted over the differing practices of the two factions. Paul sought to mediate their disputes. He appears to have written this epistle within five years after the exile ended.¹³⁹

These verses come at the end of what many consider the greatest theological treatise in Scripture (Rom 1–11). They form a hymn of praise to God which bears some resemblance to Job 42:1–5.¹⁴⁰ It begins with “O!” to express strong emotion,¹⁴¹ a reaction to what Paul had just written concerning the infinite depths and riches of God’s mercy, wisdom, and knowledge (Rom 11:25–32). The Lord’s plan of salvation reveals his majestic attributes for both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 11:12; 1 Cor 2:10–13; Gal 3:26–29).¹⁴²

Structurally, the second sentence suggests the form of a hymn,¹⁴³ with two strongly alliterative adjectives meaning “unsearchable” (*anexeraunētos*) and “beyond tracing out” (*anexichniastos*).¹⁴⁴ “Judgments” (*krima*) refers to God’s decisions in redemptive history (Ps 19:9; Ps 36:6; Ps 119:75).¹⁴⁴ The Lord’s purposes and activity enfold far more than our human minds can comprehend.¹⁴⁵

Paul followed his exclamation with a series of rhetorical questions in which he anticipated the answer, “No one.” He employed an A–B–B–A chiasm with the qualities listed in Rom 11:33. “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” alludes to knowledge. “Who has been his counselor?” addresses the Lord’s wisdom (Isa 40:13). Finally, “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” (Job 41:11) refers to his riches.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. Ed.* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 284.

¹³⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 573.

¹³⁶ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 283–4.

¹³⁷ Charles D. Myers Jr., “Romans, Epistle to the,” *ABD* 5:816–26, 817.

¹³⁸ Keener, “Romans Situation,” *IVPBBCNT*, Rom.

¹³⁹ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 13; Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 703.

¹⁴¹ Frederick W. Danker, et al., “ὦ” (*ō*), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd Ed.* (BDAG) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1101.

¹⁴² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 389.

¹⁴³ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 699.

¹⁴⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 390.

¹⁴⁵ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 700.

¹⁴⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 390.

In Rom 11:35, Paul deviated from his normal practice of quoting the Greek translation of the Old Testament and went directly to the Hebrew text of Job 41:11.¹⁴⁷ Here “repay” (*antapodidōmi*) has positive connotations as in Luke 14:13–4 and Col 3:24.¹⁴⁸ None of us can earn the Lord’s favor or kindness (Rom 3:21–30). Our salvation results solely from God’s great love for us (Rom 5:6–11). He is no one’s debtor.¹⁴⁹

Paul expressed the supreme majesty of the creator and sustainer of the universe, for he comprises everything from beginning to end (1 Cor 8:5–6). Note that in the Corinthians passage, the functions which Paul here ascribes to God describe both the Father and the Son.¹⁵⁰ Thus, Paul extolled the Lord’s self-sufficiency and boundless prudence.¹⁵¹ As the personification of God’s wisdom, Christ revealed God’s plan of salvation to us.¹⁵² Yet, for our finite minds, these mysteries remain too vast for us to fully comprehend.¹⁵³

a) Read Rom 11:33–36. How did Paul describe the fathomless mysteries of God’s plan of redemption? Why doesn’t God owe us anything despite our offerings to him? How does this passage resonate with your experience of God?

A Living Sacrifice

b) Rom 12:1: In most of his letters, the Apostle Paul communicated the truth of the gospel, as here in Rom 1–11, before turning to how we should respond.¹⁵⁴ This well-known verse—which succinctly depicts a Christian’s reaction to God’s gracious mercy—¹⁵⁵ serves as the hinge for the ethical section of Romans in chapters 12–15. Accordingly, Paul began by writing, “therefore.”

Principles of Christian behavior arise from our theology. For example, our obedience flows from our gratitude for all that Christ has done for us (Rom 11:30–36; Luke 7:40–50),¹⁵⁶ as well as from what the Holy Spirit does in us (Phil 2:12–13).¹⁵⁷ Consequently, Paul authoritatively exhorted the Roman believers to live in accordance with the gospel which they received.¹⁵⁸ He gave specific instructions to obey in Rom 12:3–15:13.¹⁵⁹

But first, he called them “brothers [and sisters]” in order to strengthen his bond with these believers,¹⁶⁰ most of whom he had never met.¹⁶¹ He then compared a life of Christian integrity to

¹⁴⁷C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols. (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 2:591.

¹⁴⁸Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 701.

¹⁴⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 704.

¹⁵⁰Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 704.

¹⁵¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:590–1.

¹⁵²Moo, *Romans*, 390.

¹⁵³Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 703.

¹⁵⁴Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:596.

¹⁵⁵Moo, *Romans*, 393–4.

¹⁵⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:59–6.

¹⁵⁷Moo, *Romans*, 394.

¹⁵⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:597.

¹⁵⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 708.

¹⁶⁰Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 284. In Greek, a masculine plural can apply to a group of men or to one of mixed gender.

¹⁶¹Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 4.

sacrificial rituals in which we comprise the offerings.¹⁶² Earlier in this letter, Paul employed the same term (*paristēmi*) in his call to the Romans to present their bodies to the Lord as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:11–19).

Although *paristēmi* in terms of a sacrifice occurs nowhere in the New Testament apart from Romans,¹⁶³ Greco-Roman works often attest that usage.¹⁶⁴ For example, Xenophon (430–354 BC) wrote, “He accordingly brought two victims to the altar and proceeded to offer sacrifice (*paristēmi*) to King Zeus.”¹⁶⁵

Josephus (37–100 AD) asserted, “Archelaus, lest he should be in danger of not being thought the genuine son of Herod, began his reign with the murder of three thousand citizens; as if he had a mind to offer (*paristēmi*) so many bloody sacrifices to God for his government, and to fill the temple with the like number of dead bodies at that festival.”¹⁶⁶

In Rom 12:1, “your bodies” (*sōma*) refers to the entire self, rather than merely to the physical frame (Cf. Rom 6:13; Eph 5:28).¹⁶⁷ How we behave works in concert with how we think (Rom 12:2).¹⁶⁸ As I frequently told my daughters, “If people’s words and actions don’t conform to each other, their behavior will tell you what they really believe.”

Paul called his readers to offer all that we are to God.¹⁶⁹ We honor him by displaying the fruit of the Spirit as we eat, engage others in conversation, work, study, and even play. Those walking in tune with God’s Spirit aim for a life of continuous worship directed toward the one who created and redeemed us (Gal 5:22–26; Eph 5:15–21; Col 3:17, 23–24).¹⁷⁰

In contrast, Scripture strongly condemned the mere outward ritual of performing sacrifices, even before the coming of Christ (Ps 51:16–17; Isa 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–24).¹⁷¹ The Lord accepted only those sacrifices which people offered from a pure heart (Ps 24:1–6).¹⁷²

Due to the once-for-all-time sufficiency of Jesus’s atoning death,¹⁷³ God no longer requires animal bloodshed (Heb 9:11–14). Instead, we offer ourselves as “living sacrifices,”¹⁷⁴ passing from self-rule to the possession of the one who receives our offering.

After dying with and being raised with Christ,¹⁷⁵ we become God’s property (Rom 6:3–5).¹⁷⁶ The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) noted, “The sacrifice when once placed on

¹⁶² Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 284.

¹⁶³ Danker et al., “παριστήμι” (*paristēmi*), *BDAG*, 778. Confirmed by a Logos 7 word study.

¹⁶⁴ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:598.

¹⁶⁵ Xenophon, *Anabasis* (vol. 3 of *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*; LCL; trans. Carleton L. Brownson; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1922), 1.6.22,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0202%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D22>.

¹⁶⁶ Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: Beardsley, 1895), 2.89,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D6%3Awhiston%20section%3D2>.

¹⁶⁷ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:598.

¹⁶⁸ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 284.

¹⁶⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (trans. John Owen; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 452.

¹⁷⁰ Moo, *Romans*, 397–8.

¹⁷¹ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 710.

¹⁷² Moo, *Romans*, 395–6.

¹⁷³ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 284.

¹⁷⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 394.

¹⁷⁵ Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 252.

¹⁷⁶ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:599.

the altar, is no longer the property of the person who has offered it but belongs to that Being to whom the victim is sacrificed.”¹⁷⁷ The Lord does not demand something from us: he wants us.¹⁷⁸

Paul’s description of the type of sacrifice meshes with tabernacle and temple practices. The animals were still alive when brought before God (Lev 1:5), they were holy (Lev 6:24–27), and—since they were without defect—the lord accepted them (Lev 1:3–4).¹⁷⁹ While “holy” (*hagios*) can mean “set apart” for service,¹⁸⁰ it also carries the nuance of “pure, perfect, worthy of God.”¹⁸¹ Thus, over time, believers should experience increasing conformity to life shaped by the Holy Spirit.¹⁸²

Read Rom 12:1. Due to what Jesus has done for us, what is our reasonable response? How do Old Testament sacrificial practices affect your understanding of life as a believer?

Transformed Minds

c) Rom 12:2: After Paul called believers in Rome to offer themselves to God as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), he commanded them not to be “formed according to the pattern” of this present age.¹⁸³ This requires an act of the will,¹⁸⁴ allowing the Spirit to transform us (Rom 8:1–11).¹⁸⁵ We cannot merely follow the influences of our pre-Christian experiences.¹⁸⁶ Although we live in this current age, as citizens of “the age to come” we must act accordingly, intentionally developing moral sensitivity (Phil 3:17–21; Eph 4:21–24).¹⁸⁷

The verb tenses in this verse indicate that we must continually practice both the “not being conformed” and the “being transformed.”¹⁸⁸ By undergoing the process of changing the way we think, we alter the way we live. We need patience, as this typically requires sustained effort over time.¹⁸⁹ However, the way we view the world shifts profoundly (1 Cor 2:11–16).¹⁹⁰

Many Greco-Roman philosophers viewed matter as inherently corrupt.¹⁹¹ 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.”¹⁹² Paul did not adhere to the

¹⁷⁷Philo, “On Animals Fit for Sacrifice,” in *The Works of Philo, Vol. 3* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 221, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda03phil#page/220/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁸ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 285.

¹⁷⁹ Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 462.

¹⁸⁰ Moo, *Romans*, 394.

¹⁸¹ Danker et al., “ἅγιος” (*hagios*), *BDAG*, 11.

¹⁸² Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:601.

¹⁸³ Frederick W. Danker, et al., “συσχηματίζω” (*syschēmatizō*), *BDAG*, 979.

¹⁸⁴ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 712.

¹⁸⁵ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:607. The verb is *metamorphoō*.

¹⁸⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 395.

¹⁸⁷ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:608–9.

¹⁸⁸ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 310. The present tense connotes either continuous or repetitive action.

¹⁸⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 398.

¹⁹⁰ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 286.

¹⁹¹ Harry 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>.

¹⁹² Plotinus, *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/n155/mode/2up>.

mind/body dualism common in Greco-Roman thought. He asserted that the presenting of our bodies results in the renewal of our minds.¹⁹³

Once this transformation occurs, we are “able to determine what [is] the will of God.” In other words, we learn how to behave in a manner pleasing to him.¹⁹⁴ This by no means takes place automatically.¹⁹⁵ To accomplish this change, we must reprogram how we think by feeding upon Scripture and other materials whose values align with those of the kingdom of God.¹⁹⁶ The adage “garbage in; garbage out” certainly holds true. Once we know the will of God, we face the task of performing it (Phil 4:8–9).¹⁹⁷

This verse espouses the necessity of inner transformation as opposed to external conformity.¹⁹⁸ Paul did not command us to grit our teeth and attempt to keep the Mosaic law (Rom 2:28–29). Instead, we must “walk in the Spirit,” which yields a “good and acceptable and complete” ethical life pleasing to God (Gal 5:16–25; Mark 12:28–34).¹⁹⁹ Not that this is always easy. In our fallen world, few clear-cut issues emerge in terms of right and wrong.²⁰⁰ Therefore, we must continually develop moral discernment and hear both sides of an argument before prayerfully reaching a conclusion.

Read Rom 12:2. How did Paul’s command repudiate the prevailing Greek philosophy of his era? What practical things can you do to enhance the renewal of your mind?

Sin Lies Stretched Out

6) Gen 4:6–7: This portion of the narrative implies that God continued to meet with people face-to-face even after he drove them out of Eden (Gen 3:22–24).²⁰¹ First, the Lord employed an idiom, “Why is it burning (*kharah*) to you?” to question Cain regarding the source of his anger. Then he asked, “And why has your face fallen (*naphal*)?” indicating that Cain exhibited depression.²⁰² Just as in Gen 3:9, God already knew the answer.²⁰³ Nevertheless, he gave Cain an opportunity to confess his error.²⁰⁴

Some scholars describe v. 7 as one of the most difficult verses in Genesis to translate and to comprehend.²⁰⁵ It opens with, “If you do well, exaltation (*seth*).” Other strong translation

¹⁹³ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 714.

¹⁹⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 395.

¹⁹⁵ Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 253.

¹⁹⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 399.

¹⁹⁷ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 718.

¹⁹⁸ Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 253.

¹⁹⁹ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 714.

²⁰⁰ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 287.

²⁰¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 263.

²⁰² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 224.

²⁰³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 104.

²⁰⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: a commentary*, 98.

²⁰⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 225.

possibilities for “exaltation” include “acceptance” and “forgiveness.”²⁰⁶ Whichever option we select, one thing is clear: Cain could obtain God’s favor,²⁰⁷ and obedience would raise his countenance.²⁰⁸ Sadly, Cain left the Lord’s questions unanswered, revealing his true nature. He knew the right thing to do but rebelled against it, illustrating the power of original sin.²⁰⁹

After Cain ignored his questions, God continued, “And if you do not do right, at the doorway sin lies stretched out” (*rabatz*).²¹⁰ In Ancient Near Eastern thinking, one who would lie across a threshold either sought to keep the entrants safe or was a demon (*rabitzum* in Akkadian) who lurked there to harm those who crossed its path.²¹¹

Among the curses which the seventh century BC Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon placed upon his vassal kings for disloyalty was this:²¹² “May...evil spirits, demons, and lurkers select your houses (as their abode).”²¹³ Therefore, most Hebrew scholars contend that this verb depicts sin skulking in Cain’s path,²¹⁴ waiting for its victim to launch a vicious attack (Cf. Gen 49:9).²¹⁵

Using the same phrase as in Gen 3:16, the Lord told Cain that sin’s “longing (*teshuqah*) is toward you.”²¹⁶ With emphasis,²¹⁷ God declared “and you must rule over (*mashal*) it.”²¹⁸ This conversation indicates that Cain could choose to do the right thing, rather than depicting him as one so utterly depraved that he could not avoid sin.²¹⁹ The serpent employed his persuasive deception to lure Eve into ignoring the Lord’s command (Gen 3:1–5). In contrast, Cain stubbornly refused to allow God’s plea to divert him. He embraced the way of the serpent.²²⁰

Read Gen 4:6–7. What did God command Cain to do? How does this depiction of sin fit with your experience? Are you more like Eve or like Cain?

²⁰⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שֵׁט” (*seth*), 673, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/672/mode/2up>.

²⁰⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 263–4.

²⁰⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 105–6.

²⁰⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

²¹⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs “רָבַצַּ” (*rabatz*), *BDB*, 918. An alternative is “at the door sin makes its lair.” <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/918/mode/2up>.

²¹¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 227.

²¹² James B Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, 3rd Ed. (ANET)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 265.

²¹³ Esarhaddon, “Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre,” in *ANET*. Translated by D. J. Wiseman, 534–41, line 493, 539, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n569/mode/2up.

²¹⁴ E.-J. Waschke, “רָבַצַּ” (*rabatz*) in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)* (Rev. Ed., G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (Eds.), D. W. Stott (Trans.) (Grand Rapids; Cambridge. U.K.: Eerdmans, 2004), 13:298–303, 303.

²¹⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 264.

²¹⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “תְּשׁוּקָה” (*teshuqah*), *BDB*, 1003, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1002/mode/2up>.

²¹⁷ F. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar (GKC)* (ed. Emil Kautzsch; trans. Arthur Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 437, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/436/mode/2up>. Since Hebrew verbs already contain a subject, the appearance of the pronoun “you” makes the statement emphatic.

²¹⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מָשַׁל” (*mashal*), *BDB*, 605, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/604/mode/2up>.

²¹⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 228.

²²⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100.

Instruments of Righteousness

7) Rom 6:12–14: Paul began this chapter by urging believers to consider ourselves dead to sin (Rom 6:1–7).²²¹ We cannot remain content to live as we had prior to placing our faith in Jesus.²²² Instead, “sin must not reign” in us. The apostle called us to take hold of Christ’s victory by revolting against sin’s domination (Cf. 1 Cor 15:54–58).²²³

Although he used the term “mortal bodies” (*thnētos sōma*), this most likely means the whole person, not just our physical flesh (Rom 6:6).²²⁴ By personifying lustful passion as a slave-master, Paul warned believers not to fall prey to our cravings, which results in enslavement.²²⁵ To thwart sin’s desire to rule over us, we must refuse to obey it.²²⁶

We fight this battle daily in the decisions we make.²²⁷ These passions include the need to dominate others and to covet what they have,²²⁸ not only sensual lust.²²⁹ As the Greco-Roman philosopher Epictetus (55–135 AD) stated, “Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire.”²³⁰

In the Greek army, a hoplite fought with a spear.²³¹ Since we are “dead to sin and alive to God” (Rom 6:11), we must not present our natural abilities as “instruments” or “weapons” (*hopla*),²³² battling on the side of sin.²³³

The great preacher John Chrysostom (347–407) wrote this: “The body is not evil, since it may be made an arm [i.e. a weapon] of righteousness. But by calling it an arm, he makes it clear that there is a hard warfare at hand for us. And for this reason, we need strong armor, and also a noble spirit, and one acquainted too with the ways of this warfare; and above all we need a commander. The Commander, however, is standing by, ever ready to help us, and abiding unconquerable, and has furnished us with strong arms likewise. Farther, we have need of a purpose of mind to handle them as should be, so that we may both obey our Commander, and take the field for our country.”²³⁴

Here in Romans, Paul’s contrast between unrighteousness and virtue sharply focuses

²²¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 382.

²²² Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:316.

²²³ Moo, *Romans*, 200.

²²⁴ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 336.

²²⁵ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 163.

²²⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 336.

²²⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383.

²²⁸ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383.

²²⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 336.

²³⁰ Epictetus, “Discourses,” in *The Works of Epictetus: His Discourses, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments*. (trans. Thomas Wentworth Higginson; New York: Thomas Nelson, 1890), 4.1.175.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D4>

²³¹ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 163.

²³² Danker et al., “ὄπλον” (*hoplon*), *BDAG*, 716.

²³³ Craig S. Keener, *InterVarsity Press Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVPBBCNT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), electronic edition, Rom 6:12–3.

²³⁴ John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (NPNF1–11)* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. J. B. Morris and W. H. Simcox, revised by George B. Stevens; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1889), 11.6.5., 411, <https://archive.org/stream/selectlibraryofn11auguooft#page/410/mode/2up>.

upon one's behavior.²³⁵ No middle ground exists.²³⁶ After renouncing sin, we immediately serve under our new master, the Lord.²³⁷ This involves a decisive and deliberate decision to come under his control, sharing in Christ's new life of resurrection.²³⁸

Paul's statement, "for sin shall not rule over you" does not mean that Christians will never sin.²³⁹ However, sin no longer exerts sovereignty over us.²⁴⁰ Jesus does. Unless we deliberately choose to turn away from following the Lord, never again shall we experience powerlessness in our fight against sin (1 Cor 10:1–13).²⁴¹ Although refraining from habitual transgressions may seem daunting, we are indeed "dead to sin and alive to God."²⁴²

By writing, "for you are not under law but under grace," Paul did not claim that believers can freely ignore God's commands.²⁴³ Rather than obeying the Mosaic law, we fall under a new covenant—the law of Christ—which is characterized by grace (John 1:17; Rom 8:1–2; Gal 3:23–29). Now we have the Spirit's power to overcome temptation (Gal 5:13–26). Remaining "in Adam" is no longer a valid option for God's people (Rom 5:12–21).²⁴⁴

Read Rom 6:12–14. How can we avoid slavery to sin? What happens when we present ourselves to God as "instruments of righteousness"? Why can't people whose loyalty belongs to Jesus continually practice sin? What advantage do you have which Cain did not experience?

Cain Arose against His Brother

8) Gen 4:8: Here we reach the center of the chiasm in the account of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16). Thus, the central focus falls upon the two brothers standing alone.²⁴⁵ In contrast to the long dialogues on either end of the story, this section tersely describes what occurred.²⁴⁶ Depictions of Cain struggling with his conscience or considering the consequences of his actions are strikingly absent. Instead, Moses portrayed his act as the outrageous result of consuming jealousy.²⁴⁷ The repetition of "his brother" magnifies the horror of the event.²⁴⁸

²³⁵ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 163.

²³⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 337–8.

²³⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 385.

²³⁸ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 338.

²³⁹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:318–9.

²⁴⁰ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387.

²⁴¹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:319.

²⁴² Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387.

²⁴³ Moo, *Romans*, 200.

²⁴⁴ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 164–5.

²⁴⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106.

²⁴⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 99.

²⁴⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 264.

²⁴⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106.

Only one generation after the fall (Gen 3:1–7; Gen 3:22–4:1), the first case of sibling rivalry proved deadly.²⁴⁹ The verse begins with “And Cain said to Abel his brother,” then omits what Cain communicated. It skips right to “And it happened, while they were in the field, Cain arose against Abel his brother, and he killed him.”

That Cain went out to the field to find his brother strongly suggests premeditation.²⁵⁰ He vented his anger toward God on the most likely scapegoat.²⁵¹ The fractured relationship between husband and wife now extended to their offspring (Gen 3:12, 16).²⁵²

“Killed” (*hāragh*) implies private, ruthless violence.²⁵³ Such activity lies at the extreme of what the sixth commandment forbids,²⁵⁴ for Exod 20:13 employs a term (*rātsakh*) which includes the possibility of manslaughter.²⁵⁵ Cain rejected the one whom the Lord accepted, instead of acknowledging God’s rebuke and repenting (Gen 4:6–7). Yet, this only increased his torment. He dealt with Abel by exterminating him, but what could he do with God?²⁵⁶

Read Gen 4:8. What do you think Cain was trying to accomplish by killing his brother? Do you see similar tendencies in yourself?

Transcending the Law

9) Matt 5:21–22: Christ preached, “You have heard that it was said to the ancient ones, ‘You shall not commit murder.’” In this passage, Jesus contrasted the teaching of his day with the true meaning of the Pentateuch. Rabbis employed the formula, “You have heard that it was said” when speaking of religious tradition.²⁵⁷ “It was said” implied that God himself spoke the command.²⁵⁸ “The ancient [ones]” referred to the people who first received the Mosaic law.²⁵⁹

Jesus quoted, “You shall not murder” (*phoneuō*) directly from the Greek translation of Deut 5:17. Although Hebrew has seven words meaning “to kill,”²⁶⁰ the term used here refers to intentionally taking someone’s life.²⁶¹ Thus, it involves an act of premeditation. In addition, *phoneuō* includes abetting murder and benefiting from this crime (1 Ki 21:11–19). The penalty was death (Num 35:16–21).²⁶²

“Anyone who commits murder will be liable to judgment” likely derives from Num 35:20–24, 30–34. That passage emphasizes the need for legal proceedings to determine whether someone intentionally killed another person. The process also sought to prevent blood feuds

²⁴⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

²⁵⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106.

²⁵¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.

²⁵² H. F. Fuhs, “הָרַג” (*hāragh*) in *TDOT*, 3:454–7, 454.

²⁵³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “הָרַג” (*haragh*), *BDB*, 246–7,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/246/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.

²⁵⁵ W. R. Dörmers, “רָצַח” (*ratsakh*) in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, 5 Vols. (Willem A. Van Gemeren, ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1189.

²⁵⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.

²⁵⁷ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 111, 115.

²⁵⁸ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 241.

²⁵⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 200.

²⁶⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 241–2.

²⁶¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200.

²⁶² Wilkins, *Matthew*, 241–2.

from occurring.²⁶³ A Jewish apocryphal work noted, “He who works the killing of a man’s soul, kills his own soul, and kills his own body, and there is no cure for him for all time.”²⁶⁴

At the time of Christ, competing Jewish factions vied to win people over to their interpretation of obedience to the Mosaic law through lengthy debates.²⁶⁵ Jesus found fault with the rabbis’ application of the Old Testament (OT).²⁶⁶

By emphatically proclaiming, “but I say to you,”²⁶⁷ Jesus invoked his own authority as the Messiah.²⁶⁸ He equated his decree to the rest of Scripture while explaining the original intent of God’s law.²⁶⁹ Christ’s words did not violate the law: they transcended it.²⁷⁰

Jesus looked beyond a person’s behavior to an unrestrained heart which generates murder (1 John 3:15).²⁷¹ Contrary to the frequent perception that Christ loosened the requirements of the OT (Matt 5:17–20), here he made the rigor of the commandment far greater.²⁷² A person’s character matters just as much as behavior.²⁷³

Anger violates God’s commands, for it forms the basis for murder. Therefore, both receive the same judgment.²⁷⁴ Our rage strips people of their value as image-bearers of God (Gen 1:26–27; Matt 12:34–37; Matt 15:18–20).²⁷⁵

Some manuscripts say, “Anyone who is angry with his brother *without reason*.” The words in italics appear to be a later addition intended to make the command easier to keep.²⁷⁶

“Brother [or sister]” likely refers to another believer.²⁷⁷ However, later in the sermon Jesus ordered, “Love your enemies and pray on behalf of the ones persecuting you” (Matt 5:43).²⁷⁸ This expands the command to all people, not only to fellow Christians.²⁷⁹

The punishments outlined in this verse increase in severity, even though the sins seem roughly equivalent.²⁸⁰ Those “subject to judgment” would have appeared before either the local religious authorities (*sanhedrin*),²⁸¹ a group of twenty-three men who determined the outcome of capital cases (*m. Sanhedrin* 1.4), or the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, which was the highest Jewish council. It consisted of a group of seventy-one priests, scribes, and elders.²⁸²

²⁶³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200.

²⁶⁴ W. R. Morfill, trans., *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), 60.1. <https://archive.org/stream/bookofsecretsofe00morf#page/76/mode/2up>.

²⁶⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 181.

²⁶⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 240.

²⁶⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 319. Greek verbs include a personal pronoun. Adding the word “I” to the verb makes it emphatic.

²⁶⁸ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 111.

²⁶⁹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 240–1.

²⁷⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 112.

²⁷¹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 183.

²⁷² Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 114.

²⁷³ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 182.

²⁷⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 116.

²⁷⁵ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 242.

²⁷⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 113. Italics mine.

²⁷⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200.

²⁷⁸ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 116.

²⁷⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200.

²⁸⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200–1.

²⁸¹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 242.

²⁸² Anthony J. Saldarini, “Sanhedrin,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)*, 6 Vols., David Noel Freeman, Ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:975–80, 576–7.

However, anger did not come to trial before the Jewish courts except in highly controlled communities like that of the Essenes.²⁸³ The Community Rule of the Dead Sea Scrolls says: “If [someone] has spoken in anger against one of the Priests inscribed in the Book, he shall do penance for one year and shall be excluded for his soul’s sake from the pure Meal of the Congregation. But if he has spoken unwittingly, he shall do penance for six months...Whoever has deliberately insulted his companion unjustly shall do penance for one year and shall be excluded.”²⁸⁴

“*Raka*” appears only here in the New Testament.²⁸⁵ Rabbis commonly employed it as an insult.²⁸⁶ The term implied that the person addressed was “empty-headed” or foolish.²⁸⁷ In that culture, calling someone “an idiot” was considered a serious offense, for it demeaned the person’s name.²⁸⁸ For the same reason, calling someone “a bastard” resulted in forty lashes (b. Kiddushin 28a).

Greco-Roman society also considered defamation an actionable injury. For example, Gaius (ca. 130–180 AD) wrote, “Outrages are atrocious either by the act, as when a man is wounded, horse-whipped, or beaten by a stick; or from the place, as when an affront is offered in the theater or the forum; or from the persons, as when a magistrate or senator is insulted by one of lower rank.”²⁸⁹

These types of insults reveal attitudes of contempt which the Lord condemns.²⁹⁰ The heavenly court hears every word we speak (Matt 10:26–30; Mark 4:22–25). Slandering another person merits the punishment which would have been given to the ones we falsely accuse (Deut 19:16–19).²⁹¹

Jewish courts under Roman rule could no longer carry out the punishments for capital crimes (John 18:31–32). Therefore, for Jesus, “the Sanhedrin” appears to refer to God’s heavenly court.²⁹² That tribunal shall condemn the guilty to destruction “into the *Gehenna* of fire.”²⁹³

Earlier in Israel’s history, parents burned their children to death as sacrifices to the Canaanite god Molech in Gehenna (Ps 106:37–39; Jer 7:31; 2 Ki 23:10).²⁹⁴ By the time of Christ, Gehenna served as Jerusalem’s city dump. Since garbage continually burned there,²⁹⁵ it provided an apt metaphor for the fires of hell.²⁹⁶

a) Read Matt 5:21–22. Why are anger and insults akin to murder? What do they do to us?

²⁸³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 182.

²⁸⁴Geza Vermes, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th Ed* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 1QS7:2–4, 79. https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n137/mode/2up.

²⁸⁵Joachim Jeremias, “*Ρακα*” (*raka*), in *Theological Diction of the New Testament (TDNT)*, 10 Vols. Gerhard Kittel, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 6:973–6, 973.

²⁸⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 116.

²⁸⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 242.

²⁸⁸Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 116.

²⁸⁹Gaius, *Institutes of Roman Law by Gaius* (trans. Edward Poste, rev E. A. Whittuck; Oxford: Clarendon, 1904), 3.225, 427–8, <https://archive.org/stream/gaiinstitutiones00gaiuuoft#page/426/mode/2up>.

²⁹⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 201.

²⁹¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 184.

²⁹²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 184.

²⁹³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 201–2.

²⁹⁴George C. Heider, “Molech (Deity),” *ABD* 4:895–8, 897.

²⁹⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 202.

²⁹⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 117.

Be Reconciled to Your Brother

b) Matt 5:23–24: Jesus narrowed his focus from a general principle in Matt 5:21–22 to specific application in these verses.²⁹⁷ He taught that a believer’s relationship with God correlates with how we treat others.²⁹⁸

Rabbis of that era asserted something similar. According to the *Mishnah*, “From all your sins before the Lord shall ye be clean. Those transgressions of which man has been guilty towards his God, [the Day of Atonement] atones for; but for those transgressions of which man has been guilty towards his neighbor, [the Day of Atonement] cannot atone, until he has appeased his neighbor” (*m. Yoma* 8.9).

In this instance, Christ addressed occasions when one aggrieves someone else, not been the recipient of the offense.²⁹⁹ Yet, elsewhere he said, “If you are standing [and] praying, forgive if you have anything against someone, in order that also your Father in heaven may forgive your sins” (Mark 11:25). Thus, this applies to resentment in both directions. Reconciliation is paramount,³⁰⁰ for fostering bitterness has the same effect as drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.³⁰¹

“When, therefore, you bring your gift on the altar” implies a sacrifice in Jerusalem’s temple (Josh 22:29; Ezra 6:3).³⁰² However, Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee (Matt 4:25–5:1). Following Jesus’s command to “leave your gift there in front of the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother [or sister] and then come offer your gift” required a journey of approximately eighty miles each way.³⁰³

Imagine arriving in Jerusalem after traveling for days. Due to the distance, you bought a lamb for an offering when you arrived. While standing in a long line at the temple, you remember how you offended your neighbor. Following Christ’s command would necessitate going back to Galilee, making amends, and repeating the process.

Eph 4:26 and Ps 4:4 apply to people with differing temperaments. While one person immediately erupts in anger and needs to take time to reflect and pray before responding to a situation, another grows enraged by allowing time to pass. We must understand how we operate and act accordingly.

By making such a difficult demand, Christ stressed the importance of maintaining right relationships with our neighbors, especially within the church (Matt 18:21–35; Eph 4:21–32).³⁰⁴

Read Matt 5:23–24. Why is living in harmony with all people—and particularly with other believers—so critical to our spiritual well-being? Are you the type of person who needs to deal with infuriating issues immediately or do you need time to process your anger? How is Christ’s admonition like what the Lord said to Cain in Gen 4:3–8?

²⁹⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 202.

²⁹⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 185.

²⁹⁹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 243.

³⁰⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 117.

³⁰¹ This concept is attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous.

³⁰² Wilkins, *Matthew*, 243.

³⁰³ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 191.

³⁰⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 203.

Misappropriated Blood

10) Gen 4:9–10: We return to the fourth scene in the saga of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16), the conversation between the Lord and Cain. Strong parallels exist between this interrogation and Adam’s (Gen 3:9–12).³⁰⁵ God first drew attention to Cain and Abel’s familial relationship by asking, “Where is Abel, your brother?”³⁰⁶ As in Adam’s case, the Lord already knew the answer.

Cain’s reply belied a heart much harder than those of his parents. Rather than acknowledging his fault, he denied any awareness of Abel’s situation.³⁰⁷ He responded by saying, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“Keeper” (*shamar*) is the same word used as Adam’s job description in Gen 2:15.³⁰⁸ In only one generation, people degenerated from tending paradise to disavowing any obligation to one’s family.³⁰⁹ Since a “keeper” tended flocks, Cain employed sarcasm here. He essentially asked, “Should I be shepherding the shepherd?”³¹⁰ Not only did Cain imply that God’s question was improper,³¹¹ he exhibited the evasiveness of his parents (Gen 3:11–13).³¹²

The Lord never demands that a person watch over a sibling continually.³¹³ He assumes that responsibility (Num 6:24–25; Ps 121:4–8).³¹⁴ Cain used that fact as an accusation against God.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, in times of difficulty, the Lord expects a man’s brother to assist him whenever feasible (Lev 25:47–48).

Ironically, Cain should have acted as the “avenger of blood” in the event of Abel’s murder (Ruth 3:12–13; Num 35:19–21).³¹⁶ People in the Ancient Near East believed that a murderer misappropriated his victim’s blood. That vital fluid could be redeemed and symbolically returned to the relatives of the slain only by the death of the offender.³¹⁷

Accordingly, an 8th century BC Aramaic treaty between two allied kings states: “If it happens that one of my brothers or one of the hou[se of my father or one of my sons or one of my *officers* or one of my officials or one of the people under my control or one of my enemies seeks my head to kill me and to kill my son and my offspring, if it is me they kill, you must come and avenge my blood from the hand of my enemies. Your son must come to avenge the blood of my son from his enemies. The son of your son must come to avenge the bl[ood of the s]on of my son. Your offspring must come to avenge the blood of my offspring. If it is a city, you must slay it with the sword. If it is one of my brothers or one of my slaves or [one] of my officials or one of the people under my control, you must slay him and his offspring, his *supporters*, and his friends

³⁰⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106.

³⁰⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 227.

³⁰⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106–7.

³⁰⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *BDB*, 1036, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1036/mode/2up>.

³⁰⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 267.

³¹⁰ Matthew R. Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 338–9, http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/890/D_Schlimm_Matthew_a_200812.pdf?sequence=.

³¹¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.

³¹² Walton, *Genesis*, 265.

³¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106–7.

³¹⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 231.

³¹⁵ Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Ethics of Anger in Genesis*, 339.

³¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107.

³¹⁷ S. David Sperling, “Blood, Avenger of,” *ABD* 1:763–4, 764.

with the sword. If you do not do so, you will have been false to all the Gods of the treaty in this inscription.”³¹⁸

The Lord responded with outrage to Cain’s callousness,³¹⁹ switching from interrogation to accusation. God said, “What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother is crying out to me from the ground!” (Cf. Job 16:18–19).³²⁰ Murder without recompense polluted the land. This rendered it unfit for God’s presence, even when the guilty person remained unidentified (Deut 21:1–9).³²¹

Israelites considered killing someone by bloodshed particularly heinous. Those seeking to murder another might ease their guilt by not shedding the victim’s blood. This may explain why Reuben easily persuaded his brothers to throw Joseph into a pit to slowly die (Gen 37:19–24). The blood which even David shed in warfare prevented him from building a temple for the Lord (1 Chr 22:7–8).³²² When Christ returns, all the blood shed upon the earth shall be revealed and avenged (Isa 26:21; Rev 6:9–11).³²³

Read Gen 4:9–10. How was this conversation like and different from the one in Gen 3:9–13? What made Abel’s murder especially repugnant? Why is it impossible to hide bloodshed from God? What effect does it have upon the earth? How does this affect the way you evaluate justice for murdered people?

A Charge of Hypocrisy

11) Matt 23:29–33: This passage appears at the end of Jesus’s scathing denunciation of the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matt 23:1–39). By focusing upon adherence to the *Mishnah*—external regulations more restrictive than what God required—these men often failed to practice the character qualities expected of the Lord’s people.

Christ employed a common rhetorical strategy of that era by using their own testimony to reveal the contradictions in their behavior.³²⁴ Jesus announced to the assembled crowd, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we were in the days of our fathers, we would not be their partners in the blood of the prophets.’”

³¹⁸Barga’yah, “The Treaty Between Ktk and Arpad,” Pages 559–61 in *ANET*. Translated by A. J. Dupont-Sommer and J. Starcky, 661. Italics original.

³¹⁹Walke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

³²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 231.

³²¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107.

³²²S. David Sperling, “Blood,” *ABD* 1:761–3, 763.

³²³Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 113.

³²⁴Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 554.

The Lives of the Prophets, written in the first century AD, not only lists the burial sites of the prophets, it provides detailed descriptions of their tombs.³²⁵ By seeking to convey their admiration for these seers, the scribes and Pharisees attempted to dissociate themselves from the people who murdered them. However, they erected this facade to hide their lack of receptivity to the messengers sent by God (Matt 12:14–16; Matt 21:33–46).³²⁶

Jesus continued, “Therefore, you testify against yourselves that sons you are of the murderers of the prophets.” While claiming that they would not have participated with their ancestors, the scribes and Pharisees identified themselves as their seed (Gen 3:15).³²⁷ In this instance, Jesus used “sons” (*huios*) as an idiom.³²⁸ During the time of Christ, the term could depict a man’s character.³²⁹

For example, the Essene Community produced this statement, “The Sons of Darkness will be burnt...For all folly and wicked[ness are dar]k, and all [pea]ce and truth are brigh[t. For all the Sons of Light g]o towards the light, towards [eternal] jo[y and rej]oicin[g], and all the Sons of Dar[kness go towards death] and perdition.”³³⁰

A person’s disposition determined one’s designation as a Son of Light or a Son of Darkness.

Consequently, the behavior of Jesus’s opponents testified against their descent from the prophets. Instead, their ancestors had murdered those messengers of God (Heb 11:32–40).³³¹ As a result, the Lord held them responsible for the deaths of the men whose tombs they venerated,³³² reaping the judgment of their forebears.³³³

Christ declared, “And so, fill up the measure of your fathers!” This allusion refers to a cup on the verge of overflowing with the blood of God’s people.³³⁴ According to Jewish belief, God predetermined a necessary amount of suffering before the last age would arrive.³³⁵

A first century AD Jewish apocryphal book recounts this conversation with an angel: “A grain of evil seed was sown in Adam's heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now, and will produce until the time of threshing comes! Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced. When heads of grain without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill!”

Then I answered and said, ‘How long and when will these things be? Why are our years few and evil?’

“He answered me and said, ‘You do not hasten faster than the Most High, for your haste is for yourself, but the Highest hastens on behalf of many. Did not the souls of the righteous in their chambers ask about these matters, saying, “How long are we to remain here? And when will come the harvest of our reward?”’

“And Jeremiel the archangel answered them and said, ‘When the number of those like yourselves is completed; for he has weighed the age in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and

³²⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 876–7.

³²⁶Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 278.

³²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 672.

³²⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 877.

³²⁹Eduard Lohse, “ὄσιος” (*huios*), *TDNT* 8:334–97, 358.

³³⁰Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Rev. Ed., 4Q548 Fragment 1:10, 626, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n625/mode/2up.

³³¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 672.

³³²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 876.

³³³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 554.

³³⁴Gerhard Delling, “πληροῶ” (*plēroō*), *TDNT* 6:283–311, 294.

³³⁵Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 555–6.

numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled.” (4 Ezra 4:30–37, RSV)

Christ asserted that what their ancestors began, the scribes and Pharisees would complete (Acts 7:51–52; 1 Thess 2:14–16).³³⁶ The Old Testament prophets also employed this type of irony. They exhorted the Israelites to continue sinning but to expect God’s judgment as a result (Isa 6:9–11; Jer 44:24–29; Amos 4:4–6).³³⁷

Jesus said, “You serpents, offspring of vipers! How will you escape from the condemnation of Gehenna?” John the Baptist had employed the same invective against the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 3:7–10). That Christ spoke this way to Israel’s leaders shocked those who heard him.³³⁸ He delivered a clear message: God destined the most overtly religious people in Israel for the fire of hell.³³⁹

a) Read Matt 23:29–33. Why did Jesus call the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites” in these verses? What would be their fate? How can you avoid hypocrisy?

From Abel to Zechariah

b) Matt 23:34–36: In these verses, Christ shifted from the past failures of Israel’s leaders to their future transgressions (Cf. Matt 23:29–33).³⁴⁰ He stated, “On account of this, behold, I am sending to you prophets, and wise people, and scribes.”³⁴¹ Since God alone reserves the right to send prophets, this pronouncement shocked those who heard him (Jer 1:4–5; 2 Chron 36:15–16).³⁴² Once again, Jesus equated himself with Yahweh (Matt 9:1–8; Matt 12:8, 40).

“Wise people” (*sophos*) likely refers to those who teach in a style like that of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Prov 1:1–7; Ecc 12:9–11). While the inclusion of scribes seems surprising, many devout Jews became followers of Christ beginning at Pentecost (<https://www.theopedia.com/Pentecost>) (Matt 13:52; Acts 2:14, 36–42).³⁴³

Christ foretold, “Some of them you will kill and you will crucify. And some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and you will persecute from city to city” (Acts 7:58–60; Acts 26:9–11). By rejecting Jesus and his disciples, these men would repeat the sins of their forefathers.³⁴⁴ Their rebellion would culminate in the most extreme form imaginable: the betrayal and execution of their long-awaited messiah.³⁴⁵

³³⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 672.

³³⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 554.

³³⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 672.

³³⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 877.

³⁴⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 878.

³⁴¹The three types of people mentioned here are listed in masculine plural form. This can refer either to only males or to groups comprised of both genders.

³⁴²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 555.

³⁴³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 878–9.

³⁴⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 672.

³⁴⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 877.

He continued, “So that may come upon you all the righteous blood being poured out on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

An important key to understanding this verse 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 (Exod 20:4–6; 2 Sam 9:1–7; Jer 35:12–19; Dan 6:24).³⁴⁶ Therefore, God would credit the guilt incurred by the ancestors of the people of Jerusalem to their accounts, as if they had shed that blood.³⁴⁷

The Old Testament (OT) records two prophets whom their own people murdered, Uriah and Zechariah the son of Jehoida (Jer 26:20–23; 2 Chr 24:20–22). They nearly killed Jeremiah (Jer 26:11, 24). Jezebel, a foreign-born queen, massacred an unknown number of prophets (1 Ki 18:4). According to *The Lives of the Prophets*, Jeremiah was eventually martyred, as were Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Micah (Neh 9:26).³⁴⁸

The OT mentions more than thirty men named Zechariah. However, only a few fit the profile well enough to be the man mentioned by Jesus. No evidence exists that Zechariah son of Barachiah, who wrote the book of Zechariah, died unnaturally (Zech 1:1).³⁴⁹ Furthermore, the Babylonians destroyed the temple before his lifetime (Zech 1:12–17),³⁵⁰ so that Zechariah could not have died between the temple and the altar. Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, which is translated as Barachiah in the Greek OT, served as a witness for Isaiah (Isa 8:2). However, he does not appear to have suffered a violent death.³⁵¹

Josephus (37–100 AD) mentioned the murder of a wealthy man named Zechariah son of Baruch by Zealots in the temple in 67 AD.³⁵² However, Matthew likely wrote this gospel before that date.³⁵³ Consequently, this appears to be a transcription error. Only the ancient *Codex Sinaiticus*, which dates from the fourth century AD, lacks “son of Barachiah.”³⁵⁴ On the other hand, Sinaiticus is one of the earliest reliable complete manuscripts (Ⲙ) known to scholars.³⁵⁵ Therefore, the omission may reflect what Matthew wrote.

In a parallel passage, Luke did not include the designation “son of Barachiah” (Luke 11:50–51).³⁵⁶ Most scholars assert that Matthew and Luke utilized the same sources, the gospel of Mark and an unknown document called Q.³⁵⁷

³⁴⁶Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 138.

³⁴⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 556.

³⁴⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 880.

³⁴⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 677.

³⁵⁰W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 19–28* (ICC; Edinburgh; London; New York: T & T Clark, 1997), 318.

³⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 676–7.

³⁵²Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 4.5.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston+chapter%3D5%3Awhiston+section%3D4>

³⁵³Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 35.

³⁵⁴Nestle, et al., *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, 28. *Revidierte Auflage*, 78,

<http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=33&chapter=23&lid=en&side=r&verse=35&zoomSlider=0>. Note that the English translation on this site does not reflect the omission of *hiou Barachio* denoted by the blue marker resembling a capital T on the Greek transcription.

³⁵⁵Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament, 2nd Ed.* (Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 73.

³⁵⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 868.

³⁵⁷Osborne, *Matthew*, 36–7.

In the Hebrew Bible, the last book is 2 Chronicles rather than Malachi.³⁵⁸ While the names of the martyrs cited run the gamut from A to Z, more likely Jesus named Abel and Zechariah because they were the first and last saints to die in the pages of the Hebrew OT (Gen 4:8; 2 Chron 24:20–22). Since Zechariah was murdered in the ninth century BC, he was not the last righteous man unjustly killed. King Jehoiakim murdered Uriah for testifying against Jerusalem three centuries later (Jer 26:20–23).³⁵⁹

Therefore, Christ employed the literary device known as merism. God would hold the scribes and Pharisees accountable for the deaths of Abel, Zechariah, and all the prophets in between them. Furthermore—as with Abel’s blood (Gen 4:10)—Zechariah called for the Lord to avenge him (2 Chron 24:22).³⁶⁰

The *Babylonian Talmud* records this event from the sacking of Jerusalem in 586 BC: “An old man from the inhabitants of Jerusalem told me that in this valley Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard killed two hundred and eleven myriads, and in Jerusalem he killed ninety-four myriads on one stone, until their blood went and joined that of Zechariah, to fulfill the words, ‘Blood toucheth blood.’”

“He noticed the blood of Zechariah bubbling up warm and asked what it was. They said, ‘It is the blood of the sacrifices which has been poured there.’ He had some blood brought, but it was different from the other. He then said to them, ‘If you tell me [the truth], well and good, but if not, I will tear your flesh with combs of iron.’”

“They said, ‘What can we say to you? There was a prophet among us who used to reprove us for our irreligion, and we rose up against him and killed him, and for many years his blood has not rested.’”

“He said to them, ‘I will appease him.’” He brought the great Sanhedrin and the small [local] Sanhedrin (*m. Sanhedrin* 1.4) and killed them over him, but the blood did not cease. He then slaughtered young men and women, but the blood did not cease. He brought schoolchildren and slaughtered them over it, but the blood did not cease. So, he said, ‘Zechariah, Zechariah. I have slain the best of them. Do you want me to destroy them all?’ When he said this to him, it stopped” (*b. Gittin* 57b).

Jerusalem’s destruction did not occur solely to avenge Zechariah’s blood. During the reign of Manasseh—a century before the Babylonians razed the city—the king shed so much innocent blood that God proclaimed certain judgment (2 Ki 24:3–4; Lam 4:12–16; Lam 5:7).

Christ’s discussion of blood “being poured out” indicates that this martyrdom had not reached its completion.³⁶¹ Even as the guilt for Zechariah’s death centuries earlier desecrated the temple and invited God’s retribution, so would the blame for the execution of Jesus fall upon that generation (Matt 27:24–26; Deut 32:43; Matt 23:37–24:2).³⁶²

As Josephus reported, only thirty-seven years later, Rome’s army destroyed Jerusalem and its temple:

“[The Jews] were forced to defend themselves for fear of being punished; as after they had fought, they thought it too late to make any supplications for mercy; so, they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died, and were then crucified before the

³⁵⁸Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1983), 1459–574.

³⁵⁹Robert Althann, “Uriah (Person),” *ABD* 6:767–9, 768–9.

³⁶⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 880.

³⁶¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 880.

³⁶²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 557.

wall of the city. This miserable procedure made [General] Titus greatly to pity them, while they caught every day five hundred Jews; nay, some days they caught more...

“The main reason why he did not forbid that cruelty was this, that he hoped the Jews might perhaps yield at that sight, out of fear lest they might themselves afterwards be liable to the same cruel treatment. So, the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest, when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies...

“While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity, but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests were all slain in the same manner...The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire.

“Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword...The blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.”³⁶³

Read Matt 23:34–36. How did Christ’s pronouncement of judgment upon that generation come to pass? Why did he hold that generation responsible for so many deaths?

Blood Given for You

12) Matt 26:26–28: This passage focuses upon God’s perspective on the death of Jesus.³⁶⁴ It also explains the origin of one of the universally recognized sacraments of the church.³⁶⁵ While hosting the traditional Passover feast, Christ introduced a startling new element to the ancient ritual.³⁶⁶ Jewish people around the world follow a specific pattern of celebrating the meal.³⁶⁷ Typically, the host interprets the meaning behind the various portions of the meal, such as the

³⁶³Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5.11.1, 6.5.1,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D5%3Awhiston+chapter%3D11%3Awhiston+section%3D1>;

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D6%3Awhiston+chapter%3D5%3Awhiston+section%3D1>.

³⁶⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 994.

³⁶⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 771.

³⁶⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 991.

³⁶⁷The Jewish Federations of North America, “The Passover Haggadah: A Guide to the Seder,” http://www.jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday_images/39497.pdf.

unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the lamb.³⁶⁸ During the feast, celebrants consume four cups of wine.³⁶⁹

Jesus transformed the meaning behind the food and drink into a portrayal of his redemptive death, rather than emphasizing the historical exodus from Egypt (Exod 13:1–10; 1 Cor 11:26).³⁷⁰ He embodied the sacrifice to which the Passover pointed (1 Cor 5:7).³⁷¹

The *Mishnah* provides this overview of the ritual:

“When the first cup has been poured out, the blessing of the festival must be said...Herbs and vegetables are then to be brought: the lettuce is to be immersed, and part eaten thereof, until the eating of the unleavened bread; then unleavened cakes are to be placed before him, as also lettuce and two kinds of cooked food...”

“During the existence of the Holy Temple, the paschal sacrifice was then also placed before him. A second cup of wine is then poured out; and the son shall then enquire of his father [the cause of this ceremony], and when the son's mental faculties are insufficient, the father is bound to instruct him in the following manner: ‘Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights? That on all other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night it must be all unleavened; on all other nights we may eat any kind of herbs, but on this night we must eat bitter herbs; on other nights we may eat meat, either roasted, boiled, or cooked in different ways, but on this night we must eat roasted meat only; on all other nights we immerse what we eat once, but on this night twice.’

“And according to the powers of comprehension of the child, thus his father is bound to teach him: he shall first inform him of the dishonor [of our ancestors]...and conclude with Deut 26:5–9.

“Rabbi Gamaliel says, ‘Whosoever does not mention [explain] three things on the Passover, has not fulfilled his duty. These are the paschal sacrifice, the unleavened cakes, and bitter herbs. The paschal sacrifice is offered because the Lord passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt; the unleavened bread [is eaten] because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt [before they had time to leaven their dough]; and bitter herbs are eaten, because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt’” (*m. Pesah* 10:2–5).

Jesus identified himself with the Passover lamb (Exod 12:21–28).³⁷² Yet, Christ also used the unleavened bread to symbolize his body.³⁷³ Note the abundance of sacrificial terminology in his words, such as “flesh,” “blood,” “poured out,” and “remission of sins.”³⁷⁴

According to Matthew, “While they were eating, Jesus took bread and he blessed [it] and broke [it] and gave [it] to his disciples. And he said, ‘Take, eat, this is my body.’” This differs radically from the traditional formula,³⁷⁵ which states, “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His laws and commanded us to eat matzah.”³⁷⁶

The host served unleavened bread after the main part of the meal to symbolize the coming of the messiah,³⁷⁷ for it represented cleanliness and new life (1 Cor 5:7–8). By these

³⁶⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 630.

³⁶⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 836.

³⁷⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 771.

³⁷¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 836.

³⁷²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 772.

³⁷³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 991–2.

³⁷⁴Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 631.

³⁷⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 991.

³⁷⁶The Jewish Federations of North America, “The Passover Haggadah: A Guide to the Seder,” 13, http://www.jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday_images/39497.pdf.

³⁷⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 772.

words, Jesus implied that his impending death would benefit his disciples.³⁷⁸ The institution of bread to represent Christ's body indicates that God no longer requires the sacrifice of a lamb to cover our sins (Heb 9:11–14).³⁷⁹

Exactly what Jesus meant by the word “is” (*eimi*) in “This is my body” has provoked a great deal of controversy in the Protestant church.³⁸⁰ The verb can have a wide range of meaning. “Is” can mean anything from complete physical reality to a symbolic representation.³⁸¹

Although Martin Luther and the other Reformers agreed upon fourteen of fifteen points at the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, their views on the Lord's Supper tore them apart. The debate centered upon whether Jesus meant his words, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” to be taken literally or figuratively. Luther denounced the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which led people to believe that a priest's words of institution mystically changed the bread and wine into Christ's actual body and blood. Yet, Luther charged that those who “contort the little word ‘is’ into ‘signifies’ [do so] frivolously and unsupported by Scripture.”³⁸²

This theological debate would never have occurred to the disciples.³⁸³ After all, a literal interpretation of the Passover liturgy which reads, “This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt” (Deut 16:3) was not possible. They could not have ingested the same pieces of unleavened bread.³⁸⁴ Furthermore, Jesus ate with them at this meal, so they did not consume his actual body.

When Christ previously informed his compatriots that they needed to consume his flesh and drink his blood, bread and wine were not even present (John 6:48–58).³⁸⁵ Therefore, the Lord's Supper provides spiritual benefit and memorializes Christ's sacrifice but does not constitute another offering of himself (Heb 7:23–28; Heb 9:24–28). Thus, a rich symbolism remains the best option.³⁸⁶

Matthew reported, “And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave [it] to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.” Prior to this, they ate the bitter herbs and sang Psalms 113–118, in accordance with *m. Pesah* 10:1–7.³⁸⁷ Of the four cups of wine which they consumed, this one appears to be the third cup, known as the cup of blessing or the cup of redemption (1 Cor 10:16; Exod 6:6).³⁸⁸

Observant Jewish people traditionally recite these words, “Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the world, who creates the fruit of the vine.”³⁸⁹ Instead, Jesus asserted, “For this is my blood of the covenant, poured out on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

³⁷⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 992.

³⁷⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 836.

³⁸⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 772.

³⁸¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 992.

³⁸²James M. Kittleston, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 179.

³⁸³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 836–7.

³⁸⁴Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 631.

³⁸⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 992.

³⁸⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 772.

³⁸⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 773.

³⁸⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 837.

³⁸⁹The Jewish Federations of North America, “The Passover Haggadah: A Guide to the Seder,” 15, http://www.jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday_images/39497.pdf.

Symbolizing Jesus’s blood, to partake of that wine signifies our participation in his atoning sacrifice (Heb 12:22–24).³⁹⁰

In Egypt, the blood of lambs had saved the lives of many (Exod 12: 22–23). Now Christ’s blood secures the salvation of his people.³⁹¹ The phrase “Blood of the covenant” occurs in several Old Testament passages, such as Exod 24:8 and Zech 9:11.³⁹² However, the new covenant foretold by Jer 31:27–34 fits best with the concept of a restored relationship with God resulting from the forgiveness of sins (Ezek 36:25–27; Matt 5:17–20). Thus, Christ’s atoning sacrifice forms the theological basis for the new people of God.³⁹³

Read Matt 26:26–28. How did Jesus alter the traditional Passover meal? What does receiving Communion do for us? How does the sprinkled blood of Jesus “speak a better word than the blood of Abel?”

Praying for Justice

13) Rev 6:9–10: The book of Revelation consists of the Apostle John’s vision during his exile on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9–11). When he wrote it, persecution affected many churches. However, only a few regions of the Roman Empire experienced martyrdom. While some of what John saw pertained to his own era, much of his vision related to the unfolding of future events.³⁹⁴ Christ charges every believer to deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow him (Mark 8:34–38).³⁹⁵ Therefore, none of us should be surprised when persecution comes (John 15:18–21; Rom 8:35–39).

The Lamb represents the crucified and risen Christ (Rev 5:6–10). When the Lamb broke the other seals, plagues afflicted humanity (Rev 6:1–6, 11–17; Rev 8:1–5). His opening of this one revealed those whom humanity afflicted praying for justice.³⁹⁶ In the book of Revelation, “inhabitants on the earth” refers to the persecutors of God’s people (Rev 3:10).³⁹⁷ John “saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered,” indicating that the scene took place in heaven.³⁹⁸ This view of the afterlife differed from the Old Testament conception of entry into the underworld (*Sheol*), upon one’s death (Num 16:30–33; Job 7:6–10).³⁹⁹

These believers chose to identify with the suffering of the Lamb, receiving execution for their witness to the redemptive work of Jesus.⁴⁰⁰ This passage affirms that God ushers his people

³⁹⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 773.

³⁹¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 993.

³⁹²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 773.

³⁹³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 994–5.

³⁹⁴G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 395.

³⁹⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 391.

³⁹⁶Craig S. Keener, *Revelation* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 217.

³⁹⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 392.

³⁹⁸David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 403.

³⁹⁹Theodore J. Lewis, “Dead, Abode of the,” *ABD* 2:101–5, 102.

⁴⁰⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 390.

into his presence immediately when our lives on earth reach their end (2 Cor 5:1–8; Phil 1:21–24; 1 Thess 5:9–10). However, our bodily resurrection will not occur until Christ returns (1 Cor 15:42–58; 1 Thess 4:13–17).

Stoic philosophy promoted a similar view. However, its adherents considered the body a prison of the soul.⁴⁰¹ According to Seneca (ca. 1 BC–65 AD):

“This body of ours is a weight upon the soul and its penance. As the load presses down the soul is crushed and is in bondage, unless philosophy has come to its assistance and has bid it take fresh courage by contemplating the universe and has turned it from things earthly to things divine. There it has its liberty, there it can roam abroad; meantime it escapes the custody in which it is bound and renews its life in heaven.”⁴⁰²

Israel’s priests poured a sacrificial bull’s blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering (Lev 4:7). Therefore, the souls of martyrs dwelling under the altar in heaven indicates that the Lord views their deaths as a sacrifice, “because the blood for a soul (*nephesh*) will make atonement” (Lev 17:11).⁴⁰³ Paul considered the ongoing persecution he experienced and his impending death “a drink offering” (Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6).⁴⁰⁴

However, the altar in heaven does not necessarily represent the bronze sacrificial altar (Exod 27:1–3). Given that the martyrs’ prayers rose to God, their souls might rest under the altar of incense (Exod 30:8–10; Rev 8:3–5; Rev 9:13–15; Rev 16:4–7).⁴⁰⁵ While the theme of sacrifice points to one type of altar and prayer to another, in John’s vision both images may converge into one reality.⁴⁰⁶

The *Babylonian Talmud* states, “The souls of the righteous are hidden under the Throne of Glory” (*b. Shabbat* 152b). Therefore, the altar could also signify the throne of God, protecting the souls of martyrs after they lose their lives (Matt 10:26–39; Phil 1:27–30; 2 Tim 1:8–12).⁴⁰⁷ Crying out for vindication “with a loud voice,”⁴⁰⁸ these souls pled, “How long, O master, holy and true, will you not judge and grant justice to our blood from the inhabitants on the earth?” (Cf. Gen 4:9–11).

A man subjected to persecution under Domitian (51–96 AD) noted, “Well, how I bore my exile...bearing up under the hatred...of the most powerful, stern man, who was called by all Greeks and barbarians both master and god, but who was in reality an evil demon.”⁴⁰⁹ This meshes with John’s view of the real power behind the Roman Empire (Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2–3).⁴¹⁰

In a Jewish intertestamental apocryphal account, some citizens of Israel appealed to their ruler. “They went to the king and said, “How long will you fail to do justice and to avenge our kindred?” (1 Macc 6:22 NRSVCE)

⁴⁰¹ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 403–4.

⁴⁰² Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles, Vol. 1* (trans. Richard M. Grummere; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 94–5, <https://archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu01seneuoft#page/452/mode/2up>.

⁴⁰³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נֶפֶשׁ” (*nephesh*), *BDB*, 659–60, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/658/mode/2up>. This word can be translated as “soul,” “living being,” “life,” or “self,” among other options.

⁴⁰⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 146.

⁴⁰⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 391.

⁴⁰⁶ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 146.

⁴⁰⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 391–2.

⁴⁰⁸ Keener, *Revelation*, 218.

⁴⁰⁹ Dio Chrysostom, *Orations, Vol. 4* (trans. H. Lamar Crosby; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 45.1, 207, <https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.57803/2015.57803.Dio-Chrysostom-Vol-4#page/n217/mode/2up>.

⁴¹⁰ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 407.

A Jewish tombstone from the same era features a similar plea: “I call upon and pray the Most High God, the Lord of the spirits and of all flesh, against those who with guile murdered or poisoned the wretched, untimely lost Heraclea, shedding her innocent blood wickedly: that it may be so with them that murdered or poisoned her, and with their children; O Lord that seeth all things, and ye angels of God, Thou before whom every soul is afflicted this same day with supplication: that Thou mayst avenge the innocent blood and require it again right speedily!”⁴¹¹

In Hebrew tribunals, plaintiffs argued their own cases before the judge.⁴¹² After condemnation by human courts, the martyrs in John’s vision sought vindication in the heavenly one. Had God remained silent, he would have signaled that the martyrs’ murder was justifiable.⁴¹³ “How long?” pleads for the Lord’s quick intervention,⁴¹⁴ for much time has passed without justice (Ps 13:1–4; Ps 79:1–7; Zech 1:12).⁴¹⁵ According to these martyrs, by failing to vindicate them, God put his reputation at stake (Luke 18:1–8).⁴¹⁶

Although they received an immediate response (Rev 6:12–17), their prayers shall not be fully answered until the events of Rev 19:2 occur. At that time, the Lord shall serve as “the avenger of blood” (Num 35:19; Ps 9:10–16).⁴¹⁷

a) Read Rev 6:9–10. Why are the souls of these martyrs under the altar? How does this fit with the sacrificial altar, the altar of incense, and God’s throne? For what are they waiting? How does this passage affect you?

The Full Number of Martyrs

b) Rev 6:11: For people in Greco-Roman culture, clothing represented a person’s identity.⁴¹⁸ In this verse, God responded to the martyr’s plea in Rev 6:9–10 symbolically, giving each of them a white robe. White robes denoted the purity which resulted from persevering in faith (Rev 3:4–5).⁴¹⁹ This garb also connoted salvation, victory, and immortality.⁴²⁰

Therefore, the Lord declared them righteous despite the world’s guilty verdict.⁴²¹ Then these martyrs were told to “rest a little longer.” God expects them to wait, even though his sense of time is not like ours (2 Pet 3:8).⁴²² C. S. Lewis captured this concept well. When the Christ-

⁴¹¹ Adolf Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; New York; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 435, <https://archive.org/stream/lightfromancient00deis#page/434/mode/2up>.

⁴¹² Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 146.

⁴¹³ Keener, *Revelation*, 218.

⁴¹⁴ Keener, *Revelation*, 218.

⁴¹⁵ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 407.

⁴¹⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 392–3.

⁴¹⁷ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 407–8.

⁴¹⁸ Ulrich Wilckens, “στολη” (*stolē*), *TDNT* 7:687–91, 689.

⁴¹⁹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 394.

⁴²⁰ Wilckens, “στολη” (*stolē*), *TDNT*, 7:691.

⁴²¹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 394.

⁴²² Keener, *Revelation*, 220.

figure told Lucy that he would return shortly, she asked, “Please, Aslan...what do you call soon?” He replied, “I call all times soon.”⁴²³

What the martyrs eagerly anticipate will occur when “might be completed also, [the number of] their fellow servants, their brothers [and sisters], the ones about to be killed even as they [had been].”

The apocryphal book of 1 Enoch expresses this same concept:

“And in those days shall have ascended the prayer of the righteous, and the blood of the righteous from the earth before the Lord of Spirits. In those days the holy ones who dwell above in the heavens shall unite with one voice and supplicate and pray...that judgment may be done unto them...In those days I saw the Head of Days when he seated himself upon the throne of his glory, and the books of the living were opened before him...And the hearts of the holy were filled with joy; because the number of the righteous had been offered, and the prayer of the righteous had been heard, and the blood of the righteous been required before the Lord of Spirits.”⁴²⁴

The martyrdom of believers falls within the plan of God. Their deaths shall inaugurate the coming of the Kingdom in all its fullness,⁴²⁵ making these Christians especially important in determining when the day of the Lord shall come.⁴²⁶

Nero’s victims in John’s era were soon followed by those who died under other Roman emperors.⁴²⁷ For example, Polycarp, a disciple of John, refused to deny Christ by elevating Caesar above the Lord.⁴²⁸ Shortly before his persecutors burned him to death, he testified, “Thou hast granted me this day and hour, that I might receive a portion amongst the number of martyrs...May I be received among these in Thy presence this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice.”⁴²⁹ May we stand as firmly as Polycarp did, through whatever trials we undergo.

Read Rev 6:11. Why were the martyrs given white robes and told to wait a little longer? How do their deaths affect the timing of Christ’s return? What gives you the ability to stand firm under great pressure?

Cursed from the Ground

14) Gen 4:11–14: People in the Ancient Near East and in the Roman Empire believed in a three-part universe.⁴³⁰ For example, Homer wrote, “Now therefore let earth be witness to this, and the broad heaven above, and the down-flowing water of the Styx.”⁴³¹ The phrase, “the ground which

⁴²³C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), 138.

⁴²⁴R. H. Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apochrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (APOT)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 47, 90–2, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n207/mode/2up>.

⁴²⁵Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 411.

⁴²⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 394.

⁴²⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 149.

⁴²⁸Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language, 3rd Ed.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 37.

⁴²⁹Polycarp, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (trans. J. B. Lightfoot, adapted by Athena Data Products ; 1990), 14.2, <https://archive.org/stream/apostolicfathers02lakeuoft#page/330/mode/2up>.

⁴³⁰Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2004), 128.

⁴³¹Homer, *The Odyssey* (trans. A. T. Murray; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1919), 5.184–6,

had opened its mouth in order to take the blood of your brother from your hand” suggests that Abel entered Sheol, the abode of the dead (Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5).⁴³²

As with the serpent and the ground (Gen 3:14–19),⁴³³ God cursed Cain. By being “cursed from the ground,” Cain would no longer benefit from its productivity.⁴³⁴ This implied banishment from places where he could cultivate the earth.⁴³⁵ Instead, Cain would be “one wavering back and forth...on the land,” a restless wanderer in his quest to find food. Far from experiencing the joys his parents had in Eden (Gen 2:7–25), Cain would spend his life hunting and gathering food to survive.⁴³⁶

Since Cain disavowed any responsibility for the welfare of his brother (Gen 4:8–9), the Lord deprived him of family relationships.⁴³⁷ No longer would he enjoy their community. Cain would lose his sense of belonging, in some ways, a fate worse than death.⁴³⁸

According to the Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD):
 “[Cain and Abel were] persons who have received a birth more excellent than that of any succeeding generation, in being sprung from the first wedded pair, from the first man and woman...But, nevertheless the elder of them endured to slay the younger and, having committed the great and most accursed crime of fratricide, he first defiled the ground with human blood. “Now, what good did the nobility of his birth do to a man who had displayed this want of nobleness in his soul? Which God, who surveys all human things and actions, detested when he saw it; and, casting it forth, affixed a punishment to it, not slaying him at once, so that he should arrive at an immediate insensibility to misfortunes, but suspending over him ten thousand deaths in his external senses, by...incessant griefs and fears, so as to inflict upon him...the most grievous calamities.”⁴³⁹

Adam and Eve accepted their sentences without protest (Gen 3:16–24). Cain failed to repent. Instead, he responded with self-pity.⁴⁴⁰ Although, the Lord could have justly sentenced him to an immediate death,⁴⁴¹ Cain seemed concerned only with the effects of the harsh punishment imposed by God,⁴⁴² which he considered intolerable.⁴⁴³ He protested, “Behold, you have driven me this day from upon the faces of the ground, and from your face I will be hidden.” Cain perceived that God was sending him even farther from the Lord’s presence than his parents had been when they were driven out of Eden (Gen 3:22–4:6).⁴⁴⁴

Cain’s complaint also reflects his fear of entering a wilderness devoid of the rule of

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0136%3Abook%3D5%3Acard%3D145>.

⁴³² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107–8.

⁴³³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98. There is no evidence that God cursed Adam or Eve.

⁴³⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 232.

⁴³⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107.

⁴³⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 265.

⁴³⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 265.

⁴³⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 232.

⁴³⁹ Philo, “On the Virtues,” in *The Works of Philo, Vol. 3* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 499, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda03phil#page/498/mode/2up>.

⁴⁴⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

⁴⁴¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 233.

⁴⁴² Schlimm, “From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Ethics of Anger in Genesis,” 342, http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/890/D_Schlimm_Matthew_a_200812.pdf?sequence=

⁴⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108.

⁴⁴⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108.

law.⁴⁴⁵ He said, “I shall be one who wavers back and forth in the land, and anyone who finds me shall kill me.” He fretted that he would receive the same treatment he delivered to Abel (Gen 4:8; Num 35:19).⁴⁴⁶ Where no government exists, blood feuds tend to occur.⁴⁴⁷

As many have observed, Cain’s lament indicates that other people besides his parents lived at that time.⁴⁴⁸ However, this portion of the text focuses upon his spiritual condition, rather than human history. Therefore, Genesis cannot definitively answer speculation regarding whom he feared and where he would later find a wife (Gen 4:17).⁴⁴⁹

a) Read Gen 4:11–12. How would Cain live due to his sin? What does this tell us about the value of human life? Why was Cain’s punishment too much for him to bear? How would you respond to that sentence?

Banished from God’s Presence

c) Gen 4:15–16: Here the narrative of Gen 4:1–16 takes a surprising turn: the Lord granted the murderer a pledge and a protective action.⁴⁵⁰ While God did not promise that Cain would live, he would render judgment against anyone who killed him.⁴⁵¹ The number seven denotes a complete cycle.⁴⁵² Therefore, that upon “anyone who kills Cain sevenfold shall vengeance be taken” indicates that God would deliver perfect justice,⁴⁵³ an act of divine retribution (Ps 79:8–12).⁴⁵⁴

Then “the Lord put on Cain a sign (*oth*).”⁴⁵⁵ God provided protective clothing for Adam and Eve before sending them out of Eden into a hostile environment (Gen 3:20). Here he gave their son a safeguard for his new conditions.⁴⁵⁶ The precise nature of this sign remains a subject of tremendous speculation.⁴⁵⁷ Marking a slave with a tattoo,⁴⁵⁸ or maiming a criminal commonly occurred in the Ancient Near East.⁴⁵⁹ However, Cain’s mark best fits with the sign of preservation which an angel placed upon the heads of innocent people in Jerusalem (Ezek 9:3–

⁴⁴⁵ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 164.

⁴⁴⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 233.

⁴⁴⁷ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 4:15.

⁴⁴⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 233.

⁴⁴⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁴⁵⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 233.

⁴⁵¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 165.

⁴⁵² Leland Ryken, et al., “Seven,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (DBI)* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 774–5.

⁴⁵³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁴⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 109.

⁴⁵⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*oth*,” *BDB*, 16,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/16/mode/2up>.

⁴⁵⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 265–6.

⁴⁵⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 109.

⁴⁵⁸ Mallory Ditchey, “Body Language: Tattooing and Branding in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 4, no. 1 (14 March 2017), <https://www.degruyter.com/view/j/janeh.ahead-of-print/janeh-2015-0004/janeh-2015-0004.xml>.

⁴⁵⁹ Theophile J. Meek, “Middle Assyrian Laws,” in *ANET*, A4, 180,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n205/mode/2up.

6).⁴⁶⁰ Although he was forced from God’s presence, Cain remained under the Lord’s protection.⁴⁶¹

“And Cain was banished from the presence of the Lord,”⁴⁶² just as his parents had been (Gen 3:22–24).⁴⁶³ “And he dwelt in the land of Nod.” “Nod” means “Wandering.” This designation reinforced Cain’s sentence to live as a restless outsider (Gen 4:11–14).⁴⁶⁴ Adam and Eve went “east of Eden.” So did their only remaining son.⁴⁶⁵ While Adam and Eve had attempted to become like God (Gen 3:1–7), Cain sought to draw near to God by making an offering (Gen 4:3). However, his demeanor ultimately resulted in banishment from his community as well as from the Lord’s presence (Gen 4:4–8).⁴⁶⁶

Many parallels exist between the accounts of the fall and of Cain and Abel. However, the narrative of the two brothers demonstrates the increasingly brutal effects of sin. In only one generation, Cain’s behavior resulted in even greater alienation of humanity from God.⁴⁶⁷

Read Gen 4:15-16. How did Cain live in alienation from God and yet with his mercy? Have you ever experienced that?

Children of the Devil

15) 1 John 3:10–12: The Apostle John proclaimed that a test exists to determine the validity of a person’s claim of faith in Christ,⁴⁶⁸ and whether we ourselves belong to him (Matt 7:15–23).⁴⁶⁹ This passage strongly affirms that holiness characterizes the lives of believers.⁴⁷⁰

John began by stating, “In this it is evident [who are] the children of God and the children of the devil.” Thus, he made a sharp division of people into two classes. While Jesus applied the latter designation to Israelis who opposed him (John 8:42–47), John professed that this name applies to some people who claim to live for Christ.⁴⁷¹

Those whose lives are typified by sin do not know God (1 Cor 5:9–13; Gal 5:19–21).⁴⁷² Therefore, we must scrutinize ourselves to determine whether we live righteously. Although we can never achieve perfection in this life, we do have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation (1 Cor 10:6–13; Gal 5:22–26).

⁴⁶⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:15.

⁴⁶¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 235.

⁴⁶² Jacob J. Rabinowitz, “The Susa Tablets, the Bible, and the Aramaic Papyri,” *VT* 11, no. 1 (1 January 1961): 55–76, 56,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249582516_The_Susa_Tablets_The_Bible_and_The_Aramaic_Papyri.

⁴⁶³ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 133.

⁴⁶⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 235.

⁴⁶⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 227–8.

⁴⁶⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 110.

⁴⁶⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100.

⁴⁶⁸ Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989), 179.

⁴⁶⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 187.

⁴⁷⁰ Gary M. Burge, *Letters of John* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 150–1.

⁴⁷¹ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 180.

⁴⁷² Burge, *Letters of John*, 157.

John saw no conflict between the law and the gospel: both call us to live in holiness and love (1 John 2:3–6).⁴⁷³ Therefore, failing to practice righteousness on an on-going basis indicates that one is not a believer. This especially applies to not loving fellow Christians.⁴⁷⁴

What John wrote to them was nothing new. They had heard this from him before (John 13:34–35).⁴⁷⁵ By loving others, even those outside of the church, we fulfill the moral demands of the law (Rom 12:9–21; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 6:7–10).⁴⁷⁶ Consequently, the apostle exhorted them to live out the new character which the Lord had placed within them.⁴⁷⁷

Since the essence of God is love (1 John 4:7–12),⁴⁷⁸ the commands to believe and to continuously love others are inextricably linked.⁴⁷⁹ The apostle then emphasized the requirement to love by contrasting devotion with its antithesis.⁴⁸⁰

Greco-Romans considered killing a member of one's family one of the most heinous crimes.⁴⁸¹ For example, Cicero (106–43 BC) castigated his archenemy by calling him, “You parricide, you fratricide, you murderer of your sister.”⁴⁸²

John applied this same concept within the church,⁴⁸³ citing Cain as the prototype of murderers (Gen 4:3–8).⁴⁸⁴ While Cain could control his actions, John specified the source of his attitude and behavior as Satan himself.⁴⁸⁵ He was “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44; Gen 3:1–7, 17–19).⁴⁸⁶ According to John, Cain “slaughtered” (*sphazō*) his brother.⁴⁸⁷ This term exudes violence. It occurs in the New Testament only here and nine times in the book of Revelation (e.g. Rev 6:4).⁴⁸⁸

The atrocity began with a failure to love which turned to hatred: murder in embryonic form (Matt 5:21–22).⁴⁸⁹ John noted that Cain despised Abel “because his deeds were evil and those of his brother [were] righteous.” Jealousy of his brother's uprightness formed the root of Cain's life-altering iniquity (Prov 27:4; James 3:13–16).⁴⁹⁰

a) Read 1 John 3:10–12. What do our attitudes toward Christians reveal about us? Why is Cain a supreme example of the consequences of envy? How does jealousy affect your life?

⁴⁷³ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 183.

⁴⁷⁴ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 187.

⁴⁷⁵ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 189.

⁴⁷⁶ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 181.

⁴⁷⁷ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 188.

⁴⁷⁸ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 181.

⁴⁷⁹ Burge, *Letters of John*, 160. In Koine Greek, a verb in the present tense indicates that the action occurs continuously or repetitively.

⁴⁸⁰ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 183.

⁴⁸¹ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 John 3:11–3.

⁴⁸² M. Tullius Cicero, “On His House,” in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), 10.26, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0020:text=Dom.:chapter=10>.

⁴⁸³ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 John 3:11–3.

⁴⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 189.

⁴⁸⁵ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 183–4.

⁴⁸⁶ Burge, *Letters of John*, 160.

⁴⁸⁷ Danker et al., “σφαζω” (*sphazō*), *BDAG*, 979.

⁴⁸⁸ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 184.

⁴⁸⁹ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 189–90.

⁴⁹⁰ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 185.

Love or Death

b) 1 John 3:13–15: Following John’s exposition concerning Cain’s murder of his brother (1 John 3:10–12), he inserted an aside. the apostle proclaimed the importance of loving others even though the world will hate us. In fact, we can expect persecution.⁴⁹¹ First, he wrote, “Do not be astonished.” His next phrase can be translated as “if the world hates you” or “that the word hates you.” Since “be astonished” occurs in the imperative (*thaumazete*), rather than the subjunctive mood, (*thaumazēte*),⁴⁹² he likely meant “that the world hates you.”⁴⁹³

The same situation exists today as in the era of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–8).⁴⁹⁴ Those who remain in spiritual death despise those who “crossed over from death into life” (John 15:18–21; 1 Pet 4:12–19).⁴⁹⁵ Sadly, this attitude of hatred can appear even within our congregations (1 John 2:7–11).⁴⁹⁶ People without love for other believers expose their true origin:⁴⁹⁷ the realm of evil and death.⁴⁹⁸

John provided a compelling description of the transition from one kingdom to another, an event which occurred in the past but whose effects endure.⁴⁹⁹ He emphatically pronounced, “We know that we have crossed over from death into life because we love the brothers [and sisters].”⁵⁰⁰ Since “we love” appears in the present tense, continual devotion to other Christians characterizes God’s people.⁵⁰¹ The proof of eternal life consists of the love we have for those in whom the Holy Spirit also resides.⁵⁰² Loving others does not lead to salvation but exhibits that we have already received redemption. It provides tangible evidence of Christ’s work within us (1 John 3:16–18, 23–24; John 5:24).⁵⁰³

On the other hand, “Anyone who does not continually love remains in death.” In addition, “Everyone who hates his brother [or sister] is a murderer.” Hatred fails to recognize the image of God in other people, wishing that they no longer existed (Gen 1:26–27; Matt 5:21–24).⁵⁰⁴ From the Lord’s viewpoint, our attitudes and motives are equivalent to actions (Matt 5:27–28).⁵⁰⁵

The term which John used here for “murderer” (*anthrōpoktonos*) appears in only two verses in the New Testament, here and in John 8:44. John associated both usages with the devil. In extra-biblical literature, authors reserved the word for especially revolting murders.⁵⁰⁶ After

⁴⁹¹ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 190.

⁴⁹² William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 290.

⁴⁹³ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 187.

⁴⁹⁴ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 190.

⁴⁹⁵ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 186.

⁴⁹⁶ Burge, *Letters of John*, 161.

⁴⁹⁷ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 190.

⁴⁹⁸ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 190–1.

⁴⁹⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 573. The perfect tense describes an event which occurred in the past with results which remain in the present.

⁵⁰⁰ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 188. Greek verbs already incorporate a pronoun. Adding another pronoun to the verb makes the pronoun emphatic. “Brothers” can refer to only men or to a group of mixed genders.

⁵⁰¹ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 189. The present tense refers to a continual or repetitive action.

⁵⁰² Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 191.

⁵⁰³ Burge, *Letters of John*, 161.

⁵⁰⁴ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 191.

⁵⁰⁵ Burge, *Letters of John*, 161.

⁵⁰⁶ John Byron, “Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege: Cain and Abel Traditions in 1 John 3,” *Biblica* 88, no. 4 (1 January 2007): 526–35, 527–8, <https://www.bsw.org/biblica/vol-88-2007/slaughter-fratricide-and-sacrilege-cain-and-abel-traditions-in-1-john-3/85/>.

the Cyclops devoured one of his men, Odysseus said to him, “You were destined, it seems, to pay the penalty for your ungodly feast. For my burning Troy to the ground would have been a sorry deed if I had not punished you for the murder (*anthrōpoktonos*) of my companions.”⁵⁰⁷

Hatred indicates that a person possesses the same nature as the devil. Such a person cannot belong to the kingdom of God (1 Cor 5:9–13; Gal 5:19–21).⁵⁰⁸ An absence of love is not compatible with eternal life.⁵⁰⁹

Read 1 John 3:13-15. Why shouldn't we be surprised when those outside of the church hate us? What makes hatred for Christians incompatible with eternal life? How does John's admonition mesh with the account of Cain and Abel?

⁵⁰⁷Euripides, *Cyclops, Alcestis, Medea* (translator David Kovacs; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 694–5, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0094%3Acard%3D663>.

⁵⁰⁸ Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 191–2.

⁵⁰⁹ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 190.

Chapter 2: The Descent of Humanity (Gen 4:17–24)

Adam and Eve enjoyed a deep personal involvement and intimacy which culminated in a sexual relationship.⁵¹⁰ Whether that occurred before or after the fall remains unknown.⁵¹¹ As a result of that act, Eve “acquired (*qanah*) a man.” She appears to have ironically alluded to Adam’s statement, “She will be called woman because from man she was taken” (Gen 2:23). Now a man had come from a woman.⁵¹²

She then bore Abel, and gave him a name which means “vapor, breath, or futility.”⁵¹³ In God’s words of judgment against the serpent after the fall, he declared that people would align themselves either with the serpent or with the Lord as his “seed” (Gen 3:15). The battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman began with Cain and Abel. As frequently occurs in Genesis, God granted the favor expected by the firstborn son to the younger brother.⁵¹⁴

Despite the fall, both sons worked to fulfill the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26–28 by stewarding the planet’s natural resources.⁵¹⁵ Cain continued in the profession of his father as “a servant of the ground,” while Abel shepherded domesticated animals.⁵¹⁶ At one point, they brought gifts of thanks to God for his generosity to them.⁵¹⁷ Moses’s original readers would have likened this to a vassal king bringing tribute as a sign of deference and respect to his suzerain overlord.⁵¹⁸

According to the author of Hebrews, Abel made his offering by faith, while his brother did not.⁵¹⁹ Therefore, the Lord rejected Cain’s gift. When God exposed his failure, Cain burned with anger against Abel.⁵²⁰ The Lord gave Cain an opportunity to confess his error,⁵²¹ but he left God’s questions unanswered. Then, the Lord informed Cain that sin was lying in wait for him.⁵²² He needed to prepare himself to face temptation and rule over it.⁵²³

Nevertheless, Cain chose the way of the serpent.⁵²⁴ Moses portrayed his premeditated act as an outrageous result of consuming jealousy.⁵²⁵ While they were in the field, Cain killed his brother. He vented his anger toward God on the most likely scapegoat by destroying the one whom the Lord accepted.⁵²⁶

When God confronted him, Cain’s reply belied a heart much harder than those of his parents. He denied any awareness of Abel’s situation,⁵²⁷ sarcastically responding, “Should I be

⁵¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

⁵¹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 260.

⁵¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

⁵¹³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “הֶבֶל” (*hebel*), *BDB*, 210–1, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/210/mode/2up>.

⁵¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96.

⁵¹⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.

⁵¹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 222.

⁵¹⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:7.

⁵¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 262.

⁵¹⁹Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 335.

⁵²⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 182.

⁵²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

⁵²²Walton, *Genesis*, 264.

⁵²³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “masha,” *BDB*, 605,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/604/mode/2up>.

⁵²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100.

⁵²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 264.

⁵²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 230.

⁵²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106–7.

shepherding the shepherd?”⁵²⁸ In only one generation, people had gone from tending paradise to denying an obligation to a family member.⁵²⁹

The Lord responded with outrage,⁵³⁰ saying, “What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother is crying out to me from the ground!”

As a result, God cursed Cain from the ground, banishing him from places where he could cultivate the land.⁵³¹ Cain became a restless wanderer in his quest to find food.⁵³² No longer would he enjoy community. He would become a man without a sense of belonging, a fate worse than death.⁵³³

Cain feared that he would be subject to the same treatment he delivered to Abel.

Surprisingly, the Lord granted him a pledge and a protective action.⁵³⁴ Although God did not promise Cain that he would live, the Lord would render perfect judgment against anyone who killed him.⁵³⁵ Then, the Lord marked Cain with a sign and exiled him.

Cain Dedicated a City

1) Gen 4:17: In parallel with Gen 4:1, Moses wrote, “Then Cain knew his wife. And she conceived and she bore Enoch.”⁵³⁶ Although Moses did not cite the name of Cain’s wife, his original readers would have assumed that she was one of Adam’s “other daughters” (Gen 5:4).

Clearly, the mark placed upon Cain worked. Not only did he survive, Cain produced a family line.⁵³⁷ This genealogy names one son in each of seven generations—the number of perfect completion—ending with Lamech’s four children.⁵³⁸ Cain’s descendants introduced the first metalworking, poetry, and cities.⁵³⁹ These comprise the hallmarks of great civilizations.⁵⁴⁰ As in Genesis 1, Moses wrote a subtle polemic against the pagan mythologies of Israel’s neighbors. In other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) nations, people attributed these cultural advances to either the gods or semi-divine beings.⁵⁴¹

Moses continued, “And it happened that he was building a city. And he called the name of the city by the name of his son Enoch.” In an ominous sign, the man who killed the first martyr built the first city (Gen 4:8).⁵⁴² The name Enoch appears to be related to the verb meaning “to dedicate,”⁵⁴³ apropos for someone with a city designated in his honor.⁵⁴⁴

⁵²⁸Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis*, 338, [Http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/890/D_Schlimm_Matthew_a_200812.pdf?sequence=](http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/890/D_Schlimm_Matthew_a_200812.pdf?sequence=)

⁵²⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 267.

⁵³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 98.

⁵³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107.

⁵³²Walton, *Genesis*, 265.

⁵³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 232.

⁵³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 233.

⁵³⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 165.

⁵³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 111.

⁵³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 237.

⁵³⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁵³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁵⁴⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 276.

⁵⁴¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁵⁴²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 182.

⁵⁴³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “khanak,” *BDB*, 335,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/334/mode/2up>.

⁵⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 111.

Unlike Jacob, who changed the name of Luz to Bethel—which means “the house of God” (Gen 28:16–19)—Cain chose to glorify humanity rather than the Lord.⁵⁴⁵ Indeed, those who built cities in early biblical history typically demonstrated an obsession with making a name for themselves. They promoted human self-sufficiency (Gen 11:4; Num 32:41–42).⁵⁴⁶

Cain’s enterprise seems to contradict the Lord’s decree that he would live as a fugitive (Gen 4:11–14). While this may represent an act of defiance, Moses did not report God’s displeasure.⁵⁴⁷ Living in a city ended Cain’s wandering alienation and provided security.⁵⁴⁸ Even after his rebellion, Cain and his descendants enjoyed the blessing of ruling and subduing the earth (Gen 1:26–28).⁵⁴⁹

Archaeological discoveries point to the unfolding of successive human civilizations dating back approximately 14,000 years.⁵⁵⁰ People built ANE cities close to a river or springs, as they needed a reliable water supply.⁵⁵¹ They fortified their construction with a wall and strong gate.⁵⁵² The organization necessary to build a municipality and keep its mudbrick and stone walls in repair led to the development of assemblies of elders and monarchies to rule them.⁵⁵³ Each city typically had its own ruler (Gen 14:1–2). Small villages—which depended upon the cities for protection, religious activities, and commerce—often developed around them.⁵⁵⁴

A city’s inhabitants considered the history of its founding an important aspect of their heritage. Such documents usually included information about advantageous natural resources, unusual characteristics of the builder, and assistance from the patron deity.⁵⁵⁵ Since people believed that cities represented the dwelling places of the gods, they viewed divine guidance for their construction as essential (Ps 46; Joel 3:16, 20–21; Heb 12:22). In most ANE mythologies, the gods themselves built the cities which people inhabited.⁵⁵⁶

For example, the Sumerians believed that the gods fashioned the city of Uruk, and that its temple had descended from heaven to house them.⁵⁵⁷ Likewise, people thought that the gods constructed Babylon.⁵⁵⁸ According to *Enuma Elish*, the gods gave Marduk control of the entire universe after he defeated the cosmic sea monster. In gratitude to him, the lesser gods built the sacred city of Babylon so that Marduk could rest.⁵⁵⁹

“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

⁵⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁵⁴⁶Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.

⁵⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 237–8.

⁵⁴⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99–100.

⁵⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 277.

⁵⁵⁰Michael Balter, “The Seeds of Civilization,” <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-seeds-of-civilization-78015429/?no-ist>.

⁵⁵¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.

⁵⁵²James D. Price, “ir” *NIDOTTE* 3:396–9, 396–7.

⁵⁵³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.

⁵⁵⁴James D. Price, “ir” *NIDOTTE* 3:396–9, 396–7.

⁵⁵⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:17.

⁵⁵⁶Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 83.

⁵⁵⁷S. N. Kramer, trans., “Gilgamesh and Agga,” in *ANET*, lines 30–4, 46–7, 46,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n71/mode/2up.

⁵⁵⁸E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines 55–64, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

⁵⁵⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

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.”⁵⁶⁰

In ancient Egypt, people revered pharaohs as both kings and the incarnation of the sun god. One 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.”⁵⁶¹

Another Egyptian 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.’”⁵⁶²

Therefore, Seti I, the father of Rameses the Great testified: “Another good thought has come into my heart, at the command of the god, even the equipment of a town, in whose august midst shall be a resting place, a settlement, with a temple. I will build a resting place in this spot, in the great name of my fathers, the gods. May they grant that what I have wrought abide, that my name will prosper.”⁵⁶³

Read Gen 4:17. How did the Lord continue to bless Cain? What was Cain implying by building a city and naming it after his son?

Minds on Earthly Things

2) Read Phil 3:17–19: In contrast to building our own empires (Cf. Gen 4:17), God calls us to direct our efforts toward the expansion of his kingdom (Luke 9:59–60). Consequently, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Philippi: “Fellow imitators of me become, brothers [and sisters]. And continually keep your eyes on those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”

To assist these new believers living in a thoroughly hedonistic environment,⁵⁶⁴ Paul exhorted them to imitate him, as he emulated Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6).⁵⁶⁵ Other Jewish

⁵⁶⁰ “The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, tablet 6:47–65, 68–9,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

⁵⁶¹ Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), lines 407–8, 82,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n509/mode/2up.

⁵⁶² W. 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.

⁵⁶³ James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (5 Vols.) (*ARE*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), section 172, 3:82, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924082479241#page/n113/mode/2up>.

⁵⁶⁴ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 216.

⁵⁶⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 213–4.

and Christian leaders also challenged their followers to internalize and practice their way of life (2 Chron 34:31–33; 2 Chron 36:11–14; Heb 13:7).⁵⁶⁶

This commonly occurred in the Greco-Roman milieu as well. The first century AD statesman Seneca wrote the following:

“We can get assistance not only from the living, but from those of the past. Let us choose, however, from among the living, not men who pour forth their words with the greatest glibness, turning out commonplaces and holding, as it were, their own little private exhibitions, not these, I say, but men who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do and then prove it by practice, who show us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have ordered us to avoid. Choose as a guide one whom you will admire more when you see him act than when you hear him speak.”⁵⁶⁷

How did Paul want the Philippians to mimic him? In this epistle, he prayed for others with a spirit of thanksgiving so that they might grow in sincerity and blamelessness (Phil 1:3–4, 9–11). Paul rejoiced in the advance of the gospel, recognizing that even in his imprisonment God accomplished his will (Phil 1:12–14, 29–30). Emulating Jesus, he sought to live a life characterized by love, a desire for unity, and self-denying humility (Phil 2:1–8, 14–18).

The apostle recognized the insufficiency of observing rites of the Mosaic law when compared to the great value of knowing Christ (Phil 3:2–11). Paul put the sins of his past behind him as he strove to live as Jesus demands (Phil 3:12–16). He rejoiced in all things, practiced prayer rather than worrying, focused upon good things, and enjoyed contentment regardless of his circumstances (Phil 4:4–9, 11–14).

However, Paul recognized the difficulty of imitating someone no longer present in Philippi. Therefore, he called his original readers to “continually keep your eyes on those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” While “us” may refer to his co-author Timothy, more likely Paul cited Epaphroditus, a man from their own city (Phil 1:1–2; Phil 2:25–30).⁵⁶⁸

Copying the behavior of those who practice living in a Christ-like manner matters because “Many walk—as I was often saying to you, and even now crying I am telling you—who are enemies of the cross of Christ.” Philippi was located on a major highway running from east to west a full day’s walking distance from the coast. It appears that the apostle singled out certain itinerant missionaries who passed through the city.⁵⁶⁹

Paul described them as those, “...whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is] their stomach, and [whose] glory is in their shame.” These people considered themselves Christians, but their evil ways of living testified otherwise. Even today, those who preach false doctrines and model tainted behavior can lead those who follow them to destruction (2 Cor 11:13–15).⁵⁷⁰

“Destruction” (*apōleia*) points to an eternal state of torment and death, rather than causing someone to cease to exist.⁵⁷¹ Rejecting the salvation available to us through the cross results in the condemnation of our souls (Matt 10:28; Heb 10:26–31).⁵⁷²

These false believers set their minds on earthly things instead of heavenly ones.⁵⁷³ The

⁵⁶⁶Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 363–4.

⁵⁶⁷Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles, Vol. 1* (LCL; trans. Richard M. Grummere; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), epistle 52, 349, <https://archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu01seneuoft#page/348/mode/2up>.

⁵⁶⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 217–8.

⁵⁶⁹Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 367.

⁵⁷⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 221.

⁵⁷¹Albrecht Oepke, “ἀπόλεια” (*apōleia*) *TDNT* 1:397.

⁵⁷²Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 223.

⁵⁷³Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 372.

metaphor “their god [is] their stomach” was likely familiar to Paul’s readers. The great fifth century BC playwright Euripides reported the Cyclops as saying:⁵⁷⁴ “And as for Zeus’s thunderbolt, I do not shudder at that, stranger, nor do I know any respect in which he is my superior as a god. [If I ever thought about him before,] I am not concerned about him henceforth...When Zeus sends his rain from above, taking my water-tight shelter in this cave and dining on roasted calf or some wild beast, I put on a feast for my upturned belly, then drinking dry a whole storage-vat of milk, I drum on it, making a din to rival Zeus’s thunder... “The Earth brings forth grass willy-nilly to feed my flock. These I sacrifice to no one but myself—never to the gods—and to my belly, the greatest of divinities. To guzzle and eat day by day and to give oneself no pain—this is Zeus in the eyes of men of sense...For my part, I shall not forgo giving pleasure to my heart.”⁵⁷⁵

Paul wrote of people who gave themselves over to bodily desires until pleasure became their god (Rom 16:17–18). What should have provoked shame they saw as glorious.⁵⁷⁶ In contrast, for the apostle, to live was Christ and to die was gain (Phil 1:21).⁵⁷⁷

a) Read Phil 3:17–19. In what ways can we imitate Paul? How can we identify those who set their minds on earthly things? Why should we avoid becoming like them? Is there someone in your life whom you consider worthy of imitation?

Citizens of Heaven

b) Read Phil 3:20: Paul continued, “For our commonwealth in heaven exists.” This creates an extremely abrupt transition from Phil 3:17–19. Not only does the word “for” seem out of place, the language, style, and rhythm of these verses change the flow of the passage. Consequently, many scholars hold that—as in Phil 2:6–11—Paul inserted an early Christian hymn here.⁵⁷⁸

In these verses we again see the apostle’s “now and not yet” theology.⁵⁷⁹ As believers we begin to experience eternal life due to the impact of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Rom 8:9–11; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14). However, our complete participation in the kingdom of God shall not begin until Christ’s return (1 Cor 15:50–57; 1 Thess 4:13–18). That event shall initiate the renewal of everything on earth into the kingdom of God (Rom 8:18–23).⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁴Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216.

⁵⁷⁵Euripides, “Cyclops,” in *Cyclops, Alcestis, Medea* (trans. David Kovacs; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 320–40.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0094%3Acard%3D316>.

⁵⁷⁶Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 372–3.

⁵⁷⁷Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 374.

⁵⁷⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 28–9.

⁵⁷⁹Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 376.

⁵⁸⁰Regarding Rom 8:23, there are indications in the Greek text that it is precisely because the holy Spirit dwells within us that we groan as we wait for the coming of God’s kingdom in all its fullness. Some translations give the impression that we groan despite the Spirit’s presence.

However, everything remains under Jesus’s control (1 Cor 15:20–28; Col 1:15–20).⁵⁸¹ Even those acts which Paul previously associated with the Father, he attributed to Christ (Rom 8:29–30; Eph 1:18–22).⁵⁸² As Christians, our allegiance belongs to the kingdom of heaven, not to our earthly cities.⁵⁸³ Paul placed his emphasis upon the word “our,” as it appears first in the sentence.⁵⁸⁴ This created a strong contrast between the false teachers and the believers in Philippi (Phil 3:18–21).⁵⁸⁵

The word translated as “commonwealth” (*politeuma*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Typically, it refers to a state or government.⁵⁸⁶ However, the term also describes a colony of relocated foreigners or veterans.⁵⁸⁷ Within the Roman Empire, the military often secured a recently conquered nation by removing some of its people and replacing them with those loyal to the emperor. As a result, Greco-Roman ideals and customs took hold in foreign areas.⁵⁸⁸

In 42 BC, the last great battle to establish the Roman republic occurred on the Plains of Philippi. The grateful victors made the city a Roman colony and resettled veterans of the battle there.⁵⁸⁹ Those dwelling in Philippi enjoyed Roman citizenship, unlike most people living in the empire. Thus, they received all the rights and privileges of people born in Rome, even though they lived elsewhere.⁵⁹⁰

Likewise, the Christians of Philippi lived on earth while their citizenship remained in heaven (Eph 2:19–22). All of them—even the enslaved, who could not claim the privileges of Roman citizenship—comprised the Lord’s colony, with Christ as their ruler. In Greco-Roman society, a person’s citizenship determined one’s allegiance and regulated ethical behavior (Acts 16:20–21).⁵⁹¹

A second century Christian author wrote this:

“For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity...But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.

“They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the

⁵⁸¹Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 229.

⁵⁸²Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 376.

⁵⁸³Hermann Strathmann, “πολίτευμα” (*politeuma*) *TDNT* 6:535.

⁵⁸⁴Matthew 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 appear at the beginning of a sentence or clause. What the author wished to emphasize comes at the beginning of the sentence or clause.

⁵⁸⁵Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.

⁵⁸⁶Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216.

⁵⁸⁷Danker et al., “πολίτευμα” (*politeuma*), *BDAG*, 845.

⁵⁸⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.

⁵⁸⁹John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 161.

⁵⁹⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.

⁵⁹¹Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 216–7.

flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives...Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens.”⁵⁹²

Although we remain here on earth, believers enjoy the rights and privileges of our heavenly commonwealth. For us, eternal life has already begun.⁵⁹³ Furthermore, God calls us to live as people belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem (Matt 5:14–16; Rev 21:1–2).⁵⁹⁴

This perspective eventually created conflict between Christians and imperial forces. In particular, the requirement to burn incense as a sacrifice to the emperor—who claimed the right to veneration as a—god resulted in tremendous persecution for those who refused to deny Jesus as their only Lord.

After Pliny the Younger began governing a region of northern Turkey in 109 AD, he experienced great consternation when seeking to determine how to deal with these recalcitrant Christians. Therefore, he wrote the following to the emperor Trajan (reigned 98–117 AD):

“Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them...Whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt...

“The method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished...”⁵⁹⁵

“Anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances. I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them...

“[Others] affirmed the whole of their guilt...was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict...

“After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to

⁵⁹²Mathetes, “The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1* (ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Cox; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 5–6, 307–9, <https://archive.org/stream/writingsapostoli00unknuoft#page/306/mode/2up>.

⁵⁹³Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231–2.

⁵⁹⁴Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 379.

⁵⁹⁵Most translations of this letter indicate that the punishment was execution.

extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country.⁵⁹⁶

Pliny's letter confirms Paul's statement, "for a savior we eagerly wait (*apekdexomai*), our Lord Jesus Christ." Our emperor does not reside in Rome but in heaven (Acts 2:32–36; Acts 7:55–56; Heb 1:1–3).⁵⁹⁷ The word which Paul used conveys a burning expectation for God to fulfill his divine plans,⁵⁹⁸ culminating in the return of Christ to earth from heaven.⁵⁹⁹ Then all of creation shall be restored to pristine wholeness (Isa 65:17–25; Rev 21:3–7; Rev 22:1–5).⁶⁰⁰

Most people in the Roman Empire used the term "savior" (*kurios*) when describing Caesar,⁶⁰¹ the ruler of their earthly commonwealth.⁶⁰² From the time of Octavian (Augustus) through the reign of Hadrian, (27 BC–128 AD), subjects of Rome hailed their emperors as the "saviors of the world."⁶⁰³

Since the Philippians' true emperor was Jesus,⁶⁰⁴ Paul encouraged them to exhibit more excitement about the return of Christ than for a visit from their imperial ruler. After all, the benefits of belonging to an earthly nationality cannot eclipse the advantages of our heavenly citizenship (Isa 35:4–10; James 4:4; Heb 11:13–16; Heb 13:14).⁶⁰⁵

Read Phil 3:20. How can you tell if your citizenship is in heaven? What made this verse especially pertinent for believers in Philippi? Why did the allegiance of Christians lead to conflict with the Roman Empire? How does our heavenly commonwealth contrast with the one Cain built (Gen 4:17)?

Glorified Bodies

c) Phil 3:21: Paul continued, asserting that Christ "shall transform our lowly bodies [to become] similar in form to his glorified body." The apostle did not subscribe to the Greek view of the human body. For example, Plato (427–347 BC) claimed, "the body (*sōma*) is our tomb (*sēma*)."⁶⁰⁶ Our bodies comprise such an intrinsic part of us that Christ will renew them in

⁵⁹⁶Pliny the Younger, *Letters of Pliny the Younger*, Vol. 2 (ed. F. C. T. Bosanquet; trans. William Melmoth; New York: Hinds, Noble, and Eldredge, 1900), 10.96, 394–5,

<https://archive.org/stream/lettersofplinyyo00plin#page/394/mode/2up>.

⁵⁹⁷Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 232.

⁵⁹⁸Walter Grundmann, "ἀπεκδέχομαι" (*apekdexomai*) *TDNT* 2:56.

⁵⁹⁹Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 380.

⁶⁰⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 232.

⁶⁰¹Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 381.

⁶⁰²Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 218.

⁶⁰³Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 369, <https://archive.org/stream/lightfromancient00deis#page/n519/mode/2up>.

⁶⁰⁴Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233.

⁶⁰⁵Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 218.

⁶⁰⁶Plato, "Gorgias," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 3*; trans. W. R. M. Lamb; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 493a,

resurrection, not discard them (1 Cor 15:35–37; 1 Thess 5:23; Rev 3:12).⁶⁰⁷ They do not imprison our souls. However, when Jesus rose from the dead, his glorified body received freedom from the limitations of the flesh.⁶⁰⁸

The New Testament never describes the nature of Christ's new body, but it does give some tantalizing hints of what is to come for us. For example, Jesus appeared and disappeared whenever he chose, yet he could eat fish and allow his disciples to feel his wounds (Luke 24:30–43).⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, Paul called the resurrected bodies of believers “spiritual bodies” (*sōma pneumatikos*) because he will imbue them with heavenly glory and power, not because they will be immaterial (1 Cor 15:42–52).⁶¹⁰

Jesus shall do this “by the working of his ability even to subject to himself all things.” In this era of the “now and not yet,” Christ rules over all authorities, powers, and dominions (Col 1:15–20; Col 2:15). This included the emperor and those persecuting the believers in Philippi (Phil 1:12–21).

Since we know how the cosmic story concludes, we can eagerly press on to the end.⁶¹¹ When all creation has been subjected to Jesus, he shall place everything under the Father, including 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 are the others. Therefore, he wrote, “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 contemplation of Himself.”⁶¹²

The Greek term *perichoresis* best captures the essence of the Godhead. As in a perfectly choreographed dance, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit so interpenetrate one another that their wills are unified.⁶¹³ Where there is one, the other two are also, without one being greater than the others.⁶¹⁴ Theirs forms a community of perfect love.⁶¹⁵ Philippians 3:21 contains strong verbal links with the hymn in Phil 2:6–11, as we can see in this table:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D493a>.

⁶⁰⁷M. H. Cressey, “Dualism” in *New Bible Dictionary, 3rd Ed. (NBD)* D. R. W. Wood, et al., Eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 284.

⁶⁰⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233.

⁶⁰⁹Larry J. Kreitzer, “Body,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPL)* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 71–4, 74.

⁶¹⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 233–4.

⁶¹¹Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 384.

⁶¹²Augustine, “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>.

⁶¹³Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113.

⁶¹⁴William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Ed.* (ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 250.

⁶¹⁵David S. Cunningham, “What Do We Mean by ‘God’?” in *Essentials of Christian Theology* (ed. William C. Placher; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 59.

Verse in Phil 2	Greek word	English Translation	Greek word in 3:21	English Translation
6, 7	<i>morphē</i>	form	<i>symmorphon</i>	<i>similar in form</i>
6, 7	<i>morphē</i>	form	<i>metaschēmatischei</i>	shall be transformed
8	<i>etapeinōs en</i>	he humbled	<i>tapeinōseōs</i>	lowly
11	<i>doxan</i>	glory	<i>doxēs</i>	glory

Furthermore, Phil 2:9–11 portrays the subjection of all things to Christ, while Phil 3:21 explicitly states that all things shall be subject to him. Thus, Paul asserted that the reward to believers for our humility shall parallel the exaltation due to Jesus for his obedience.⁶¹⁶

Regarding this topic, Augustine wrote:

“It is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel being a sojourner, built none. For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection; and then shall the promised kingdom be given to them, in which they shall reign with their Prince, the King of the ages, time without end.”⁶¹⁷

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 22:34–40; Matt 28:18–20). As we devote ourselves to these aspects of life, we experience the unity of the Trinity and anticipate the age to come.⁶¹⁸

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.”⁶¹⁹

Read Phil 3:21. How shall we be like Christ in the age to come? Why do we have this hope? How do you experience life in the Trinity?

⁶¹⁶Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 170.

⁶¹⁷Augustine, *The City of God*, 2 Vols. (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. J. F. Shaw and Marcus Dods; NPNF2; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), 15, 2:51, <https://archive.org/stream/TheCityOfGodV2#page/n61/mode/2up>.

⁶¹⁸Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 230–1.

⁶¹⁹Cassian John, Boniface Ramsey, trans., in *John Cassian: The Conferences* (ACW; Costa Mesa, CA: Paulist Press, 1997), 253–4.

Two Wives

3) Gen 4:18–19: Moses provided descriptive information for only three of the six generations produced from Cain’s line. He mentioned the others only as early descendants of Adam who assisted in populating the earth.⁶²⁰ As in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) traditions, Hebrew genealogies can represent actual father to son records. However, they may condense the ancestral record by omitting some generations or by listing grandsons as sons (compare Gen 35:25 with Gen 46:18).

This also occurs in the New Testament. For example, Matt 1:8 asserts “Jehoram fathered Uzziah,” although he appeared to be Uzziah’s great-great-grandfather (2 Chron 22:1, 8–12; 2 Chron 24:1, 24, 27; 2 Chron 26:1).⁶²¹ As a result, we cannot ascertain whether more direct descendants in the Adam to Lamech line existed than Moses cited.

This family line tragically depicts how sin distorts the image of God, leaving destruction in its wake.⁶²² Lamech’s violent temperament reflects that of his ancestor Cain, which is likely why the text focuses upon him (Gen 4:23–24).⁶²³ Cain and his descendants exhibited increasing depravity. However, they also practiced and expanded the cultural mandate of Gen 1:28. They domesticated and bred animals, developed musical arts, and fashioned metal (Gen 4:20–22).⁶²⁴

Moses reported, “And Lamech took to himself two wives.” This directly contradicted his previous editorial comment regarding the Lord’s design for marriage, an arrangement which Jesus also validated (Gen 2:24; Mark 10:2–12).⁶²⁵ In ancient Israel, harmony and intimacy characterized the ideal marriage (Gen 2:21–23).⁶²⁶ Scripture does not report God rebuking Lamech or the patriarchs who practiced polygamy for their multiple wives. Nevertheless, Genesis freely records the devastating impact of bigamy upon family life (Gen 16:1–6; Gen 21:9–10; Gen 30:1–15).⁶²⁷

a) Read Gen 4:18–19. Why would Lamech’s decision have made the harmony and intimacy which God intended for marriage impossible?

Advancements in Civilization

b) Gen 4:20–22: Here Moses focused upon three sons of Lamech (Gen 4:18–19), rather than identifying one son per generation. Each of these men originated a new facet of human culture.⁶²⁸ Moses began by writing, “And Adah bore Yabal. He was the father of the ones dwelling in tents and [raising] livestock.”

Abel appears to have remained in one area while tending his flocks (Gen 4:2–5). In contrast, Yabal established a nomadic lifestyle like that practiced by some Bedouins even

⁶²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.

⁶²¹Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 440.

⁶²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁶²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112.

⁶²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁶²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.

⁶²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69.

⁶²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.

⁶²⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.

today.⁶²⁹ Furthermore, Yabal bred more kinds of animals.⁶³⁰ Abel’s flocks consisted of only sheep and goats (*tson*).⁶³¹ However, the word used to describe the types of animals domesticated by Yabal (*miqneh*) expands to include cattle, donkeys, and even camels. As a professional livestock breeder, Yabal may have engaged in trade.⁶³² Perhaps he even cared for the animals of nearby city dwellers (Gen 4:17).⁶³³

The earliest archaeological evidence for the breeding and control of sheep and goats dates back ten thousand years.⁶³⁴ Mitochondrial research confirms it.⁶³⁵ Inhabitants of the Ancient Near East (ANE) domesticated cattle beginning in the mid-ninth century BC.⁶³⁶

Moses also wrote, “And the name of his brother [was] Yubal. He was the father of all of those who skillfully use a lyre and a flute.” Yubal’s name appropriately sounds like the word used to designate the ram’s horn played in Israel’s religious festivals, a *yobēl*.⁶³⁷

Moses ranked musical instruments among the oldest inventions of early humanity.⁶³⁸ Aside from simple drums and rattles, the most common excavated instruments in the ANE are harps and lyres.⁶³⁹ People constructed early flutes from bone or pottery.⁶⁴⁰ Music comprised an important aspect of ritual performances, religious processions, and dances (2 Sam 6:5, 14–15). It invoked deities, soothed a person’s spirit, and provided the cadence for a marching army (1 Sam 16:23; Josh 6:13). As members of a highly respected profession, early musicians even formed guilds.⁶⁴¹

In a Hittite invocation to the gods, the priest implored, “Let the soothing effect of the cedar, the music of the lyres (and) the words of the diviner be such an [alluring] inducement to the gods that they will get them called here! Wherever else ye may be, come (ye) here!”⁶⁴²

Concerning Lamech’s second wife, Moses wrote, “And Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-Cain, the hammerer of all copper and iron.” Four distinct eras characterize ancient human civilizations, although their dates vary by location: the Stone Age (ca. 100,000–4000 BC); the Chalcolithic Period (“copper stone,” ca. 4000–3200BC); the Bronze Age (ca. 3200–1200 BC); and the Iron Age (ca. 1200–330 BC).⁶⁴³ Copper tools and weapons first appeared in the fourth millennium BC.⁶⁴⁴

⁶²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.

⁶³⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.

⁶³¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יָבָל” (*tson*), *BDB*, 838,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/838/mode/2up>.

⁶³² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.

⁶³³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.

⁶³⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 276.

⁶³⁵ Koh Nomura et. al., “Domestication Process of the Goat Revealed by an Analysis of the Nearly Complete Mitochondrial Protein-Encoding Genes,” *PLOS ONE* 8, no. 8 (1 August 2013): 1, [Http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0067775&type=printable](http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0067775&type=printable).

⁶³⁶ Amelie Scheu et. al. “The Genetic Prehistory of Domesticated Cattle from Their Origin to the Spread Across Europe,” *BMC Genet* 16, no. 54 (2015):1–11, 9, <https://bmccgenomdata.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12863-015-0203-2>.

⁶³⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.

⁶³⁸ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:21.

⁶³⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 276.

⁶⁴⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:21.

⁶⁴¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:21.

⁶⁴² Albrecht Goetze, trans., “Evocatio” in *ANET*, 351–3, 353.

⁶⁴³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.

⁶⁴⁴ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 4:22.

The inclusion of iron—a metal which requires much higher temperatures than copper and its alloys—⁶⁴⁵ seems out of place in the text. However, archaeologists have discovered amulets crafted from cold-forged meteoritic iron which predate the Iron Age.⁶⁴⁶ A Ugaritic text attributes the first ironwork to the god Kothar.⁶⁴⁷

The names of these three sons of Lamech all derive from the Hebrew word which means “produce” (*yebul*) alluding to their fruitful creativity.⁶⁴⁸ Consequently, Moses asserted that the disobedient line of Cain developed many important cultural advancements. God’s grace appears even here.⁶⁴⁹ On the other hand, Tubal-Cain may have introduced swords into society.⁶⁵⁰

In contrast, ANE literature credits these discoveries to the gods, such as Kothar.⁶⁵¹ According to one myth, Inanna, the patron goddess of Uruk procures the arts of civilization from Enki, one of the greatest gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon.⁶⁵² Among these are shepherding, the creation of musical instruments, and metal-working.⁶⁵³ The tablets state, “O name of my power, O name of my power, to the bright Inanna, my daughter, I shall present...the arts of woodworking, metalworking, writing, toolmaking, leatherworking...building, basketweaving...shepherdship, kingship.”⁶⁵⁴

An interesting omission occurs not only in Gen 4:20–22, but in all of Gen 1–11. Other ANE texts emphasize the development of royal rule. Building cities, acquiring multiple wives, and initiating warfare commonly appear in the records of these monarchs. Yet, in Moses’s primeval history, we have no record of kings. This may occur because most ANE literature portrayed rulers positively as the initiators and preservers of advancements in civilization. However, Moses focused upon the increasing depravity of early peoples.⁶⁵⁵

Moses concluded this genealogy by writing, “And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.” Lamech’s fourth child, a daughter, was named “pleasant.”⁶⁵⁶

Read Gen 4:20–22. How do we see the grace of God at work even through the disobedient lineage of Cain? In what ways were these great achievements of civilization tainted by sin? How does this account differ from others from the ANE?

⁶⁴⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 276–7.

⁶⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 113.

⁶⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99 n66.

⁶⁴⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112.

⁶⁴⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 239.

⁶⁵⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.

⁶⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99 n66.

⁶⁵²Walton, *Genesis*, 277.

⁶⁵³Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., “Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech,” http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sumer_anunnaki/esp_sumer_annunaki16.htm.

⁶⁵⁴Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., “Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech,” http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sumer_anunnaki/esp_sumer_annunaki16.htm.

⁶⁵⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 278.

⁶⁵⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238–9.

Lamech's Ode to Himself

b) Gen 4:23–24: Sandwiched between two birth announcements (Gen 4:19–22, 25),⁶⁵⁷ Moses recorded one of the earliest examples of poetry.⁶⁵⁸ In this savage and vicious composition,⁶⁵⁹ Lamech employed a variety of Hebrew literary devices, such as parallelism, meter, and rhyme to emphasize his cruel egotism.⁶⁶⁰

“And Lamech said to his wives,
‘Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice.
Wives of Lamech, give ear to my speech,
because a man I have slain for wounding me,
and a youth for striking me.
If seven-fold is Cain avenged,
then Lamech seventy and seven.”

People rarely commit single sins. Pride, mockery, and assault cluster together like grapes and continue to replicate. These distorted relational patterns pass down from parent to child, resulting in dysfunctional family systems.⁶⁶¹

Without intervention, family violence can continue for generation after generation. Parents beat their children, who attack younger siblings, who beat the family pets. Victims victimize others, causing vengeance to ricochet through their communities. No one carries more potential for violence than a victim.⁶⁶²

Since this song appears in a section which focuses upon various developments in human civilization, Lamech's taunt may signify the initiation of warfare (Gen 4:19–22).⁶⁶³ Adah and Zillah had proudly watched their sons develop animal husbandry, music, and metallurgy. In contrast, Lamech's violent boasting must have filled them with horror.⁶⁶⁴ By embracing such great vindictiveness,⁶⁶⁵ Lamech indicated that his depravity exceeded that of Cain, his ancestor (Gen 4:9–10).⁶⁶⁶

The parallelism in this song suggests that the “man” (*ish*) and the “youth” (*yeled*) are the same person.⁶⁶⁷ Similarly, the wounding and striking refer to one incident.⁶⁶⁸ In Hebrew, *yeled* covers a range from premature infants to early manhood (Exod 21:22; 1 Ki 14:21; 1 Ki 12:6–8).⁶⁶⁹ Cain had felt incapable of self-defense (Gen 4:13–15). His descendant Lamech had no qualms about handling any mistreatment by others on his own.⁶⁷⁰ In fact, he appointed himself to perform a function reserved for kings (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Sam 15:1–4).

⁶⁵⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.

⁶⁵⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 277.

⁶⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 240.

⁶⁶⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁶¹Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 54–5.

⁶⁶²Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 57.

⁶⁶³Walton, *Genesis*, 278.

⁶⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁶⁶⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁶⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 277–8.

⁶⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁶⁹Holladay, “*yeledh*,” *CHALOT*, 135.

⁶⁷⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 241.

Lamech made a travesty of the office of a ruler by seeking personal vengeance, rather than maintaining justice.⁶⁷¹ Taking the law into his hands served as a point of pride. While Cain sought to hide Abel's murder (Gen 4:9), Lamech exulted in his vindictiveness.⁶⁷²

One of the first portions of Scripture recorded included the phrase, “a wound for a wound and a strike for a strike” (Exod 21:23–25). Therefore, Moses's original audience recognized that Lamech violated the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*).⁶⁷³ God commanded this principle to prevent the escalation of violence.⁶⁷⁴ The young man's execution would have been just only if his action resulted in Lamech's death (Exod 21:12).

In Scripture, the number seven signifies completeness. Therefore, seventy-seven represents an unrestricted fullness which one cannot surpass.⁶⁷⁵ This intensification of violence could easily erupt into warfare aided by the technological advancements of Lamech's son Tubal-Cain (Gen 4:22).⁶⁷⁶ Sin acts as a plague which spreads by contagion, like a polluted river which keeps branching into tributaries. It contaminates parents, children, and grandchildren (Exod 34:6–7).⁶⁷⁷

By highlighting this vignette, Moses hinted that all of Cain's descendants would face God's judgment.⁶⁷⁸ Not only did this intimate the disaster to come (Gen 6:11–13, 17), it served as a warning to Moses's readers. One cannot disregard God's laws and expect to emerge unscathed.⁶⁷⁹

Read Gen 4:23–24: Why would Moses's original readers have been shocked by this passage? How does it portray the increasing depravity of Cain's descendants? What does revenge do to us?

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.⁶⁸⁰ If your family of origin practiced violence, what can you do to break that cycle?

⁶⁷¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 183.

⁶⁷²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 241.

⁶⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁷⁴H. B. Huffmon, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321–2, 321.

⁶⁷⁵Ryken et. al., “Seven,” in *DBI*, 775.

⁶⁷⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 278.

⁶⁷⁷Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 53.

⁶⁷⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁶⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 117.

⁶⁸⁰ http://www.ncdsv.org/publications_wheel.html. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

A Lesson on Forgiveness

4) Matt 18:21–22: In this passage, Jesus reversed Lamech’s concept of seventy-fold vengeance for God’s people to respond to those who sin against us (Cf. Gen 4:22–23).⁶⁸¹ Christ had just instructed his disciples regarding the proper practices for church discipline (Matt 18:15–20).⁶⁸² Then Peter went to him with a related question concerning personal animosity:⁶⁸³ “Lord, how many times shall my brother against me sin and I shall forgive him? As many as seven?”

In the earlier case, the person had failed to repent, necessitating the involvement of church leaders. However, here Peter asked about dealing with a person who requests forgiveness (Luke 17:3–4).⁶⁸⁴ Pastoral concern for another believer’s spiritual life does not conflict with a willingness to forgive offenses against us (cf. 1 Cor 5:1–13 and its result in 2 Cor 2:5–11).⁶⁸⁵

Peter’s question does not revolve around whether to forgive at all but how often to do so (Matt 6:12–15).⁶⁸⁶ After all, manipulative people can exploit easy forgiveness to achieve their own ends.⁶⁸⁷ Knowing that Jesus held to a high standard for righteousness (Matt 5:17–20), Peter likely selected the number seven because it represented complete fullness.⁶⁸⁸

According to contemporary Jewish thought, righteous people forgave an offender.⁶⁸⁹ The apocryphal Testament of Gad states, “Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him.”⁶⁹⁰

However, based upon Amos 1:3 and Amos 2:6,⁶⁹¹ rabbis considered forgiving premeditated sins three times sufficient (*b. Yoma* 86b).⁶⁹² When a perpetrator exceeded that number, rabbis regarded their claims of repentance as false,⁶⁹³ for “One who asks pardon of his neighbor need do so no more than three times” (*b. Yoma* 87a).⁶⁹⁴

After all, true repentance involves turning away from sin.⁶⁹⁵ Most of Peter’s contemporaries would have viewed his suggestion of forgiving seven times as more than generous.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁸¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 457.

⁶⁸²Jesus promised to provide guidance for church leaders who make decisions pertaining to the discipline of a member whose life is characterized by sin. He did not say that the prayers of a group of believers who gather together are more effective than those of individuals praying separately.

⁶⁸³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.

⁶⁸⁴Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 537.

⁶⁸⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700. Most commentators believe that the second passage refers to the same person as the one discussed in Paul’s first letter to Corinth.

⁶⁸⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.

⁶⁸⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.

⁶⁸⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.

⁶⁸⁹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 456–7.

⁶⁹⁰Rutherford H. Platt Jr., trans., “The Testament of Gad,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha House, 1926), 2.3, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe290.htm>.

⁶⁹¹Talmudist, *English Babylonian Talmud*, *Yoma* 86b, [Http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf](http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf).

⁶⁹²Wilkins, *Matthew*, 622.

⁶⁹³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 456–7.

⁶⁹⁴Talmudist, “English Babylonian Talmud,” *Yoma* 87a, [Http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf](http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf).

⁶⁹⁵Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:21–2.

⁶⁹⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700.

Going against conventional wisdom,⁶⁹⁷ “Jesus said to him, ‘I say to you, not as many as seven times, but as many as seventy times seven’ (*ebdomēkontakis hepta*).” The Greek translation of Gen 4:24 employs the same phrase, rather than seventy-seven.⁶⁹⁸

Nevertheless, both terms have a virtually identical meaning, for seventy-seven also represents an unrestrained and unsurpassable fullness.⁶⁹⁹ Christ’s followers must forgive as extravagantly as Lamech exacted vengeance.⁷⁰⁰

Jesus used figurative—not calculating—language.⁷⁰¹ He employed a typically Jewish way of commanding, “Never hold grudges.”⁷⁰² Anyone who stresses over whether the actual number is seventy-seven or 490 misses the point. If we are keeping count, we are not really forgiving.⁷⁰³

Read Matt 18:21–22. Why do matters which require church discipline differ from those in which people have committed sins against us? Do you think that Jesus had Lamech’s poem in mind when he said these words? Why or why not? What did Christ command his people to do?

A King Settling Accounts

b) Matt 18:23–27: Jesus illustrated why we must forgive others through this parable (Matt 18:21–35).⁷⁰⁴ No one can come close to offending us to the extent that our sins provoke our holy God.⁷⁰⁵ Therefore, a community of forgiven people who internalize the depth of our pardon can freely extend grace and mercy to others.⁷⁰⁶ To explain to Peter how the kingdom of God operates, Jesus told a story about a Gentile king and his slaves, using “debt” as a metaphor for sin.⁷⁰⁷ In Jewish thought, sins were debts to God (Cf. Col 1:13–14). Indeed, the same Aramaic word applies to both.⁷⁰⁸

Christ began by saying, “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like [the case of] a king who desired to settle accounts with his slaves.” Rulers performed this reckoning at a certain time each year.⁷⁰⁹ Unlike in American society, slaves in the ancient world could serve in

⁶⁹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704–5.

⁶⁹⁸Rick Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint (LES)* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012), Gen 4:24.

⁶⁹⁹Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

⁷⁰⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.

⁷⁰¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.

⁷⁰²Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:21–2.

⁷⁰³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.

⁷⁰⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.

⁷⁰⁵Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.

⁷⁰⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 702.

⁷⁰⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.

⁷⁰⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 6:12.

⁷⁰⁹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.

positions of authority,⁷¹⁰ even as provincial governors (Dan 1:1–5; Dan 3:1–2, 12).⁷¹¹ Most likely, these slaves worked as tax collectors—also known as tax farmers—working for a Gentile king.⁷¹²

The Roman historian Livy (59 BC–17 AD) wrote this:

“A great many men were slain or captured there, an ill-organized mass, however, of rustics and slaves. It was the smallest part of the loss that, along with the rest, the prefect was captured, who was responsible at that time for a reckless battle and had previously been a tax-farmer possessed of all the dishonest devices, faithless and ruinous both to the state and to the companies.”⁷¹³

Jesus said, “And when he began to settle [the accounts], there was brought to him one debtor of ten thousand talents.” A talent was a unit of weight, rather than an amount of money.⁷¹⁴ It usually referred to silver.⁷¹⁵ Ten thousand talents weighed 665,797 pounds.⁷¹⁶ An Israeli laborer could expect to earn a denarius for a day’s wages (Matt 20:1–2).⁷¹⁷ Ten thousand talents equaled 60 million denarii,⁷¹⁸ five hundred times more than the average person earned in a lifetime.⁷¹⁹

Josephus (37–100 AD) reported that Caesar Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) appointed Herod’s son over the territories of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria in 4 BC.⁷²⁰ He wrote, “The tribute-money that came to Archelaus every year from his own dominions amounted to six hundred talents.”⁷²¹

On the other hand, ten thousand served as the largest numeral in typical Koine Greek,⁷²² while a talent consisted of the greatest unit of currency.⁷²³ Therefore, Jesus may have meant that no one could calculate such an astronomical debt,⁷²⁴ akin to saying, “a gazillion dollars.”⁷²⁵

This larger-than-life imagery would have elicited gasps of astonishment from those listening to this parable.⁷²⁶ The debtor owed more money than the amount circulated in the entire country. How could a man foolishly incur such debt?⁷²⁷

Jesus continued, saying, “But not having it to repay, the king commanded him to be sold, and [also] his wife and his children and all that he had, and to be repaid.” In the Old Testament era, slavery often resulted from owing money (Exod 22:2; 2 Ki 4:1; Neh 5:3–5; Isa 50:1).⁷²⁸

⁷¹⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.

⁷¹¹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.

⁷¹²Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:23.

⁷¹³Titus Livy, *History of Rome, Books 23–25* (trans. Frank Gardner Moore; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 25.1.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.02.0157%3abook%3d25>.

⁷¹⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 623.

⁷¹⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷¹⁶Logos 7 Bible Software, Weights and Measures Converter.

⁷¹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷¹⁸Marvin A. Powell, “Weights and Measures,” *ABD* 6:897–908, 907.

⁷¹⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷²⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.

⁷²¹Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.1.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D17%3Awhiston+chapter%3D11%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

⁷²²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷²³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 458.

⁷²⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.

⁷²⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷²⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704.

⁷²⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.

⁷²⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.

Since the Roman Empire remained at peace during Christ’s ministry, most slavery ensued from being unable to pay a debt, rather than due to war.⁷²⁹ By Christ’s lifetime, Jewish rabbis forbade the sale of women and children to repay debts incurred by theft (*m. Sotah* 3:8).⁷³⁰ While Jews abhorred the practice,⁷³¹ a Gentile king could act with impunity.⁷³²

Indeed, Livy reported this senate declaration: “For the Capuans, family by family, decrees were passed...the property of some of them was to be confiscated, themselves and their children and wives sold, except the daughters who, before they became subject to the authority of the Roman people, had married into other communities.”⁷³³

The amount of money raised by the sale of the family in this parable would amount to a minuscule fraction of what the slave owed his master.⁷³⁴ During that era, a person could purchase a young male with average skills for about four tons of wheat.⁷³⁵

Josephus recorded that a century earlier, “Hyrcanus...came to the merchants privately, and bought a hundred boys that had learning, and were in the flower of their ages, each at a talent apiece; as also he bought a hundred maidens, each at the same price as the other.”⁷³⁶ Consequently, people typically considered being sold into slavery as a punishment, rather than a means of repayment.⁷³⁷

Jesus said, “Falling, therefore, the slave prostrated (*proskuneō*) himself to him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and all I shall repay to you.’” In the New Testament (NT), to fall prostrate implies worship. The object of that obeisance is always divine (*Matt* 8:2; *Matt* 9:18). Here we see a hint that the earthly king in this parable represents the Lord.⁷³⁸

The slave made a ridiculous appeal to the king for extra time to repay his debt.⁷³⁹ The phrase “I shall repay” (*apodidōmi*) frequently appeared in Greco-Roman business documents.⁷⁴⁰

Appian of Alexandria, a Greco-Roman historian (95–165 AD), wrote, “Now that Antony is vanquished and Hirtius dead...I am about to pay the debt of nature...The army that you yourself gave to us should most properly be given back (*apodidōmi*) to you, and I do give it. If you can take and hold the new levies, I will give you those also.”⁷⁴¹

The great Athenian orator Demosthenes (384–322 BC) recorded this speech concerning a loan to ransom some slaves:

⁷²⁹Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 695.

⁷³⁰Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.

⁷³¹Keener, *IVPBCNT*, *Matt* 18:25.

⁷³²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.

⁷³³Titus Livy, *History of Rome, Books 26–27* (trans. Frank Gardner Moore; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), 26.34.3,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0158%3Abook%3D26%3Achapter%3D34>.

⁷³⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷³⁵Walter Scheidel, “The Roman Slave Supply,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 300.

⁷³⁶Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.6.9,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D12%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D6%3Awhiston%20section%3D9>.

⁷³⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 623.

⁷³⁸Heinrich Greeven, “προσκυνέω” (*proskuneō*), *TDNT* 6:758–66, 763.

⁷³⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 538.

⁷⁴⁰Keener, *IVPBCNT*, *Matt* 18:26.

⁷⁴¹Appian, *The Civil Wars* (trans. Horace White; London: MacMillan, 1899), 3.10.76,

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0232%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D10%3Asection%3D76](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0232%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D10%3Asection%3D76).

“‘Do you, therefore,’ he said, ‘provide for me the amount which is lacking before the thirty days have passed, in order that what I have already paid, the thousand drachmae, may not be lost, and that I myself be not liable to seizure. I shall make a collection from my friends,’ he said, ‘and when I have got rid of the strangers, I shall pay you in full whatever you shall have lent me. You know,’ he said, ‘that the laws enact that a person ransomed from the enemy shall be the property of the ransomer, if he fail to pay the redemption money.’”⁷⁴²

Failure to repay the loan to release people from slavery in a timely fashion would result in his own enslavement.

Despite the outrageous nature of the debtor’s request in this parable, “Moved with compassion [was] the lord of that slave. He released him and the loan forgave him.” Originally, the noun form of “moved with compassion” (*splanchnizomai*) referred to the inward parts of a sacrificed animal.⁷⁴³ The term evokes images of deep emotion coming from one’s spleen (Matt 9:35–38). Whenever this word appears elsewhere in Matthew’s gospel, it always applied to Jesus (Matt 14:14; Matt 15:32; Matt 20:29–34).⁷⁴⁴

The king’s overwhelming pity moved him to give the unworthy slave far more than he requested. He canceled his debt and set him free,⁷⁴⁵ exceedingly more than the slave could do for himself.⁷⁴⁶ Ancient Near Eastern kings were notoriously ruthless. Therefore, the original audience would have found this act of mercy just as unbelievable as the size of the debt.⁷⁴⁷

For example, the Assyrian king Sargon II (722–705 BC) besieged Samaria for three years after Israel’s king refused to pay the tribute exacted by his predecessor (2 Ki 17:1–6). Sargon boasted:

“I besieged and conquered Samaria (*Sa-me-ri-na*), led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it. I formed from among them a contingent of 50 chariots and made remaining (inhabitants) assume their (social) positions. I installed over them an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king...I received the tribute from Pir’u of Musuru, from Samsi, queen of Arabia (and) It’amar the Sabaeen, gold in dust-form, horses (and) camels.”⁷⁴⁸

Greco-Roman emperors behaved no better. Suetonius (71–135 AD) described Tiberius, who ruled the empire at the time of Christ (14–37 AD), as “guilty of many barbarous actions, under the pretense of strictness and reformation of manners, but more to gratify his own savage disposition.”⁷⁴⁹ For rulers like Sargon and Tiberius, compassion remained a foreign concept.

⁷⁴²Demosthenes, “Oration 53: Apollodorus Against Nicostratus in the Matter of the Slaves of Arethusias,” in *Demosthenes with an English Translation* (trans. Norman W. DeWitt and Norman J. DeWitt; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 53.11, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0080%3Aspeech%3D53%3Asection%3D11>.

⁷⁴³Helmut Köster, “σπλαγχνίζομαι” (*splanchnizomai*) *TDNT* 7:548–59, 748.

⁷⁴⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁴⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

⁷⁴⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 706.

⁷⁴⁷Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Matt 18:27.

⁷⁴⁸Sargon II, “The Fall of Samaria,” in *ANET* trans. Daniel D. Luckenbill, 23–6, 284–5, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n309/mode/2up.

⁷⁴⁹C. Suetonius Tranquillus, “Tiberius,” in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates*. (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1883), 59, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib.%3Achapter%3D59>.

In the NT, the predominant usage of the word translated as “forgave” (*aphiēmi*)—in which one is released from a moral or legal obligation—indicates that this absolution comes from God (Matt 9:1–8).⁷⁵⁰ He forgives lawlessness, sins, and offenses (Rom 4:7–8; Matt 6:14).⁷⁵¹

Read Matt 18:23–27. How did Jesus depict sin in this section of the parable? Why would this story have shocked those who first heard it? In what ways are the king and God alike? What effect does an attempt to earn our salvation have?

Astounding Hypocrisy

c) Matt 18:28–30: Jesus continued the parable of Matt 18:21–35, saying, “But that slave went out [and] found one of his fellow slaves who was indebted to him [for] one hundred denarii.” A much more plausible figure than 10,000 talents,⁷⁵² one hundred denarii consists of one hundred days’ wages.⁷⁵³ The second slave owed his colleague one six-hundred thousandth the amount forgiven by the ruler.⁷⁵⁴

“And he seized him and he began to strangle him, saying, ‘Repay everything that you owe.’” The first slave resorted to physical violence,⁷⁵⁵ rather than emulating the forgiving nature of the king:⁷⁵⁶ an exhibition of incredible hypocrisy.⁷⁵⁷ Some Greco-Roman creditors did indeed seize their debtors by the throat to forcefully drag them to a governing official.⁷⁵⁸ The playwright Plautus (254–184 BC) wrote a scene in which a man caught with dishonest gain contemplated suicide, saying, “But why do I hesitate to betake me hence to utter perdition, before I’m dragged off to the Prætor by the throat?”⁷⁵⁹

Jesus stated, “After falling, therefore, his fellow slave began to implore him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay [it] to you.’” His entreaty closely parallels that of the one assaulting him, with only the word “all” missing (Cf. Matt 18:26).⁷⁶⁰ This highlights the extravagance of the first slave’s promise to his creditor.⁷⁶¹

“But he was not willing. Instead, after departing he cast him into prison until he should repay the sum that was owed.” Unlike the king, the first slave showed no compassion. Since he could not sell a slave belonging to the ruler, he capitalized upon his rights and committed the

⁷⁵⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀφίημι” (*aphiēmi*), *BDAG*, 156.

⁷⁵¹Rudolf Bultmann, “ἀφίημι” (*aphiēmi*), *TDNT*, 1:509–12.

⁷⁵²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 704.

⁷⁵³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁵⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁵⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁵⁶Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Matt 18:28.

⁷⁵⁷W. D Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 8–18* (ICC; New York: T & T Clark, 1991), 801.

⁷⁵⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459–60.

⁷⁵⁹T. Maccius Plautus, “Poenulus,” in *The Comedies of Plautus* (trans. Henry Thomas Riley; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 3.5.45,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0106%3Aact%3D3%3Ascene%3D5>.

⁷⁶⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁶¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

man to a debtor’s prison (Matt 5:25–26).⁷⁶² Incarcerated people could not repay their debts.⁷⁶³ They could only hope that their family members or friends remitted what they owed.⁷⁶⁴ Plutarch (46–122 AD) noted that “Miltiades, who had been condemned to pay a fine of fifty talents and confined till payment should be made, died in prison.”⁷⁶⁵

Read Matt 18:28–30. Were the actions of the first slave toward his colleague a reasonable response to the amount of debt owed? Why or why not? What do they reveal about his heart?

Having Mercy on our Fellow Debtors

d) Matt 18:31–34: Christ continued the parable in Matt 18:22–35, saying, “After his fellow slaves saw what occurred, they were highly distressed (*lupeō*). And they came and reported to their lord all that happened.” Matthew employed the same word to express what the disciples felt upon learning that Jesus would die (Matt 17:22–23).⁷⁶⁶ Although the slaves had no money to rescue their colleague, they acted.⁷⁶⁷ They went to the king. Jesus did not speak of their motivation.⁷⁶⁸ Yet, we can assume that they knew the king had cancelled the debt of the first slave.⁷⁶⁹ After all, who wouldn’t have shouted that news to all who could hear?

“Then he summoned him, [and] his lord said to him, ‘You evil slave, all that debt I forgave you because you entreated me. Was it not necessary for you to also show mercy to your fellow slave as I to you showed mercy?’” As a result of this incident, the king easily discerned his slave’s true nature: wickedness.⁷⁷⁰ This speech forms the heart of the parable.⁷⁷¹ Just as the lord extended mercy rather than insisting on his right to be repaid, he expected the same of the one who received his forgiveness.⁷⁷² The impact of the king’s unexpected act should have caused the slave to respond by showering others with that same mercy.⁷⁷³

God’s forgiveness toward us overflows into forgiving those who sin against us. As a result, the Lord blesses us, delivering more mercy (Matt 6:12, 14–15; Matt 5:7).⁷⁷⁴ In fact, granting mercy characterizes the people of God (Luke 6:35–36; 1 John 4:11–12).⁷⁷⁵ Compared to the immeasurable mercy the Lord extends to us, how can we refuse to forgive those whose transgressions pale in significance?⁷⁷⁶ As we treat others, so shall God treat us (James 2:13).⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁶²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁶³Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:29–30.

⁷⁶⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁶⁵Plutarch, “Cimon,” in *Plutarch’s Lives* (LCL; trans. Bernadotte Perrin; London; Cambridge, MA: Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1959), 4.3, 413, <https://archive.org/stream/plutarchslives02plutuoft#page/412/mode/2up>.

⁷⁶⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁶⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 460.

⁷⁶⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁶⁹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 539.

⁷⁷⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

⁷⁷¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁷²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁷³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

⁷⁷⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁷⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 707.

⁷⁷⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.

⁷⁷⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

Jesus concluded the parable, proclaiming, “And, full of wrath, his lord handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed.” Due to the first slave’s unwillingness to forgive another debtor, the king revoked the cancellation of his financial obligation.⁷⁷⁸ This had nothing to do with his ability to pay. Instead, he proved himself unworthy of the king’s mercy. God will not forgive those who prove unwilling to extend pardon.⁷⁷⁹ A lack of love for others indicates a failure to experience the repentance which results in eternal life.⁷⁸⁰

This scenario would have been familiar to the original audience. An ancient papyrus from Greco-Roman Egypt indicates that the governor of Egypt incarcerated a man because he had “of his own authority imprisoned a worthy man [his alleged debtor] and also women.”⁷⁸¹

As a result of his sin, the first slave received treatment far worse than sale to another master.⁷⁸² People expected jailers who ran debtor’s prisons to inflict torture upon the detainees.⁷⁸³ The slave’s destiny consisted of excruciating punishment, not mere detention.⁷⁸⁴ Only with full repayment—an impossibility—could he be freed.⁷⁸⁵ Since he fell from political favor, no allies would dare come to his aid. He would never be released.⁷⁸⁶

Herod (73–4 BC) practiced torture,⁷⁸⁷ although Jewish law prohibited it (Exod 21:26–27).⁷⁸⁸ Gentile kings had no such impediments. A Roman inscription cites the job description of a public official who tortured and executed slaves at the demand of their owners. The services of such men allowed slave masters to avoid purchasing devices to inflict extreme pain and carrying out the deed themselves.⁷⁸⁹

Plautus (254–184 BC) wrote a play in which a master ordered the following punishment for the slave who had harmed his financial status: “Take him where he may receive weighty and thick fetters, thence, after that, you shall go to the quarries for cutting stone. There, while the others are digging out eight stones, unless you daily do half as much work again, you shall have the name of the six-hundred-stripe man.” [The torturer said], “He shall be taken all care of. For at night, fastened with chains, he shall be watched; in the daytime, beneath the ground, he shall be getting out stone. For many a day will I torture him; I’ll not respite him for a single day.”⁷⁹⁰

Since people in the Greco-Roman world knew the horrors of debt slavery and torture, this parable would have captured Peter’s attention, as well that of as Matthew’s original readers.⁷⁹¹ With a Gentile king, the evil slave could not expect to be freed after seven years (Exod 21:2; Lev

⁷⁷⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁷⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.

⁷⁸⁰Gustav Stählin, “ὀργίζω” (*orgizō*), *TDNT* 5:382–447, 442.

⁷⁸¹Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 267, <https://archive.org/stream/lightfromancient00deis#page/n385/mode/2up>.

⁷⁸²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.

⁷⁸³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

⁷⁸⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.

⁷⁸⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁸⁶Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:34.

⁷⁸⁷Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1.485,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0148:book=1:section=485>.

⁷⁸⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:34.

⁷⁸⁹Jennifer A. Glancy, “Slaves and Slavery in the Matthean Parables,” *JBL* 119, no. 1 (1 January 2000): 67–90, 67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3267969.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁰T. Maccius Plautus, “The Captives,” in *The Comedies of Plautus* (trans. Henry Thomas Riley; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 3.5, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0096:act=3:scene=5>.

⁷⁹¹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 18:35.

25:39–41).⁷⁹² Thus, Jesus alluded to a destiny of harsh judgment in the afterlife (Matt 10:28; Matt 13:41–42).⁷⁹³

Read Matt 18:31–34. What about this situation highly distressed the imprisoned slave’s colleagues? Why did the king hand the first slave over to torturers? How do we know that he would never be released? What impact does this parable have as you consider your own willingness to forgive others?

The Tragedy of Mercilessness

e) Matt 18:35: Jesus immediately made the meaning of this parable in Matt 18:21–35 clear to Peter by providing its application (Cf. Matt 13:1–2, 10–11). Christ concluded by saying, “This also my heavenly Father shall do to you, if each of you will not forgive their brother [or sister] from your hearts.” At last, Jesus confirmed that the king in the parable represents the Lord.⁷⁹⁴

The Greek construction of “will not forgive” (*mē aphēte*) forms a strong negation, indicating an unwillingness to extend forgiveness to another person.⁷⁹⁵ It does not mean that we struggle to quench bitterness and find ourselves repeatedly needing to forgive the offender for the same incident. The phrase “from your hearts” refers to sincerity, rather than merely saying that we forgive someone.⁷⁹⁶

As Christians, God has absolved the enormous debt of our sin (Col 2:13–14). Surely, we can extend that same mercy to people whose transgressions against us trifle in comparison,⁷⁹⁷ especially when they express repentance.⁷⁹⁸ Experiencing the mercy and grace of God transforms our hearts. Thus, we can extend to others what we have already received (Luke 7:36–50).⁷⁹⁹ God exempts none of us from the command to reflect divine forgiveness.⁸⁰⁰ Mercy received reproduces mercy.⁸⁰¹ A refusal to forgive someone who expresses repentance casts doubt upon our citizenship in the kingdom of God.⁸⁰²

Those who do not know God’s forgiveness can imitate his disciples on a superficial level. However, their words and actions will ultimately reveal their true allegiance (Matt 12:33–37; Matt 15:18–19). People who hold onto bitterness like a treasure will experience eternal damnation.⁸⁰³ God will not forgive the unforgiving (Matt 7:1–5; James 2:13; Rev 20:11–15).⁸⁰⁴

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

“No one should be surprised that they cannot come to believe so long as, in deliberate disobedience, they flee or reject some aspect of Jesus’s commandment. You do not want to subject some sinful passion, an enmity, a hope, your life plans, or your reason to Jesus’s

⁷⁹²Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 459.

⁷⁹³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 624.

⁷⁹⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁹⁵Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.*, 314.

⁷⁹⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540.

⁷⁹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.

⁷⁹⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 540–1.

⁷⁹⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 625.

⁸⁰⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 703.

⁸⁰¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 629.

⁸⁰²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 541.

⁸⁰³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 625.

⁸⁰⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 708.

commandment? Do not be surprised that you do not receive the Holy Spirit, that you cannot pray, that your prayer for faith remains empty! Instead, go and be reconciled with your sister or brother; let go of the sin which keeps you captive; and you will be able to believe again! If you reject God’s commanding word, you will not receive God’s gracious word. How would you expect to find community while you intentionally withdraw from it at some point? The disobedient cannot believe.”⁸⁰⁵

Particularly where trauma has occurred, the concept of extending forgiveness contains some pitfalls. Finding a wise counselor, taking time to process the wounds, and even medical intervention may be required to experience healing and gain the ability to forgive the offender.⁸⁰⁶ In such cases, no one should be pressured to forgive.⁸⁰⁷

Where abuse has occurred, real change requires a long-term process, even with third party intervention.⁸⁰⁸ We must recognize that abusers often appear genuinely repentant and promise to change. However, this does not last (Prov 19:19).⁸⁰⁹ God never calls us to passively accept violence perpetrated against us.⁸¹⁰ Therefore, we must not counsel the recipients of abuse to simply accept an apology and give the perpetrator another chance. Abusers will often portray themselves as the true victims. Such advice can be equivalent to a death warrant.⁸¹¹

The Presbyterian Church of America, a conservative evangelical denomination, published the following official statement on this topic:

“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 [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 Session (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 [1 Cor 6:9–10 includes the term ‘abusive person’ (*loidoros*)]. 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 7:15].”⁸¹²

Forgiveness does not consist of denying, pardoning, or condoning the sin of another. It may neither result in reconciliation nor in forgetting the offense.⁸¹³ God does not expect us to

⁸⁰⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (ed. Martin Kuske, et al.; vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*; trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 66.

⁸⁰⁶Jeffrey M. Brandsma, “Forgiveness,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling, 2nd Ed. (BEPC)* (ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 468–71, 470.

⁸⁰⁷Walter Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 2 Vols. (BEB)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 87.

⁸⁰⁸Paul Hegstrom, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse, Rev. Ed.* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2004), 131.

⁸⁰⁹Detective Sgt Donald Stewart, *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2004), 44–5.

⁸¹⁰Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 128.

⁸¹¹Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck, eds., *Women, Abuse, and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 234.

⁸¹²20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, “*Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage* (1992), 290–1, [Http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf](http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf).

⁸¹³Brandsma, “Forgiveness,” *BEPC*, 468.

restore a toxic relationship.⁸¹⁴ Nevertheless, only by releasing grudges can a victim sever harmful emotional ties to the offender. We must confess and forsake hatred more for our own sakes than for the benefit of those who sin against us.⁸¹⁵ Fostering bitterness has the same effect as drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.⁸¹⁶

Read Matt 18:35. Why can people who refuse to forgive those who repent expect a destiny like that of the evil slave? What does forgiveness look like? How should we counsel people in abusive relationships? Based upon this parable, what can we deduce about Lamech's fate (Gen 4:23–24)?

⁸¹⁴Hegstrom, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse*, Rev. Ed., 104.

⁸¹⁵Dr. Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal: How to Understand Your Past to Ensure a Healthier Future* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 257.

⁸¹⁶ This concept is attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Chapter 3: Calling on the Name of the Lord (Gen 4:25–26)

The mark which the Lord placed upon Cain worked (Gen 4:15). Not only did he survive, he produced a family line (Gen 4:16–18).⁸¹⁷ Cain’s descendants introduced the first metal-working, poetry, and cities:⁸¹⁸ all hallmarks of great civilizations (Gen 4:19–22).⁸¹⁹ However, in an ominous sign, the one who slew the first martyr built the first city (Gen 4:8, 17).⁸²⁰ Furthermore, Cain chose to honor humanity rather than the Lord by naming the city “Enoch” after his son.⁸²¹

People in the Ancient Near East (ANE) believed that cities represented the dwelling places of the gods. Therefore, they viewed divine guidance as essential for their construction. Indeed, in ANE mythologies, the gods themselves built cities.⁸²² Cain’s city-building seems to contradict the Lord’s decree that he would live as a fugitive (Gen 4:11–14).⁸²³ Dwelling in a city put an end to his wandering alienation and provided security. Even after his rebellion, Cain and his descendants enjoyed the blessing of ruling and subduing the earth (Gen 1:26–28).⁸²⁴

Cain’s family line tragically depicts how sin distorts the image of God, leaving destruction in its wake.⁸²⁵ Lamech’s violent temperament resembles that of his ancestor (Gen 4:23–24).⁸²⁶ He also practiced polygamy, which contradicts God’s design for marriage (Gen 4:19; Gen 2:22–24). Through him and his line we see increasing depravity.⁸²⁷ Yet, they also practiced and expanded the cultural mandate of Gen 1:28 to include the domestication and breeding of animals, musical arts, and metal crafts.⁸²⁸

Adah and Zillah no doubt had proudly watched their sons develop animal husbandry, music, and metallurgy. In contrast, Lamech’s violent boasting after murdering a man who wounded him must have filled them with horror.⁸²⁹ By embracing such great vindictiveness,⁸³⁰ Lamech indicated that his depravity exceeded Cain’s.⁸³¹ For Lamech, taking the law into his own hands was a point of pride.⁸³² This escalation of violence could easily erupt into warfare aided by swords, potentially one of the technological advancements of Tubal-Cain (Gen 4:22).⁸³³

Sin acts as a plague which spreads by contagion. Like a polluted river, it branches into tributaries until it contaminates parents, children, and grandchildren.⁸³⁴ Thus, Moses hinted that all of Cain’s descendants would face God’s judgment (Gen 6:5–8).⁸³⁵

⁸¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 237.

⁸¹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 99.

⁸¹⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 276.

⁸²⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 182.

⁸²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁸²²Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 83.

⁸²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 237–8.

⁸²⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 277.

⁸²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁸²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112.

⁸²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 238.

⁸²⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁸²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁸³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100.

⁸³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

⁸³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 241.

⁸³³Walton, *Genesis*, 278.

⁸³⁴Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 53.

⁸³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 114.

An Appointed Son

1) Gen 4:25: After the long segue of Gen 4:3–24, Moses returned to the account of Adam and Eve.⁸³⁶ As a result, the events of Gen 4:3–25 do not occur in chronological order.⁸³⁷ Throughout Genesis, the genealogical line of lesser interest precedes the one of greater importance (Cf. Gen 25:12–19).⁸³⁸ This may be due to God’s preference for the younger son over the firstborn. However, when extra-biblical primeval texts record two parallel genealogies, the first represents people with valuable skills and the second cites those of the royal line.⁸³⁹

Contrasting with the depraved line of Cain, Moses takes us back in time to depict how the Lord kept his promise of a godly seed which would eventually destroy the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15).⁸⁴⁰ Paralleling Gen 4:1, Moses began this section by writing, “And Adam again knew his wife, and she gave birth to a son. And she called his name Seth, because ‘God has appointed to me another seed instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.’”

A seed (*zera*) brings forth something which resembles what produced it.⁸⁴¹ As in English, the term can be either singular or plural. It refers to an immediate descendant, distant offspring, or a collective group of descendants.⁸⁴² The word has particular importance in Genesis, where it accounts for over one-fourth of the Old Testament occurrences, appearing fifty-nine times.⁸⁴³

In Gen 3:15, the Lord announced that all those who united against him would from then on fight against God’s people.⁸⁴⁴ Since the serpent which tempted Eve symbolized sin, death, and the power of malevolence, the curse upon him envisaged a long struggle between good and evil, with redeemed humanity ultimately triumphing.⁸⁴⁵ While the seed of the woman consists of those whose hearts incline toward God, hostile unbelief characterizes the seed of the serpent (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43). The unspoken question is, “Whose seed are you?”⁸⁴⁶

To accomplish God’s plan of redemption, 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.⁸⁴⁷

However, the oldest Jewish interpretations understood Gen 3:15 to anticipate the vanquishing of the serpent by a single messiah. For example, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible utilized the masculine singular form (*spermatos*) to describe him.⁸⁴⁸ Therefore, while all of God’s people participate in the fight, this shall ultimately result in a battle of champions,⁸⁴⁹ much as David and Goliath each represented their armies in single combat (1 Sam 17:8–10, 48–50).

⁸³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 242.

⁸³⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100–1.

⁸³⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 278–9.

⁸³⁹Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 441–2.

⁸⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100–1.

⁸⁴¹Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed.*, 108.

⁸⁴²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “זֵרָע” (*zera*), *BDB*, 282–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/282/mode/2up>.

⁸⁴³Results of Logos 7 word study on *zera*.

⁸⁴⁴Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 108.

⁸⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 79–80.

⁸⁴⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

⁸⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

⁸⁴⁸Brannan, et al., *LES*, Gen 3:15.

⁸⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

Eve’s description of Seth as “another seed” indicates she recognized that redemption would come through him.⁸⁵⁰ Unlike Cain or Abel, Seth fathered a godly line of people (Gen 5).⁸⁵¹ At the birth of Cain, Eve asserted, “I have acquired a man, the Lord” (Gen 4:1) We cannot ascertain the extent of her faith that announcement. However, after Seth’s arrival, she spoke with a focus upon God, attributing his birth to the Lord.⁸⁵² Once again, Eve performed the authoritative act of naming her son (Cf. Gen 3:20).⁸⁵³

Seth’s name derives from a Hebrew verb (*sith*) which means “put,” “place,” or “appoint” (Gen 48:14; Gen 41:33).⁸⁵⁴ Despite Abel’s death, Eve trusted that God would fulfill his covenant.⁸⁵⁵ The Lord placed Seth on earth as a substitute for her second son.⁸⁵⁶

a) Read Gen 4:25. Compare this birth announcement with the one in Gen 4:1. Why is the difference significant? How did Eve view Seth?

The Peril of Certainty

2) James 4:13–14: In this passage, the half-brother of Jesus addressed Christians with ungodly attitudes.⁸⁵⁷ James tended to use attention-grabbing rhetoric.⁸⁵⁸ He resembled a father confronting his children for behavior contrary to family expectations.⁸⁵⁹

He began by writing, “Come now, the ones saying, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that city and spend a year there. And we will conduct business and make a profit.’” These words either reflect what James heard people say,⁸⁶⁰ or they represent the underlying attitude of the recipients of this letter.⁸⁶¹ This scenario concerned people planning a business trip.⁸⁶² They exhibited great confidence in where and when they would go and how long they would remain there.

James’ original audience would have been familiar with such conversations. They lived in an era marked by a strong increase in commerce, especially in the Greco-Roman areas of Palestine. Many Jewish merchants settled in cities throughout the Mediterranean to pursue financial gain.⁸⁶³ While James did not specify the type of business deal he had in mind, his first readers would have thought of exports of grain, wine, figs, and olives and of imports of incense, spices, rare woods, silk, pottery, or livestock.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁵⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 193.

⁸⁵¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 242.

⁸⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 242.

⁸⁵³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:20.

⁸⁵⁴G. Vanoni, “שִׁית” (*sith*), *TDOT*, 14:646–59, 652.

⁸⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

⁸⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 115.

⁸⁵⁷Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 202.

⁸⁵⁸Scott McKnight, *The Letter of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 368.

⁸⁵⁹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 202.

⁸⁶⁰Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 165.

⁸⁶¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 202.

⁸⁶²Martin, *James*, 165.

⁸⁶³Moo, *The Letter of James*, 202.

⁸⁶⁴McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 370.

The apostle did not direct his indignation against the merchants' secular vocations.⁸⁶⁵ He also did not rebuke their desire to make a profit.⁸⁶⁶ Instead, their error consisted of an overweening self-confidence that their business plans would succeed,⁸⁶⁷ an arrogant presumption that they would experience safe travel and healthy profits.⁸⁶⁸ They failed to factor God's will into their calculations.⁸⁶⁹

Nevertheless, James did not condemn planning for the future. God calls us to wisely steward the resources which he grants to us.⁸⁷⁰ Yet, while we devise strategies for what lies ahead, we must recognize that God's purposes will prevail (Prov 16:9; Prov 20:24; Jer 10:23). As we seek his kingdom, we must trust that the Lord will meet our needs (Matt 6:25–34).⁸⁷¹

Giving these merchants a dose of reality,⁸⁷² James wrote, "You are ones who do not know what your life will be tomorrow." Our lives are both fragile and astonishingly brief (James 1:10–11).⁸⁷³ Dictating future events lies beyond our ephemeral ability (Isa 40:6–8; Luke 12:16–21).⁸⁷⁴ Only God reigns in sovereignty.⁸⁷⁵ Restating his case, the apostle pointed out, "for a vapor you are, for a short time appearing, and then disappearing."

Coming from an agriculturally based society, James's readers kept an eye upon the clouds. They regarded the puffs of vapor which disappeared without bringing rain with grave disappointment.⁸⁷⁶ However, mist which rises from the sea and then vanishes provides an even better allusion for the merchant class whom James addressed.⁸⁷⁷ We can exude vitality and still lose our lives in just a moment.⁸⁷⁸

This concept resonated beyond the Judeo-Christian arena. Seneca, the great Roman orator and statesman (1 BC–65 AD), wrote the following:

"He who was venturing investments by land and sea, who had also entered public life and left no type of business untried, during the very realization of financial success and during the very onrush of the money that flowed into his coffers, was snatched from the world!...How foolish it is to set out one's life, when one is not even owner of the morrow!.. To say, 'I will buy and build, loan and call in money, win titles of honor, and then, old and full of years, I will surrender myself to a life of ease.' Believe me when I say that everything is doubtful, even for those who are prosperous...The very thing that we grasp slips through our hands...We plan distant voyages and long-postponed home-comings after roaming over foreign shores, we plan for military service and the slow rewards of hard campaigns, we canvass for governorships and the promotions of one office after another, and all the while death stands at our side."⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁶⁵Martin, *James*, 165.

⁸⁶⁶McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 370.

⁸⁶⁷Moo, *The Letter of James*, 202.

⁸⁶⁸McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 370–1.

⁸⁶⁹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, James 4:13.

⁸⁷⁰Moo, *The Letter of James*, 202–3.

⁸⁷¹McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 371.

⁸⁷²Moo, *The Letter of James*, 203.

⁸⁷³McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 371.

⁸⁷⁴Moo, *The Letter of James*, 203.

⁸⁷⁵Martin, *James*, 167.

⁸⁷⁶McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 372–3.

⁸⁷⁷Martin, *James*, 166.

⁸⁷⁸Moo, *The Letter of James*, 204.

⁸⁷⁹Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles* (trans. Richard M. Grummere; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 101, 3:161, <https://archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu03sene#page/160/mode/2up>.

Planning for the future without considering the sovereignty of God is both foolish and futile. We cannot know what tomorrow shall bring.⁸⁸⁰

a) **Read James 4:13–14.** Why is it foolish to presume that we know what the future holds?

Boasting in Arrogance

b) **James 4:15–16:** The apostle provided a remedy for the presumption he criticized (James 4:13–14).⁸⁸¹ He wrote, “Instead, you [are] to say, ‘If the Lord might will, then we will live and we will do this or that.’” Even the phrase “this or that” points to the doubtful nature of our plans succeeding.⁸⁸² Whatever happens to us falls under the control of the Lord (Matt 6:10; Acts 18:18–21; Rom 1:9–10).

This does not omit the need for wise planning and hard work (Prov 27:23–27; 2 Chron 32:27–30). However, humbly trusting that God controls our destinies enables us to rest securely as we face the future.⁸⁸³ The spiritual realm directly impacts what occurs in the material arena.⁸⁸⁴

Pagan authors expressed similar ideas.⁸⁸⁵ In the midst of a discussion regarding the authority of Zeus and the lesser gods over nature, the philosopher Epictetus (55–135 AD) wrote, “What, then, is to be done? To make the best of what is in our power and take the rest as it occurs. And how does it occur? As it pleases God.”⁸⁸⁶

Indeed, the phrase “if the gods will” (*Deo volente* in Latin) appears frequently in Greco-Roman literature.⁸⁸⁷ Approximately two hundred years before James penned his letter, the playwright Plautus claimed, “Isn't it the fact that if the Gods will a blessing to befall any person, that longed-for pleasure by some means or other, falls to the lot of the virtuous?”⁸⁸⁸

While the apostle James encouraged his readers to say, “if the Lord wills,”⁸⁸⁹ he never intended this to develop into a thoughtless, repetitious platitude.⁸⁹⁰ James promoted the idea behind the phrase, rather than the words themselves. Even Paul did not always state this phrase while making plans (Acts 15:36).

When determining our future paths, we must hold to those decisions lightly, knowing that the Lord may choose to alter them at any time. By remaining sensitive to the Spirit and acting according to biblical ethics,⁸⁹¹ we can live in confidence that we adhere to the will of God (Acts

⁸⁸⁰Martin, *James*, 166.

⁸⁸¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 204.

⁸⁸²McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 376.

⁸⁸³Martin, *James*, 166.

⁸⁸⁴Moo, *The Letter of James*, 204–5.

⁸⁸⁵Martin, *James*, 167.

⁸⁸⁶Epictetus, “Discourses,” 1.1.17,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D1>.

⁸⁸⁷Moo, *The Letter of James*, 205.

⁸⁸⁸T. Maccius Plautus, “Rudens (the Fisherman’s Rope),” in *The Comedies of Plautus* (ed. Henry Thomas Riley; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 4.5,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0108%3Aact%3D4%3Ascene%3D5>.

⁸⁸⁹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 205.

⁸⁹⁰Martin, *James*, 167.

⁸⁹¹Moo, *The Letter of James*, 206.

16:6–10). James neither equated wealth with virtue nor with receiving God’s blessing (James 2:1–7). Nor did Paul (2 Cor 8:1–5; 2 Cor 11:23–30; Phil 4:10–14).

The apostle drove his point home, writing, “But now you boast in your arrogance. All such arrogance is evil.” However, he did not prohibit all boasting. Whether our confidence veers into sin depends upon its object (Jer 9:23–24; 1 Cor 1:26–31; James 1:9–11). Consequently, the core of the problem consisted of their self-assured arrogance.⁸⁹²

In the New Testament, the only other occurrence of “arrogance” (*alazoneia*) as a trait appears as “the arrogance of life” (1 John 2:15–17). Arrogant people make more of themselves than reality justifies. They either ascribe qualities to themselves they do not possess, promise what they cannot perform,⁸⁹³ or claim that their gifts and talents originate from themselves rather than from the Lord (Exod 36:1–2; 1 Cor 4:6–13).

The intertestamental ruler Antiochus IV decreed himself *Epiphanēs*, which means “manifest as a god.”⁸⁹⁴ He provides a sterling example of arrogance.⁸⁹⁵ Yet, this occurred during his final military campaign:

“He who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all...While he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. Because of his intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses...He uttered these words, ‘It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God’” (2 Macc 9:8–11, RSV).

James asserted that the merchants in the congregation acted as if God does not exist.⁸⁹⁶ Furthermore, their boasting highlighted their pride for failing to depend upon the Lord.⁸⁹⁷ The apostle deemed such behavior as inherently evil.⁸⁹⁸

Read James 4:15–16. What makes boasting about the future evil? How can we avoid it? What do you believe James thought about Eve’s announcement of Seth’s birth (Gen 4:25)? Why?

Worshiping the Lord

3) Gen 4:26: Another birth announcement creates a bookend for Gen 4. It says, “To Seth also a son was born. And he called his name Enosh.” This is the first instance in Genesis which records

⁸⁹²Moo, *The Letter of James* 206.

⁸⁹³Gerhard Delling, “ἀλαζονεία” (*alazoneia*), *TDNT*, 1:226–7.

⁸⁹⁴John Whitehorne, “Antiochus (Person),” *ABD* 1:269–72, 270.

⁸⁹⁵McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 376.

⁸⁹⁶Martin, *James*, 167.

⁸⁹⁷Moo, *The Letter of James*, 207.

⁸⁹⁸Martin, *James*, 168.

the father as the one who named his child.⁸⁹⁹ Adam expressed his authority and responsibility to protect by naming the animals and—after the fall—his wife (Gen 2:19–20; Gen 3:20).⁹⁰⁰ Yet, Eve had designated their sons as “Cain” and “Seth” (Gen 4:1; Gen 4:25).⁹⁰¹

In Hebrew, the verb form of Enosh (*anash*) means “to be weak,” “to be feeble,” or “to be sick.” While Enosh typically means “human,” in some passages the nuance of the word implies frailty and mortality (2 Sam 12:15; Ps 103:15–16; Job 7:1–3).⁹⁰² Enosh’s recognition of his human weakness may have evoked his dependence upon God.⁹⁰³

Moses continued, writing, “Then it was that humanity began to call on the name of Yahweh.” The text notes that worship of the Lord began during Enosh’s lifetime of 905 years (Gen 5:11). It does not specify that he initiated it.⁹⁰⁴ People switched their focus switched from glorifying humanity—as in the lineage of Cain (Gen 4:17–24)—to exalting God.⁹⁰⁵

Although Cain and Abel brought offerings to God (Gen 4:3–4), here divine worship occurred on a regular basis.⁹⁰⁶ Therefore, ritual adoration of the Lord did not begin in Moses’s era (Exod 27:20–28:1). Instead, Israel’s priests restored a much earlier devotion. Elsewhere in Genesis, “to call on the name of the Lord” involved prayer and sacrifice upon an altar (Gen 12:7–8; Gen 13:2–4; Gen 21:32–33; Gen 26:23–25).⁹⁰⁷ In the rest of the Old Testament, the phrase refers to requesting deliverance (Ps 105:1–4; Ps 116:1–4; 2 Ki 5:11) or proclaiming God’s attributes and his activities (Isa 12:4–6).

By calling upon the name of the Lord, we meet with him (Isa 64:5–7), give him our allegiance (Isa 44:5), and acknowledge him as our God. While we call upon him, he designates us as his own (Zech 13:9).⁹⁰⁸ Thus, the people depicted here enjoyed a relationship with the Lord, depending upon him to fulfill his promise of a redeemer (Gen 3:15).⁹⁰⁹

Surprisingly, the name “Yahweh” appears in this verse. God did not make his name known as “I AM,” the English translation of “Yahweh,” until Exod 3:13–15 (Cf. Exod 6:2–3).⁹¹⁰ A careful reading of Gen 12–50 affirms that none of the patriarchs knew the Lord by his personal name.⁹¹¹ Instead, Moses asserted that not all people abandoned the worship of God as civilizations developed.⁹¹²

Giving names carried great import in the early chapters of Genesis. Unlike with humanity, no one bestowed the designation of the Lord upon him. The name of Yahweh transcends all others. His name alone deserves our worship and adoration.⁹¹³

⁸⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 115.

⁹⁰⁰Note that in Gen 2:23, Adam recognized that the woman was his feminine counterpart rather than naming her. The term he used for her is simply the feminine form of the word for “man.”

⁹⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 242.

⁹⁰²F. Maass, “אֱנוֹשׁ” (*enosh*), *TDOT* 1:345–8, 345–6.

⁹⁰³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

⁹⁰⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

⁹⁰⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

⁹⁰⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 116.

⁹⁰⁷Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 116.

⁹⁰⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

⁹⁰⁹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 193.

⁹¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 243.

⁹¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 116.

⁹¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

⁹¹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 243–4.

Read Gen 4:26. What does it mean to “call upon the name of the Lord”? Do you think there is a connection between Enosh’s name meaning “frail” or “weak” and the beginning of regularly occurring worship? Why or why not? How does your frailty bring honor to God’s name?

Confession and Belief

4) Rom 10:8–10: In Deut 30:6, God made an amazing promise to the people he would bring back to Israel after the exile. Moses wrote, “And the Lord your God shall circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed in order to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul so that you may live.”

God fulfilled this vow through the proclamation of Christ’s work, rather than by human attempts to keep the Mosaic law.⁹¹⁴ The gospel demands a simple response. Those with receptive hearts secure salvation.⁹¹⁵ Paul began this section by quoting Deut 30:14. It says, “but very near to you [is] the word, in your mouth and in your heart, in order to do it.”

While this seems odd, given that what comes from our mouths must first issue from what we believe, the apostle reversed the order in the very next verse.⁹¹⁶ He continued, “Because if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” This assertion of Christ’s sovereignty comprised one of the hallmarks of the early church (1 Cor 12:3).⁹¹⁷ “Jesus is Lord” comprises the New Testament equivalent of Deut 6:4,⁹¹⁸ a verse which observant Jews repeat daily even today.⁹¹⁹

As an established formula by the time of Paul,⁹²⁰ new believers likely declared the phrase at the time of baptism (Acts 19:5).⁹²¹ Other uses by the early church included evangelism, exhortation, and corporate worship (Acts 2:36; Col 2:6–7; 1 Cor 1:2).⁹²²

Confessing, “Jesus is Lord” meant acknowledging that he participates in all the attributes of the one true God. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (OT) renders the name Yahweh as Lord (*kurios*) over six thousand times.⁹²³ Paul announced that Jesus is God in the flesh (2 Cor 4:3–6; Phil 2:5–11).

Many recipients of salvation experience radical transformation, changing from those who bitterly curse their creator to people who recognize the matchless worth of Christ.⁹²⁴ Confession

⁹¹⁴Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 659.

⁹¹⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 657.

⁹¹⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:527.

⁹¹⁷Moo, *Romans*, 332.

⁹¹⁸Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 607.

⁹¹⁹Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2001), 137.

⁹²⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:527.

⁹²¹Otto Michel, “ὁμολογέω” (*homologeō*), *TDNT*, 5:199–220, 215.

⁹²²Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 607.

⁹²³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:529.

⁹²⁴Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 659.

in itself does not produce redemption but rather serves as an indicator of a changed heart, when it naturally flows from us (Matt 7:15–23; Acts 19:13–18).⁹²⁵ Thus, the heart and mouth must act in concert as interior and exterior expressions of the presence of the Spirit.⁹²⁶

The word “lord” described one who ruled over others. These relationships could refer to masters and slaves, kings and their subjects, or gods over their worshipers.⁹²⁷ This included the deities of the Greco-Roman religion (1 Cor 8:5).⁹²⁸ Therefore, a person who worshiped many gods could acknowledge many lords in various spheres without conflict.⁹²⁹ Even today within religions such as Hinduism, a person may worship Jesus as one among many deities.⁹³⁰

Not until Paul’s lifetime did Roman emperors adopt the title “Lord” for themselves. The earliest known example of this refers to Claudius.⁹³¹ That papyrus, dated to 49 AD, calls him “Tiberius Claudius Caesar, our Lord.”⁹³² This placed Christians on a collision course with the Roman Empire. In fact, the refusal of Jesus’s followers to worship Roman gods and their efforts to convince others to abandon emperor worship led to their persecution as atheists.⁹³³ During the era when Paul wrote Romans (ca. 57 AD), claiming Jesus as Lord brought no social advantage (Acts 28:22).

The Greco-Roman historian Tacitus (56–120 AD) noted:

“To get rid of the report [that he set Rome on fire in 64 AD], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty, then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”⁹³⁴

Bolstering Tacitus’s assertion, in 1961 people in Caesarea discovered an inscription which says, “...Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.”⁹³⁵ Prior to that, many historians reduced Pilate to an imaginary figure.

⁹²⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 657.

⁹²⁶Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 659.

⁹²⁷Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 608.

⁹²⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:528.

⁹²⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 608.

⁹³⁰Tennant, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology*, 194.

⁹³¹Werner Foerster, “κύριος” (*kurios*), *TDNT* 3:1039–98, 1054.

⁹³²Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri, “Report of a Lawsuit (P.Oxy. 1 37),” <http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/hgv/20699>.

⁹³³Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language, 3rd Ed.*, 38.

⁹³⁴Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, in *Complete Works of Tacitus* (ed. William Jackson Brodribb and Sara Bryant; trans. Alfred John Church; New York: Random House, 1942), 15.44, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=3DDF615647A0DBAE5788C50EBD09314B?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D44>.

⁹³⁵Jona Lendering, “Pontius Pilate,” <http://www.livius.org/pi-pm/pilate/pilate08.html>. The Latin reads “Tiberium [Po]ntius Pilatus [Prea]ctus Iuda[ea].”

A person's lord demanded his loyalty and trust.⁹³⁶ Consequently, when a baptismal candidate proclaimed, "Jesus is Lord," this signified a transfer of allegiance to Christ.⁹³⁷ Acts 22:6–16 provides a glimpse into this reality. Saul, who later became Paul, was traveling to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus who resided there. After an encounter with the risen Christ, God commanded him to call upon the name of the Lord as he received baptism.⁹³⁸

As the Second Adam, Jesus perfectly conformed to God's plan for humanity (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45–49; Heb 4:14–15). Due to his victory over sin and death, Christ enjoys the exaltation and dominion over creation which God intended for us (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:4–8; 1 Cor 15:25–27; Eph 1:19–23). He alone reigns sovereign over the universe.⁹³⁹

Our mouths must confess what we genuinely believe.⁹⁴⁰ We cannot separate external expression and internal faith.⁹⁴¹ Therefore, Paul wrote, "And if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Stating "Jesus is Lord" provides evidence of saving faith. It does not produce salvation.⁹⁴² As in the OT, Paul used the word "heart" (*kardia*) to mean the deepest part of a person, the internal aspect which determines our moral conduct.⁹⁴³

Belief in Christ's resurrection provides the basis for ascribing lordship to him.⁹⁴⁴ That God raised Jesus from the dead comprises a core conviction of Christians (Matt 28:1–7; 1 Cor 15:3–8, 12–20).⁹⁴⁵ Although Paul did not mention Christ's death on the cross, the resurrection implies that event. Rising from the grave vindicated Jesus and established the efficacy of his atoning death (Col 1:15–23; Rom 8:11).⁹⁴⁶ Jesus's resurrection distinguished him from all other lords of the Greco-Roman Empire.⁹⁴⁷ Christ lived a real human life and experienced a shameful death, unlike the mythological characters of that culture (1 Cor 1:22–25).⁹⁴⁸

Many theologians assert that we have been saved, are being saved, and shall be saved.⁹⁴⁹ However, in this instance Paul described our redemption as a future event. At the end of this age, the Lord shall save those who confess and belief from judgment to inherit everlasting life (Rom 5:8–10).⁹⁵⁰

In Rom 10:10, Paul reversed the order of the conditions necessary to receive salvation from Rom 10:9, forming an A-B-B-A chiasm.⁹⁵¹ Here he described how people experience becoming Christians.⁹⁵² He wrote, "For with the heart one believes, leading to righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation."

Those who hearts are being changed to live in an ethical manner are those who have

⁹³⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:529.

⁹³⁷Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 608.

⁹³⁸George R. Beasley-Murray, "Baptism," *DPL* 61–5, 61.

⁹³⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 608, 610.

⁹⁴⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:527.

⁹⁴¹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 609.

⁹⁴²Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 686.

⁹⁴³Johannes Behm, "καρδία" (*kardia*), *TDNT* 3:605–14, 613.

⁹⁴⁴Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 609.

⁹⁴⁵Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:530.

⁹⁴⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 658.

⁹⁴⁷Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 263.

⁹⁴⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:530.

⁹⁴⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 827.

⁹⁵⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:530.

⁹⁵¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 658.

⁹⁵²Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:530.

received salvation (Tit 2:11–14).⁹⁵³ Internal transformation results in external holiness, a process called sanctification (Rom 1:16–17).⁹⁵⁴ This did not represent a new development in salvation history: the psalms and the book of Isaiah confirm a parallel between salvation and righteousness (Ps 32:1–7; Ps 51:10–17; Ps 71:14–16; Isa 45:8, 21–25; Isa 51:4–8; Isa 62:1).⁹⁵⁵ Faith has always been what saves people (Heb 11:1–4).

Nevertheless, Paul refused to equate faith with performing good works. Our confession of belief springing from a certain internal conviction secures salvation.⁹⁵⁶ As C. E. B. Cranfield wrote, “All that one has to do, in order to be saved, is to confess with one’s mouth Jesus as Lord and to believe—really believe—in one’s heart that God has raised Him from the dead.”⁹⁵⁷

a) Read Rom 10:8–10. How did God fulfill the promise of Deut 30:6? Why did cultural realities prevent people in the early church from glibly confessing, “Jesus is Lord”? What is the role of that confession in our salvation? How did Paul view the relationship between righteousness and salvation?

Future Vindication

b) Rom 10:11–12: In these verses, Paul expounded upon what he had just written (Rom 10:8–10), proving from Old Testament (OT) texts that those who place their trust in Christ for salvation shall experience vindication in the coming judgment.⁹⁵⁸

The apostle wrote, “For the Scriptures say, ‘Everyone who believes in him shall not be put to shame.’” After citing the Greek translation of Isa 28:16 in Rom 9:33,⁹⁵⁹ here Paul quoted a portion of it, with the addition of the word “everyone.”⁹⁶⁰ Note that the context of Isa 28:14–18 involves a pact which the rulers of Israel made with the underworld (Sheol). By importing this reference into his letter, Paul joined Peter in identifying Jesus as the metaphorical stone from Isaiah (1 Pet 2:6–8).⁹⁶¹

Israel’s culture focused upon the avoidance of shame, unlike our guilt-based Western society. Indeed, the Lord’s covenant with Israel included promises to protect them from shame but bring it upon their enemies (Deut 28:13–14; Ps 40:14–15; Ps 78:65–66). This emphasis upon evading shame continued into the Greco-Roman era, where a loss of honor usually involved public rebuke.⁹⁶²

⁹⁵³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 658–9.

⁹⁵⁴Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 263.

⁹⁵⁵Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 41.

⁹⁵⁶Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 616.

⁹⁵⁷Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:526–7.

⁹⁵⁸Moo, *Romans*, 332.

⁹⁵⁹Moo, *Romans*, 332.

⁹⁶⁰Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 609.

⁹⁶¹Moo, *Romans*, 332.

⁹⁶²Timothy 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), 83–4, 87.

According to the New Testament, the Lord brings shame upon people, usually in the context of judgment.⁹⁶³ Since “all of us must be exposed before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10), the promise that we shall not be put to shame when God reveals all our secrets brings great comfort (Rom 2:12–16).

During his crucifixion, Jesus bore all the sin and shame of those who trust him (Isa 53:1–6, 11–12; Col 2:13–14). God nailed the charges against us to the cross. Therefore, we need not fear humiliation when Christ returns (Matt 10:27–33; 1 John 2:28).⁹⁶⁴

Why would Paul mention that “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for he is Lord of all” here? The greetings in Rom 16:3–15 imply the existence of a network of house churches comprised of people from across the social spectrum. They ranged from slaves to aristocrats,⁹⁶⁵ both Jew and Gentile (Phil 4:22). The origin of the Roman church remains obscure. However, by the time Christianity came to Rome, approximately fifty thousand Jews lived in the city. Many Gentiles had converted to Judaism. This created strong tensions between ethnic Jews and the polytheistic high-ranking Gentiles who resided in the capital. That friction seeped into the church.⁹⁶⁶

The vast majority of Rome’s one million residents experienced great difficulty. Low-income citizens, foreigners, slaves, and freed slaves comprised most of the city’s inhabitants. Landlords charged high rents in the poorly constructed and overcrowded tenements. Fires and building collapses occurred frequently in these slums. Nearly everyone lived with poor sanitation and difficulties obtaining food.⁹⁶⁷

In AD 49, the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome.⁹⁶⁸ Suetonius (ca. 69–130/140), a Roman historian, wrote, “He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.”⁹⁶⁹ This likely refers to the preaching of the gospel by Jewish believers.⁹⁷⁰ As a result, the church became composed entirely of Gentiles until the automatic repeal of the edict upon Claudius’s death in AD 54 (Cf. Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3).⁹⁷¹ Paul appears to have written his letter within five years after the exile ended.⁹⁷²

Due to the return of Jewish followers of Christ into purely Gentile congregations, conflict erupted over the differing practices of the two factions. Paul sought to mediate their disputes.⁹⁷³ Consequently, the major themes of this letter touch upon that tension. Paul reminded them that God views Jew and Gentile as equally guilty, needing his pardon (Rom 1:16–3:31). Spiritual

⁹⁶³Rudolf Bultmann, “αἰσχύνω, κατααἰσχύνω” (*aischunō, kataischunō*), *TDNT* 1:189–91, 189.

⁹⁶⁴Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 263.

⁹⁶⁵Brian M. Rapske, “Rome and Roman Christianity,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1063–7, 1064.

⁹⁶⁶Keener, “Rome’s Jewish Community,” *IVPBBCNT*, Rom.

⁹⁶⁷Rapske, “Rome and Roman Christianity,” *DLNT*, 1064.

⁹⁶⁸James D. G. Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 838–50, 839.

⁹⁶⁹C. Tranquillus Suetonius, “Divus Claudius,” in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; an English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1889), 25.4.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dcl.%3Achapter%3D25>.

⁹⁷⁰Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 852–3.

⁹⁷¹F. F. Bruce, “Christianity Under Claudius,” *BJRL* 44, no. 2 (1 March 1962): 309–26, 318,

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bjrl/claudius_bruce.pdf.

⁹⁷²Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 13.

⁹⁷³Charles D. Myers Jr., “Romans, Epistle to the,” *ABD* 5:816–26, 817.

affiliation with Abraham—rather than ethnic descent—leads to salvation (Rom 4:1–25; Rom 9:1–33), for ultimately Adam’s sin taints everyone (Rom 5:12–21).

Since God granted salvation to the Gentiles, they had no reason to boast about their grafting into Judaism (Rom 11:1–32). Therefore, Paul exhorted them to respect the existing cultural differences (Rom 14:1–23). As a representative of the Lord, he recognized the necessity of racial accord and unity within the body of Christ (Rom 15:1–33).⁹⁷⁴ In sum, the church required a fresh understanding of the radical nature of the gospel before they could put the practical implications of what they learned into practice.⁹⁷⁵

Paul announced, “The same [Lord is] Lord of all” (Deut 4:37–40; Rom 3:29–30; 1 Cor 12:4–6). The gospel offers salvation to all people regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds.⁹⁷⁶ Furthermore, both Jews and Gentiles come to Christ on the same basis:⁹⁷⁷ everyone stands on equal footing before the cross (Rom 3:21–24).⁹⁷⁸

Israel had incorporated individual Gentiles into their nation for many years (Num 12:1; Josh 6:25; Ruth 1:4–5, 16; 2 Ki 5:17–19). However, after the resurrection of Christ, Gentiles began participating in the covenant made to Abraham without converting to Judaism (Gen 12:1–3; Acts 15:1–11; Gal 3:13–14, 26–29; Eph 2:11–22).⁹⁷⁹

Consequently, people can no longer consider the Lord merely the God of Israel.⁹⁸⁰ Neither can those of Jewish descent claim a relationship with God based upon their ancestry (Matt 3:4–10; Matt 11:20–24).⁹⁸¹ The religious milieu no longer divides Jew and Gentile. Instead, the distinction falls between those who have called upon Christ to save them and those who remain outside of the Christian community (Hos 2:23).⁹⁸²

Not only does Christ demand allegiance from all people, he responds to those with faith by “abounding in riches to all who call upon him.” Paul often used the metaphor of spiritual wealth to speak of the unlimited resources which God makes available to believers.⁹⁸³ These include God’s love, kindness, and glory (Eph 3:14–21; 2 Cor 8:9; Col 1:25–28).⁹⁸⁴

Read Rom 10:11–12. Why can those who trust in Christ have confidence on the day of judgment? What created the friction between Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman churches? How has Christ abolished the distinction between Jews and Gentiles? Due to this, how should you relate to others?

⁹⁷⁴ Keener, “Romans Theme,” *IVPBBCNT*, Rom.

⁹⁷⁵ Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 840.

⁹⁷⁶ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 659.

⁹⁷⁷ Moo, *Romans*, 333.

⁹⁷⁸ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 659.

⁹⁷⁹ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 610.

⁹⁸⁰ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 618.

⁹⁸¹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:531.

⁹⁸² Elmer A. Martens, “The People of God,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 235.

⁹⁸³ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 610.

⁹⁸⁴ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:532.

Salvation for All Who Call

c) Rom 10:13: In this verse, the apostle Paul shifted from an emphasis upon confessing that Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:8–12) to calling upon him. Quoting Joel 2:32, he wrote, “For anyone who calls upon (*epikaleō*) the name of the Lord shall be saved.” In the Old Testament (OT), to call upon the Lord usually refers to appealing to Yahweh in prayer (Gen 12:7–8; 1 Sam 12:7–8; 1 Chron 16:8–16, 23–24).⁹⁸⁵ However, in the context of this passage, we call upon God to avail ourselves of his vast spiritual resources, resulting in eternal salvation.⁹⁸⁶

Polytheistic Greeks used the phrase “call upon” to describe asking someone—particularly the gods—for help.⁹⁸⁷ For example, the first century BC historian Diodorus Siculus wrote, “The details of the initiatory rite are guarded among the matters not to be divulged and are communicated to the initiates alone; but the fame has traveled wide of how these gods appear to mankind and bring unexpected aid to those initiates of theirs who call upon (*epikaleō*) them in the midst of perils”.⁹⁸⁸

Early Christians quickly adapted the phrase “calling upon the name of the Lord” but expanded its meaning to refer to the Father and the Son.⁹⁸⁹ In fact, in the New Testament, it usually means to pray to Jesus (Acts 7:59; 2 Cor 12:7–10).⁹⁹⁰ Within a few decades of Christ’s resurrection, the phrase “those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” became equivalent to the term “Christian” (Acts 9:14; 1 Cor 1:2).

God transformed Paul from a man who persecuted those who called upon Jesus’s name to one who prayed to and proclaimed the exalted Christ (Acts 9:1–27). That he no longer equated worshiping Jesus with breaking the first two commandments testifies to his belief that Christ is indeed the Lord (Exod 20:3–6).⁹⁹¹

The context of Romans 10 indicates that here the word “call” has a more specific meaning than a general prayer. Since “whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” Paul implied that those who invoke Christ in this manner understand their desperate need of forgiveness and recognize that Jesus can and will bestow salvation upon them (Cf. Joel 2:26–32; Acts 22:12–16; Mark 13:24–27).⁹⁹² They appeal to God to include them in his covenant and trust him to honor the terms of that agreement (Rev 6:12–17).⁹⁹³

To grasp the revolutionary nature of Paul’s inclusion of Gentiles, recall that he once belonged to the Jewish sect of the Pharisees (Phil 3:4–6). During the 400-year intertestamental period, the Pharisees began a lay movement which asserted that one could identify God’s covenant people by their adherence to the *Mishnah*. This commentary on the five books written by Moses formed a hedge around the Mosaic law (*m. Avot* 1:1),⁹⁹⁴ in violation of Deut 4:1–2.

The *Mishnah* contains twenty-four chapters dedicated to Sabbath regulations alone (*m. Shabbat*). Although they were not from priestly lineage, the members of this sect strictly

⁹⁸⁵Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:532.

⁹⁸⁶Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 610.

⁹⁸⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 660.

⁹⁸⁸Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 5.49.5, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/5D*.html.

⁹⁸⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 660.

⁹⁹⁰Ralph P. Martin, “Worship,” *DPL* 982–90, 987.

⁹⁹¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:532.

⁹⁹²Leon Morris, “Salvation,” *DPL* 858–62, 862.

⁹⁹³Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 611.

⁹⁹⁴Stephen Westerholm, “Pharisees,” *DJG* 609–14, 609.

maintained this tradition of laws regarding purity, tithing, and the Sabbath intended for those serving in the temple.⁹⁹⁵

The Pharisees took great care to separate from the impure “people of the land” who failed to avoid contaminating themselves.⁹⁹⁶ In contrast to the Essenes, who removed themselves from society to form an exclusive commune, the Pharisees sought to practice Judaism in every area of life while remaining in their communities.⁹⁹⁷

After his conversion, Paul opposed the concept that God planned to save only a few people who sought to obey him perfectly. The emphasis here falls upon the great expanse of God’s mercy which encompasses all who respond to the gospel of grace.⁹⁹⁸ As a result, God tasks us with offering the gospel to and making disciples among every people group on earth (Rom 10:14–15; Matt 28:18–20; Rev 5:6–10).⁹⁹⁹

These universal overtones bring us back to the time of Enosh (Gen 4:26).¹⁰⁰⁰ The Lord acted in the OT era to provide pardon to those who recognized their need for him. In the same way, he delivers salvation to all who turn to him today, calling upon his name (Matt 9:10–13; Luke 18:9–14).¹⁰⁰¹

Read Rom 10:13. Why did Paul call believers to action in Rom 10:11–15? How does this passage provide insight into Gen 4:26? What can you do to expand the reach of God’s kingdom?

⁹⁹⁵ Anthony J. Saldarini “Pharisees,” *ABD* 5:300–3, 300.

⁹⁹⁶ Saldarini “Pharisees,” *ABD* 5:300.

⁹⁹⁷ Roland Deines, “The Pharisees Between ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Common Judaism,’” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, Vol. 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 443–504, 498.

⁹⁹⁸ Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 263.

⁹⁹⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 340.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 660.

¹⁰⁰¹ Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical and Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 69–70.

Chapter 4: The Generations of Adam (Gen 5:1–27)

After chronicling the depraved line of Cain (Gen 4:17–24), Moses went back in time to describe how the Lord kept his promise of a godly line which would eventually destroy the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15).¹⁰⁰² He began this section by writing, “And Adam again knew his wife, and she gave birth to a son. And she called his name Seth, because ‘God has appointed to me another seed instead of Abel, for Cain killed him’” (Gen 4:25).

Eve spoke with a focus upon God, unequivocally attributing this son’s birth to the Lord. Her description of Seth as “another seed” indicates that she recognized redemption would come through him or one of his descendants.¹⁰⁰³ Unlike Cain or Abel (Gen 4:8), he would father a godly line of people.¹⁰⁰⁴ Seth’s name derives from a verb (*sith*) which means “put,” “place,” or “appoint.”¹⁰⁰⁵ Despite Abel’s death, Eve trusted that God would fulfill his covenant.¹⁰⁰⁶ The Lord placed Seth on earth as a substitute for her second son.¹⁰⁰⁷

At the end of Genesis 4 another birth announcement appeared: “To Seth also a son was born. And he called his name Enosh” (Gen 4:26). In Akkadian, a language related to Hebrew, the verb form of Enosh (*anash*) means “to be weak, feeble.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Enosh’s recognition of his human weakness may have evoked his dependence upon God,¹⁰⁰⁹ for “Then it was that humanity began to call on the name of Yahweh.” However, the text notes that worship of the Lord began during Enosh’s lifetime, rather than specifying that he initiated it.¹⁰¹⁰

The emphasis switched from glorifying humanity, as we saw in the lineage of Cain, to exalting God.¹⁰¹¹ Although Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord (Gen 4:3–4), here divine worship began on a regular basis.¹⁰¹² Thus, ritual adoration of Yahweh did not begin in Moses’s era but restored much earlier devotion.¹⁰¹³ These worshipers enjoyed a relationship with God as servants who depended upon him to fulfill his promise of a redeemer.¹⁰¹⁴

Ancient Near Eastern Genealogies

1) Gen 5:1: In contrast to most lay readers of Scripture, biblical scholars experience great fascination with the historical aspects of genealogies.¹⁰¹⁵ Names in the Ancient Near East (ANE) often made statements about a god. These include Ashurbanipal, Ramesses, and Nebuchadnezzar. Hebrew divine designations include “iah,” “el,” and “Jeho.” Consequently, something as mundane as people’s names informs us of their language and religious beliefs.¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰⁰²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 100–1.

¹⁰⁰³Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 193.

¹⁰⁰⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 242.

¹⁰⁰⁵G. Vanoni, “sith,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, (Rev. Ed., G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (Eds.), D. W. Stott (Trans.) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 14:646–59, 652.

¹⁰⁰⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

¹⁰⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 115.

¹⁰⁰⁸F. Maass, “עֲנוֹשׁ” (*enosh*), *TDOT* 1:345–8, 345–6.

¹⁰⁰⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

¹⁰¹⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

¹⁰¹¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 101.

¹⁰¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 116.

¹⁰¹³Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 116.

¹⁰¹⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 193.

¹⁰¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 248.

¹⁰¹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 280.

Biblical Hebrew emerged during 1400–1200 BC.¹⁰¹⁷ Therefore, names which indicate a belief in Israel’s God were likely translated from earlier sources.¹⁰¹⁸

Genesis 5 begins by saying, “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” This introductory formula denotes our entry into a new major segment of this book of the Pentateuch.¹⁰¹⁹ By citing a document (*sepher*), Moses implied that he incorporated preexisting material into this chapter.¹⁰²⁰ The phrase, “The book of the generations of...” occurs thirteen times in Genesis alone (eg. Gen 6:9; Gen 10:1; Gen 11:10, 27).¹⁰²¹ Since the word “generations of” (*toledot*) derives from the verb which connotes “fathering offspring,” the word conveys a family or clan history.¹⁰²² Long sections of narrative intersperse with these genealogies.¹⁰²³

In this chapter, Moses reached back in time to the age of Adam, once again surveying the era of Gen 4 but from the vantage point of the line of Seth.¹⁰²⁴ Both this genealogy and that of Cain trace one line of descent until the final named generation, which lists three sons (Gen 4:17–22; Gen 5:32).

This repeated format draws our attention to the contrasts between the two records. Cain’s cursed line prominently features two murderers (Gen 4:8, 23–24). The line of Seth links the two founders of humanity: Adam and Noah (Gen 4:1–2; Gen 10:1).¹⁰²⁵ Some scholars cite the similarities between names in the genealogies of Gen 4 and Gen 5 to assert that these passages denote the same people. However, enough differences exist between them to reject that theory.¹⁰²⁶

For example, Moses listed Enoch as the seventh in the line of Adam through Seth and as second through Cain (Gen 5:19; Gen 4:17). Others cite Mahalalel via Seth vs. Mehujael from Cain (Gen 5:13; Gen 4:18). This type of repetition and of similar sounding names commonly occurred throughout the ANE.¹⁰²⁷

Genesis contains two distinct genealogy formats. A segmented genealogy traces an individual’s descendants through several of his children (Gen 10:1),¹⁰²⁸ while a linear genealogy follows one straight line of descent. The latter type often bridged the gaps between major events, such as the creation of humanity and the flood.¹⁰²⁹ As commonly occurs with linear genealogies, those falling outside the main line of descent receive little mention, if any at all.¹⁰³⁰

Genealogies in the ANE suggested continuity and relationship to increase a person’s power and prestige.¹⁰³¹ By recounting the generations from Adam to Noah, Moses identified Noah as the legitimate seed who built a godly culture (Gen 3:15).¹⁰³² Indeed, the concept of a

¹⁰¹⁷Gene M. Schramm, “Languages: Hebrew,” *ABD* 4:205–14, 205.

¹⁰¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 280.

¹⁰¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

¹⁰²⁰Josef Schreiner, “תולדות” (*toledot*), *TDOT*, 15:582–8, 584.

¹⁰²¹Logos 7 word study of תולדות (*toledot*). In Hebrew, the English phrase consists of a single word in construct form.

¹⁰²²Schreiner, “תולדות” (*toledot*), *TDOT*, 15:582–8, 582–3.

¹⁰²³Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed*, 101.

¹⁰²⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 189.

¹⁰²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 112.

¹⁰²⁶Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 442.

¹⁰²⁷Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 442.

¹⁰²⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 248–9.

¹⁰²⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹⁰³⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 190.

¹⁰³¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹⁰³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 109.

seed resembling the parent closely aligns with a royal line of descent throughout Genesis.¹⁰³³ Eventually, Seth’s line would produce Abraham (Gen 11:1, 27).¹⁰³⁴

Unlike the number seven, which signifies divine completeness, the number ten symbolizes fullness on a lesser level.¹⁰³⁵ Throughout the ANE, genealogies tend to limit the number of generations to ten, just as we see in Gen 5 and in Gen 11. This also occurs in other biblical texts (Cf. 1 Chron 6:3–14 to Ezra 7:1–5).¹⁰³⁶ Ezra 7:3 skips six of the generations listed in 1 Chron 6:7–10.¹⁰³⁷

While “son” (*ben*) typically refers to a direct descendant, the Hebrew language also allows for it to mean a grandson (Gen 31:17–18, 26–28) or the distant offspring of a founding father.¹⁰³⁸ For example, the “sons of Levi” answered Moses’s summons. However, many generations had been born and died since Levi’s lifetime (Exod 32:26). After all, his descendants had been in Egypt for 430 years (Exod 12:40–41).

By limiting the Gen 5 and Gen 11 accounts to ten generations of important people or to those who lived at critical times, Moses presented the flood as the important dividing line in what scholars call primeval history (Gen 1–11).¹⁰³⁹ Knowing that these genealogies contain broken lines of descent which include only the most significant ancestors enables us to recognize that the periods of time from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham almost certainly differ in length.¹⁰⁴⁰

Even the Epic of Gilgamesh—which existed hundreds of years before Abraham’s lifetime—recognized the flood as having occurred in the distant past.¹⁰⁴¹ Gilgamesh hinted at this by nicknaming the man who had survived the flood “the Faraway” and expressing shock that he looked like a normal man.¹⁰⁴² By ca. 2000 BC, people understood that the world was already ancient. Therefore, they used existing records to develop early histories of their people.¹⁰⁴³ Gen 5:1 confirms this by using the term “the document of the genealogy,” suggesting the incorporation of preexisting material.¹⁰⁴⁴

In keeping with the ten generations mentioned in this chapter, Gen 5 contains ten paragraphs. Although some variation may occur for important historical figures,¹⁰⁴⁵ the typical format appears as follows: Person A lived x years and fathered Person B; Person A lived y years after that and had other sons and daughters; Person A lived x plus y years and then he died.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰³³Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed*, 105.

¹⁰³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 248.

¹⁰³⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111.

¹⁰³⁶Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed*, 105 n3.

¹⁰³⁷We see the same skipping of generations in Matthew’s gospel. In order to achieve 14 generations from Abraham to David, from David to the exile, and from the exile to Christ, Matthew omitted three of Judah’s kings (Matt 1:8, 17).

¹⁰³⁸H. Haag, “בֶּן” (*ben*) *TDOT*, 2:145–59, 150, 152.

¹⁰³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111.

¹⁰⁴⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 10–1.

¹⁰⁴¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 11.

¹⁰⁴²E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, tablet 11:1–4, 93.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁴³Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 444.

¹⁰⁴⁴Schreiner, “תולדות” (*toledot*), *TDOT*, 15:582–8, 584.

¹⁰⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 110.

¹⁰⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

The text does not indicate whether these people experienced the life spans typical for all people in that era or whether the descendants of Seth lived for unnaturally long periods of time.¹⁰⁴⁷

An intriguing parallel to Gen 5 exists in the form of the Sumerian King List.¹⁰⁴⁸ The prism begins by stating, “When kingship was lowered from heaven, kingship was [first] in Eridu.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Most likely, a scribe composed this record after the Sumerian Empire put an end to Akkadian rule over Sumer (ca. 2100–2000 BC). King Utuhegal wished to prove that Sumer had always been united into one empire, even though the rulers lived in different cities.¹⁰⁵⁰ Thus, the Sumerian King List consisted of propaganda.

This list of rulers notes that nine kings ruled before the great flood.¹⁰⁵¹ Their reigns ranged from 18,600 to 43,200 years. Eight of these kings ruled from five cities over a period of 241,000 years. “[Then] the flood swept over [the earth].”¹⁰⁵² Some versions of this document cite ten generations before the flood.¹⁰⁵³ The list continued after the deluge, citing thirty-nine kings with considerably shorter reigns. In fact, the longest post-flood rule endured for a relatively short 1560 years.¹⁰⁵⁴ This same pattern of progressively shorter lives occurs after the flood in Genesis,¹⁰⁵⁵ ranging from 600 to 110 years (Gen 11:10–11; Gen 50:26).¹⁰⁵⁶

Some significant differences exist between these two genealogies. While the Sumerian King List cites the first royalty, Genesis names the first man.¹⁰⁵⁷ In addition, the former calls several of the kings who lived after the flood priests and/or gods. It says: “Mes-kiag-gasher, the son of the (sun) god Utu, became high priest as well as king, and ruled 324 years...; the god Lugal-banda, a shepherd, ruled 1,200 years; the god Dumu-zi, a... fisherman ...ruled 100 years; the divine Gilgamesh, his father was a...high priest of Kullab, ruled 126 years.”¹⁰⁵⁸

While some of the men named in Genesis, such as Adam, could be considered priests (Gen 2:15), none of them were gods. Furthermore, the king list notes the length of rule; the book of the generations of Adam cites the length of life.¹⁰⁵⁹ In addition, some kings reigned approximately fifty times longer than the early descendants of Adam lived.¹⁰⁶⁰

The genealogy in Genesis 5 presents us with several difficult issues. We must address these patriarchs not becoming fathers until at least sixty-five years of age and their extremely long lives.¹⁰⁶¹ While Adam’s lifespan of 930 years has more credibility than one of nearly 43,000

¹⁰⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 256.

¹⁰⁴⁸“The Sumerian King List (SKL),” http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=the_sumerian_king_list_skl. This site has an excellent photo of the best example and descriptions of several versions of this list.

¹⁰⁴⁹Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n289/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 251.

¹⁰⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 124.

¹⁰⁵²Jacobsen, “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n289/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 124.

¹⁰⁵⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 252–3.

¹⁰⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 124.

¹⁰⁵⁶This does not include Noah, who died at 950 years of age (Gen 9:29).

¹⁰⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 125.

¹⁰⁵⁸Jacobsen, “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n289/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 253–4.

¹⁰⁶⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 125.

¹⁰⁶¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 130.

years, we cannot logically explain it with ease.¹⁰⁶²

Complicating the matter, the most reliable Hebrew text (Masoretic), the Samaritan version, and the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) frequently disagree concerning the ages of these patriarchs. In the case of the LXX, it appears that translators modified it to counter Egyptian dates for the origin of humanity.¹⁰⁶³

Not only does the amount of time which passed seem less important than the notion of completing the charge to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28),¹⁰⁶⁴ these dates of descent do not correspond to the archaeological record.¹⁰⁶⁵ As a result, the intended meaning may be that “Person A fathered the line culminating in Person B,” rather than “A fathered B.”¹⁰⁶⁶ The key may lie in understanding the purpose of a linear genealogy: to establish generational legitimacy. Since some names may have been omitted,¹⁰⁶⁷ totaling the ages of these men to establish a date for the creation of Adam at 4004 BC produces enormous problems.¹⁰⁶⁸

Sumerians utilized a number system which combines base ten and base six.¹⁰⁶⁹ The Sumerian King List contains indications that the first king of Uruk reigned for “7 x 60 plus 7 days.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Consequently, Kenneth A. Kitchen surmises that the length of the reigns before the flood in that document had been multiplied by 60 to represent heroically long rule.¹⁰⁷¹ However, this does not apply to Genesis, for the Hebrew civilization seems to have always used base ten. Furthermore, people would have fathered children when they were six or seven years old.¹⁰⁷²

The scholar M. Barnouin views the ages of these patriarchs in terms of the length of time it takes for a planet to reappear in the same place in the sky, called synodic periods. Babylonians discovered this concept. Based upon Barnouin’s theory, Enoch’s lifespan of 365 years would represent perfection, since there are 365 days in a year (Gen 5:23).¹⁰⁷³ Lamech lived for 777 years, equivalent to the synodic periods of Jupiter plus Saturn (Gen 5:31). The 962 years of Jared’s lifetime equal the synodic periods of Venus plus Saturn (Gen 5:20).¹⁰⁷⁴

By adding the number of years when each of these descendants of Seth fathered their first child and dividing by the number sixty, the sum of the remainders is a perfect 365. The same result occurs for their lengths of life. Since the cycles of these men’s years match the cycles of the heavenly orbs, Moses may have intended to symbolize that their lives were meaningful and complete.¹⁰⁷⁵

In sum, it remains unclear whether the ages of these historical figures in Adam’s genealogy are symbolic or literal. Moses’s purpose may have been to suggest that human history

¹⁰⁶²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 256.

¹⁰⁶³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 130.

¹⁰⁶⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹⁰⁶⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 133.

¹⁰⁶⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 254.

¹⁰⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 106.

¹⁰⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 133.

¹⁰⁶⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹⁰⁷⁰Thorikild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 121, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/as11.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷¹Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 445.

¹⁰⁷²Walton, *Genesis*, 281–2.

¹⁰⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 133–4.

¹⁰⁷⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111–2.

¹⁰⁷⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111–2.

extends to an extremely distant past.¹⁰⁷⁶ When discussing the Sumerian King List in relation to Gen 5, Kitchen wrote, “BE WARNED! We are entering a zone of speculation...”¹⁰⁷⁷

As a result, most Old Testament scholars present only some general observations on the transmission of the image of God from generation to generation and on the fulfillment of the mandate to fill the earth (Gen 1:26–28).¹⁰⁷⁸ The long lives of the descendants of Seth may depict that they were unusually godly people (Deut 5:16, 33–6:2). On the other hand, this genealogy many indicate that the penalty of death gradually took its hold upon humanity (Gen 3:19).¹⁰⁷⁹

By recording precise numbers, this genealogical record conveys that Moses discussed real people. At the same time, the vast spans of their longevity indicate that they lived in an environment very different and remote from ours.¹⁰⁸⁰ While God’s blessing remained upon them in terms of their fruitfulness, Moses reminds us that the scourge remained by repeating the refrain, “and then he died.”¹⁰⁸¹

a) Read Gen 5:1. What characteristics of ANE genealogies make it unlikely that God created Adam in 4004 BC? Why were these types of ancestral records important? What do you think Moses was implying by referring to the creation and blessing of humanity at the beginning of Seth’s genealogy rather than before recounting the descendants of Cain?

In the Likeness of God

b) Gen 5:1–2: Moses began this chapter by returning to the sixth day of creation. He wrote, “This is the book of the generations of Adam. On the day when God created humanity (*adam*), in the likeness of God he created him. Male and female, he created them. And he blessed them and he called their name ‘human’ (*adam*) on the day they were created.” While this paragraph sounds much like Gen 2:4, its content bears greater resemblance to Gen 1:26–28.¹⁰⁸² Repeating this information establishes that God also made the line of Adam—which originated after the fall—in his image (Cf. Gen 5:3).¹⁰⁸³

The Lord blessed those succeeding generations with the ability to multiply. However, while God created, Adam and his descendants procreated.¹⁰⁸⁴ Sexual differentiation characterizes humanity. The Lord described people in terms of gender, unlike the plants and animals, which he

¹⁰⁷⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 134.

¹⁰⁷⁷Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 445.

¹⁰⁷⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 134.

¹⁰⁷⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 282.

¹⁰⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 134.

¹⁰⁸¹Walton, *Genesis*, 284.

¹⁰⁸²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 126.

¹⁰⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 112.

¹⁰⁸⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 255.

made in various species and kinds (*min*) (Gen 1:11–12, 21, 24–25). Not until the flood narrative does Genesis portray non-human creatures as male and female (Gen 6:19). Therefore, this verse affirms that the Lord created both men and women in his image as stewards over creation. Our sexuality comes as a gift from God, rather than an accident of nature or a mere biological phenomenon.¹⁰⁸⁵

As a result, those who are male need interactions with those who are female and vice versa, for neither gender comprises all that it means to be human.¹⁰⁸⁶ Just as the members of the Trinity exist in relationship, God designed us to experience community as men and women in order to express all that it means to be fully human (Gen 2:18, 22–24).¹⁰⁸⁷ This holds true whether we marry or remain single.

Throughout Genesis, fathers blessed their children (Gen 9:26–27; Gen 27:27–29; Gen 48:14–16; Gen 49:28). Here the father of us all does the same (cf. Gen 9:1; Gen 12:1–3). Ultimately, the Lord’s plan to bless humanity would be fully realized by the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), the lion of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:8–10).¹⁰⁸⁸ This royal savior would mediate God’s favor to all the people groups of the earth (Rev 5:4–10).¹⁰⁸⁹

Read Gen 5:1–2. What makes people different from animals in the Lord’s sight? Why is it significant that God created all of humanity to rule over his creation, even after the fall? How does this affect your view of yourself? Why do people need relationships with each other?

In Adam’s Likeness and Image

b) Gen 5:3–5: Moses began Noah’s ancestral record by referring to Adam’s creation in the image of God (Gen 5:1–2). In accordance with the purpose of Ancient Near Eastern genealogies, this indicates that Noah also received that divine image and mandate to rule over the earth (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 9:1–3).¹⁰⁹⁰ The text states, “And it happened that Adam [lived] one hundred and thirty years. And he fathered [a son] in his likeness (*demuth*), according to his image (*tselem*), and he called his name Seth.”

Since Moses intertwined “likeness” and “image” both here and in Gen 1:26, where they occur in the opposite order, the two words are virtually identical in meaning.¹⁰⁹¹ Some scholars use this verse to contend that the image of God consists of a bodily resemblance. Indeed, the most common meaning of “image” involves physical appearance. Since the Old Testament stresses that God does not possess a body and remains invisible, this interpretation contains

¹⁰⁸⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–11*, 138–9.

¹⁰⁸⁶Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 97.

¹⁰⁸⁷Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83

¹⁰⁸⁸Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 117–8.

¹⁰⁸⁹Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed*, 88.

¹⁰⁹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 106–7.

¹⁰⁹¹H. D. Preuss, “הַמִּצַּח” (*demuth*), *TDOT*, 3:257–60, 259.

difficulties (Deut 4:15–16).¹⁰⁹² On the other hand, the Lord describes himself as having eyes and ears to communicate his awareness of the plight of the afflicted (Deut 11:11–12; Num 11:18).¹⁰⁹³

Seth was born in the image of the one created in the image of God. Understanding this phrase in its Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context enables us to grasp how the Lord views humanity. In the ANE, the “image of God” applied to the king, primarily in terms of his function and his presence.¹⁰⁹⁴ Consequently, in recent years most scholars understand the “image of God” in Gen 1 and 5 in terms of exercising dominion over the world, ruling as God’s representatives on earth.¹⁰⁹⁵

An Akkadian proverb says, “Man 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.”¹⁰⁹⁶ While in Egypt, the oppressors of Moses’s original readers taught them that they existed solely to work for the pharaoh. In contrast, Genesis uses royal language to describe all of humanity, from the greatest king to the lowliest slave.¹⁰⁹⁷

People living in the ANE believed that an image carried the essential nature of what it personified. For example, an Egyptian stela in the British Museum 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.”¹⁰⁹⁸

Consequently, people viewed worshiping an idol as equivalent to adoration of the god whom the idol portrayed. While it might not have looked identical to the god, it could accomplish the deity’s work.¹⁰⁹⁹ Similarly, the Hebrew concept of “image” does not necessarily specify an exact physical likeness.¹¹⁰⁰ Just as people believed an idol accomplished the work of a god, so God gave humanity the task of doing God’s will in his temple, the cosmos (Gen 1:28; Gen 2:1–3; Isa 66:1).¹¹⁰¹

In Mesopotamian thought, a son could bear the image of his father, but only a god could be created in the image of the gods.¹¹⁰² As a result, ancient rulers set up statues of themselves in distant parts of their realms to represent their authority.¹¹⁰³ 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.”¹¹⁰⁴ This is why Nebuchadnezzar II expressed such outrage

¹⁰⁹² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 30.

¹⁰⁹³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 65.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 30.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ian 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.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Robert F. Pfeiffer, trans., “Akkadian Proverbs and Counsels,” in *ANET*, 5.3, 426,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n451/mode/2up.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 135.

¹⁰⁹⁸ James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 46, <https://archive.org/stream/developmentofrel00brea#page/46/mode/2up>.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

¹¹⁰⁰ Swanson, “צֶלֶם” (*tselem*), *DBLSDH*, 7512.

¹¹⁰¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 1:31.

¹¹⁰² Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

¹¹⁰³ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 67.

¹¹⁰⁴ K. C. Hanson, “The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III,” trans. Daniel David Luckenbill, <http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/meso/obelisk.html>, 155.

when three Hebrew men refused to fall down in worship before the statue he erected (Dan 3:1, 8–15). They refused to recognize him as the incarnation of a god.¹¹⁰⁵

A phenomenal example of this concept remains in Abu Simbel, Egypt. Ramesses II ordered this temple complex carved from a cliff side along his border with Nubia to assert his power. It depicts his claim of victory over the Hittites at Kadesh. He set four images of gods, including Ramesses the Great himself, 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. Only Ptah, the god of darkness, remains unlit.

As a former member of the royal family (Exod 2:10), Moses knew the Egyptians believed that the sun god Ra once ruled on earth as the first king of their nation.¹¹⁰⁶ Beginning with the Fifth Dynasty (2494–2345 BC), every pharaoh claimed linear descent from Ra. They adopted the title “Son of Ra” to indicate that a mortal woman and the god himself produced them.¹¹⁰⁷

“According to our likeness” more precisely defines what it means to be created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:26).¹¹⁰⁸ Most scholars assert that this phrase affirms that some distinctions exist between the creator and humanity,¹¹⁰⁹ just as Seth could not have been completely identical to his father.¹¹¹⁰ The word “likeness” (*demuth*) occurs three times in Ezek 1:26 alone.¹¹¹¹ Notably, the prophet did not say that he saw a throne or a man,¹¹¹² but “something like” them.¹¹¹³ Thus, humanity bears great resemblance to God but is not divine,¹¹¹⁴ even as Seth resembled his father but was not Adam.

The Babylonian Creation epic Enuma Elish says, “Anu begot in his image Nudimmud (Enki). This Nudimmud was of his fathers the master; of broad wisdom, understanding, mighty in strength, mightier by far than his grandfather.”¹¹¹⁵ Although this god was born in the likeness of his father, they were not identical.

Moses concluded Adam’s biography by writing, “And it was that the days of Adam after his fathering of Seth [were] 800 years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And so it was that all the days of Adam which he lived [were] 930 years. And he died.” ere we finally see Adam’s physical death which resulted from the fall (Gen 2:16; Gen 3:1–6). The refrain “and he died” at the end of the description of even the oldest patriarch points to the universality of the penalty upon Adam (Gen 3:19; Rom 5:14).¹¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰⁵ Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 67.

¹¹⁰⁶ Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 37.

¹¹⁰⁷ James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt (5 Vols.)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), section 187, 2:75–6, <https://archive.org/stream/ancientrecordse13breagoog#page/n110/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁰⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

¹¹⁰⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 135–6.

¹¹¹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–30.

¹¹¹¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “הָמָוֶה” (*demuth*), *BDB*, 198, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/198/mode/2up>.

¹¹¹² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 136.

¹¹¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29.

¹¹¹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 66.

¹¹¹⁵ E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines, 16–9, 61, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n85/mode/2up.

¹¹¹⁶ Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 135.

Read Gen 5:3–5. How did people in the ANE view the image of a god? What are the implications of Seth having been born in the image of his father—who was made in the image of God even after the fall? How do we see both the blessing and curse of God in this text?

The Son of Adam, the Son of God

2) Luke 3:23, 38: Luke wrote for a Gentile audience (Luke 1:1–4), so his inclusion of a genealogy of Jesus in his account may seem rather odd. However, even Greco-Romans from his era delighted in tracing their ancestry.¹¹¹⁷ For example, Diogenes Laertius (third century AD) began his *Life of Plato* (427–347 BC) with an account of the philosopher’s maternal and paternal ancestry.¹¹¹⁸ Even Gentile readers appreciated Christ’s ancestral record.¹¹¹⁹

In contrast to Matthew’s genealogy for Jewish readers, which stops with Abraham (Matt 1:1–2), Luke reached back all the way to Adam. He compared Adam the son of God with Jesus the Son of God,¹¹²⁰ asserting Christ’s qualifications to serve as the mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5).¹¹²¹ Rather than beginning his gospel with Jesus’s ancestry, Luke placed this genealogy immediately after the Father affirmed Christ as the son of God and empowered him by the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22). This genealogy further legitimates Jesus as the son of God.¹¹²²

Luke continued his account with Jesus leaving the Jordan River. The Spirit led Christ into the wilderness to experience the devil’s temptations regarding his status as God’s Son (Luke 4:1–11).¹¹²³ The author did not ignore Christ’s Jewish royal identity, despite the nature of his audience.¹¹²⁴ Yet, this genealogy includes David’s son Nathan, rather than the messianic line of Solomon in Jesus’s lineage through Mary (Luke 3:31; 2 Sam 7:12–16; 1 Ki 1:39; Matt 1:6).¹¹²⁵ Most of the men Luke named are otherwise unknown (Luke 3:23–38).¹¹²⁶

Luke began this genealogy by writing, “And he, namely Jesus, beginning [his ministry] at about thirty years old, being son, as was thought, of Joseph.” Jewish people of that era considered thirty the appropriate age for a man to enter public service (Num 4:1–3).¹¹²⁷ Joseph had reached the age of thirty when he entered the pharaoh’s service (Gen 41:46), as did David when he began to reign over Judah (2 Sam 5:4).¹¹²⁸

¹¹¹⁷Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 123.

¹¹¹⁸Diogenes Laertius, “Plato (427–347 B.C.),” in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (trans. R. D. Hicks; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 3.1–2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0258%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D1>.

¹¹¹⁹Bock, *Luke*, 123.

¹¹²⁰John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 167.

¹¹²¹Bock, *Luke*, 124.

¹¹²²Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 188.

¹¹²³Note that the word “if” (*ei*) (<https://archive.org/stream/greekenglishlex00liddrich#page/412/mode/2up>) in Luke 4:3, 9 can also be translated as “since.” Satan was well-aware of Jesus’s identity.

¹¹²⁴David E. Garland, *Luke* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 171.

¹¹²⁵Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 170.

¹¹²⁶Garland, *Luke*, 173.

¹¹²⁷Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 188.

¹¹²⁸Garland, *Luke*, 170.

The phrase “as was thought” is very important. God had just acclaimed Jesus as his son after his baptism. Therefore, his legal ancestry pales in significance.¹¹²⁹ This expression also hints at Christ’s miraculous conception within Mary’s womb (Luke 1:26–38).¹¹³⁰ Luke asserted that Jesus merely appeared to be the son of Joseph (Luke 4:16–22).¹¹³¹ Although Jesus was not Joseph’s biological son, as the firstborn, he was Joseph’s legal heir (Luke 2:39–52).¹¹³² Even Christ needed legal legitimacy to operate within his Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) milieu.¹¹³³ Luke concluded this genealogy with “the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

The Lord kept his promise of a redeemer, working his will across thousands of years (Gen 3:15).¹¹³⁴ While this list asserts that Jesus’s life affects all of humanity,¹¹³⁵ Luke did not stop with Adam. This genealogy terminates with God himself, a feature unparalleled in the ancient world, including the Old Testament.

No ANE sources refer to Adam as a “son of God.” However, the Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD), touched upon this concept.¹¹³⁶ He wrote:

“But why should I speak of these men, and pass over the first man who was created out of the earth? Who, in respect of the nobleness of his birth can be compared to no mortal whatever, inasmuch as he was fashioned by the hand of God, and invested with a form in the likeness of a human body...And he was also thought worthy of a soul, which was derived from no being who had as yet come into existence by being created, but God breathed into him as much of his own power as mortal nature was capable of receiving. Was it not, then a perfect excess of all nobleness, which could not possibly come into comparison with any other which is ever spoken of as favors? For all persons who lay claim to that kind of eminence rest their claims on the nobility of their ancestors...”

“But the father of his man was not mortal at all, and the sole author of his being was God. And he, being in a manner his image and likeness according to the dominant mind in the soul, though it was his duty to preserve that image free from all spot of blemish, following and imitating as far as was in his power the virtues of him who had created him, since the two opposite qualities of good and evil (what is honorable and what is disgraceful, what is true and what is false) were set before him for his choice and avoidance, deliberately chose what was false, and disgraceful, and evil, and despised what was good, and honorable, and true; for which conduct he was very fairly condemned to change an immortal for a mortal existence, being deprived of blessedness and happiness.”¹¹³⁷

While Adam failed the test (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–7), Jesus endured Satan’s temptation and remained faithful. By virtue of his status as God’s son and his obedience,¹¹³⁸ Christ proved that he met the qualifications to serve as the promised messiah (Matt 28:18–20; Heb 5:4–8).¹¹³⁹

¹¹²⁹Garland, *Luke*, 171.

¹¹³⁰Bock, *Luke*, 124.

¹¹³¹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 189–90.

¹¹³²Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 174.

¹¹³³Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 190.

¹¹³⁴Garland, *Luke*, 173.

¹¹³⁵Bock, *Luke*, 123.

¹¹³⁶Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 173.

¹¹³⁷Philo, “On the Virtues,” 204–5, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda03phil#page/500/mode/2up>.

¹¹³⁸Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 173–4.

¹¹³⁹Bock, *Luke*, 123.

In effect, Luke stated that the one who is really the Son of God is Jesus.¹¹⁴⁰ As the last Adam Christ can represent all humanity (1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49). Therefore, the possibility of salvation remains open to people from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Acts 17:22–31; Rev 7:9–10).¹¹⁴¹

Adam began a plague of sin which infected the entire human race. Starting a contagion is simple; ending one proves far more difficult.¹¹⁴² On the cross, Jesus took my place and paid the penalty for my sin (Eph 1:7–8; Col 2:13–14). Similarly, God charged his righteousness to me (2 Cor 5:21).¹¹⁴³ Now when the Father looks at me, he sees Jesus. 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 Earth but can never reach the end of the East or West.

By his one act of sacrifice after a blameless life, Christ reversed the effects of the fall (Rom 5:12–21; Heb 4:14–16).¹¹⁴⁴

Read Luke 3:23, 38. Why did Luke mention Christ’s age? What was his purpose in going back to Adam instead of stopping with Abraham? How does Jesus, the Son of God, differ from Adam, the son of God? What hope does that give to you?

Walking with God

3) Gen 5:21–24: Scholars know virtually nothing about the men listed in Gen 5:6–20 aside from the meaning of a few of their names.¹¹⁴⁵ These men function simply as links in the chain between Seth and Noah.¹¹⁴⁶ Therefore, we will skip to Gen 5:21–24. Enoch’s biography begins by saying, “And Enoch lived sixty-five years, and he fathered Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God after fathering Methuselah for three hundred years. And he fathered [other] sons and daughters.”

Biblical genealogies tend to emphasize the people who occupy the seventh generations.¹¹⁴⁷ As the seventh in line from Adam, Enoch’s life of reverent devotion contrasts with that of Lamech, the seventh in line from Cain (Gen 4:23–24).¹¹⁴⁸ Although Enoch shares a name with the first son of Cain (Gen 4:17), the text portrays the son of Jared very differently (Gen 5:18).¹¹⁴⁹

Moses informed us that “Enoch walked (*hithhalak*) with (*eth*) God.” This same phrase appears in the account of Noah (Gen 6:9).¹¹⁵⁰ God expected Israel’s priests and the lay people of

¹¹⁴⁰Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 173.

¹¹⁴¹Garland, *Luke*, 172.

¹¹⁴²Garland, *Luke*, 174.

¹¹⁴³R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1994), 107.

¹¹⁴⁴Douglas Moo J., “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” *JETS* 49, no. 3 (9 January 2006): 458, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹¹⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

¹¹⁴⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 256.

¹¹⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257.

¹¹⁴⁸Richard S. Hess, “Enoch (Person),” *ABD* 2:508.

¹¹⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 112.

¹¹⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 258.

Israel to “walk (*halak*) with” him (Mal 2:1–7; Mic 6:8).¹¹⁵¹ Shortly before his death, David charged Solomon and his descendants to “walk (*halak*) before” the Lord as he had (1 Ki 2:1–4). These texts imply that to “walk before God” means living a life of obedience.¹¹⁵² The sense of the phrase connotes worship and loyal service.¹¹⁵³

However, the Hebrew verb slightly differs in meaning from what we see in Enoch’s situation.¹¹⁵⁴ Regarding Enoch, Moses used a rare verb form (hithpa’el) which adds the prefix “hith” to the verb stem. This alters the meaning of the verb to depict an intense action performed in relationship with someone else.¹¹⁵⁵ In other words, Enoch walked in fellowship with God and God walked in close communion with Enoch.¹¹⁵⁶ More than living in a way which pleased the Lord, both parties experienced mutually-satisfying intimate communion (Lev 26:11–13).¹¹⁵⁷ This indicates that Enoch experienced a deeper relationship with the Lord than most other members of Seth’s chosen line.¹¹⁵⁸

Several patriarchs in Genesis “walked (*hithhalak*) before” (*panah*) God in an intimate covenant relationship (Gen 17:1–5; Gen 24:40; Gen 48:15–16).¹¹⁵⁹ In the historical books, King Hezekiah entreated the Lord to remember how he had “walked (*hithhalak*) before” him when it appeared that he was about to die (2 Ki 20:1–7).

Moses continued, “And all of the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.” Enoch’s years correspond to the number of days it takes for the earth to orbit the sun.¹¹⁶⁰ To the original audience, this conveyed that Enoch enjoyed great privilege,¹¹⁶¹ even though his life was the shortest of those recorded in this genealogy. His relatively brief life occurred because “Enoch walked with God, and he [was] not, because God took him.”

By repeating the description of Enoch, Moses emphasized the outstanding nature of his piety. Here we see the only deviation from the formula of this record. “And he died” appears nowhere. However, “and was not” does occasionally serve as a euphemism for death (Ps 39:13; Ps 103:15–16; Job 7:21).¹¹⁶² Enoch did not suffer the fate of Adam and his other descendants.¹¹⁶³ Enoch found true life in the midst of the penalty of death.¹¹⁶⁴ Thus, the greatest honor consists not of a long life but of God lifting a person into his presence without dying.¹¹⁶⁵ Only Elijah experienced something similar among Old Testament figures (2 Kings 2:1–12).¹¹⁶⁶

Surprisingly, the text does not say where God took Enoch. People in the Ancient Near East (ANE) would never have regarded an early trip to the underworld of Sheol as a reward.¹¹⁶⁷

¹¹⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

¹¹⁵² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 258.

¹¹⁵³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 258.

¹¹⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

¹¹⁵⁵ Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, 2nd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 385.

¹¹⁵⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 114–5.

¹¹⁵⁷ F. J. Helfmeyer, “הָלַךְ וְהָלַיְחָה” (*halakh* and *halikhah*) *TDOT* 3:388–403, 394.

¹¹⁵⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 205.

¹¹⁶⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257.

¹¹⁶¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹¹⁶² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127–8.

¹¹⁶³ Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

¹¹⁶⁴ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 118.

¹¹⁶⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257.

¹¹⁶⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹¹⁶⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

This leaves us to assume that Enoch now resides with the Lord in heaven. Other ANE texts report similar depictions of devout men going directly to heaven without dying.¹¹⁶⁸

For example, the Sumerian King List records) that, “Etana, a shepherd, the one who to heaven ascended, the one who consolidated all lands, became king and reigned 1,560 years.”¹¹⁶⁹ Just like Enoch, Etana came seventh in his line.¹¹⁷⁰ Another important parallel occurs in an ANE text published by R. Borger. It describes the seventh sage of antiquity who advised the seventh king as one “who ascended to heaven.”¹¹⁷¹

Intertestamental authors elaborated upon Enoch’s significance by portraying him as a man who revealed prophecies concerning the end of this age (1, 2 and 3 Enoch).¹¹⁷² In the first two of these books, Enoch traveled through time and the universe to witness creation, judgment, and the cosmos.¹¹⁷³ Although the New Testament author Jude regarded the prophecies in 1 Enoch as inspired by God (Jude 14–15), this does not imply that he held that text as equivalent to Scripture. Similarly, the Essene community valued 1 Enoch but did not list it among their Scriptures.¹¹⁷⁴ Jewish leaders from other sects also did not accept any of the books of Enoch into the Old Testament canon.¹¹⁷⁵

Read Gen 5:21–24. How does the hithpael form of the Hebrew verb “walked” affect our understanding of Enoch’s relationship with God? Why do you think the Lord took Enoch? Where do you think God took him? How can you walk with God?

Pleasing to God

4) Heb 11:5–6: The author of Hebrews sought to lessen the influence of those who persecuted the recipients of this letter (Heb 10:32–34). The writer called them to shift their focus to seeking the Lord’s approval, rather than directing their attention to the people surrounding them.¹¹⁷⁶ Therefore, this chapter concerning Old Testament (OT) heroes emphasizes their faith and their spiritual demeanor (Heb 11).¹¹⁷⁷

This passage pays tribute to the obscure figure Enoch,¹¹⁷⁸ noting that he received divine approval.¹¹⁷⁹ Genesis 5:21–24 does not explicitly mention Enoch’s trust in the Lord.¹¹⁸⁰

¹¹⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

¹¹⁶⁹Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), obv.ii 16–19, 81, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/as11.pdf>.

¹¹⁷⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 283.

¹¹⁷¹J. Paul Maarten, “Enoch,” *NIDOTTE* 4:579–80, 579.

¹¹⁷²Walton, *Genesis*, 280.

¹¹⁷³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257–8.

¹¹⁷⁴Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1983), 97.

¹¹⁷⁵Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 574.

¹¹⁷⁶David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 390.

¹¹⁷⁷Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 375.

¹¹⁷⁸deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 389.

¹¹⁷⁹Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 336.

¹¹⁸⁰Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 574.

However, in this text he shines forth as an example of a “righteous one who by faith shall live” (Heb 10:35–39).¹¹⁸¹ The author began by writing, “By faith Enoch was transposed. He did not see death, and he was not found because God translated him.” Note the difference from “and he [was] not, because God took him” (Gen 5:24). This occurs because the quotation comes from the Greek translation of Gen 5:24, rather than from the Hebrew text.

In secular Greek, “to transpose” (*metatithēmi*) means “to bring to another place.”¹¹⁸² Here the author interpreted the word to signify that Enoch bypassed death.¹¹⁸³ Seeing (*eidon*) death meant experiencing it (Ps 89:48; Luke 2:26).¹¹⁸⁴ Since the author cited neither a point of departure nor a place of arrival, the text implies Enoch’s removal to heaven.¹¹⁸⁵

Clement of Alexandria (150–220 AD) attributed Enoch’s transfer to heaven to his behavior. He wrote, “Let us take (for instance) Enoch, who, being found righteous in obedience, was translated, and death was never known to happen to him.”¹¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Jewish literature never cites Enoch as a model of faith.¹¹⁸⁷ According to the second century BC book of Sirach, “Enoch pleased the Lord, and was taken up; he was an example of *repentance* to all generations” (Sir 44:16, RSV).¹¹⁸⁸

Hebrews takes an entirely different approach.¹¹⁸⁹ Concerning Enoch, the author wrote, “before his removal he had been attested to be found pleasing to God.” Again, the switch from “walked with God” to “was found pleasing to God” adheres to the Greek translation of Gen 5:22–24.¹¹⁹⁰ The people who translated the OT from Hebrew into Greek typically avoided any terms which gave human characteristics, such as walking, to the Lord.¹¹⁹¹ That appears to be what happened here, as well as in the quotation from the book of Sirach.¹¹⁹²

Nevertheless, those who walk in intimate fellowship with the Lord do delight him (Col 1:9–10).¹¹⁹³ Therefore, believers must emulate Enoch’s relationship with the Lord by pleasing God.¹¹⁹⁴ Developing a lifestyle of prayer enables us to draw near to the Lord (Heb 4:16; Heb 10:19–22).¹¹⁹⁵ Ultimately, we shall transcend death (Col 1:13–14).¹¹⁹⁶

However, we can accomplish this only by the work of God in our lives (Heb 13:20–21). All believers can experience the close fellowship with God which Enoch did, for the Holy Spirit resides within us (John 14:16–27; Gal 5:16–26). This gives us an advantage which even Christ’s disciples did not have while they were with him (Luke 24:49; John 16:5–15).

Indeed, “without faith it is impossible to please [him].” This statement summarizes the

¹¹⁸¹Gareth L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 529–30.

¹¹⁸²Christian Maurer, “μετατιθημι” (*metatithēmi*), *TDNT* 8:161–2, 161.

¹¹⁸³deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 389.

¹¹⁸⁴Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 336.

¹¹⁸⁵Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 575.

¹¹⁸⁶Clement, *First Clement* (NPNF01; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897), 9:3, 7, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/6/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁸⁷Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 336.

¹¹⁸⁸Italics mine.

¹¹⁸⁹Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 574.

¹¹⁹⁰Elpenor, <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physics/septuagint-genesis/5.asp?pg=3>.

¹¹⁹¹Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 284.

¹¹⁹²Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 336.

¹¹⁹³Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 376.

¹¹⁹⁴Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 337.

¹¹⁹⁵Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 376.

¹¹⁹⁶deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 390.

argument of Heb 3:7–4:2. True worship necessitates two components of faith.¹¹⁹⁷ First, “the one who comes to God must believe that he exists.” No one can sincerely approach the Lord in prayer without a firm conviction of his reality.¹¹⁹⁸ The Lord is one of the things “not seen” (Heb 11:1–2).¹¹⁹⁹

Surprisingly, the statement that God exists has no biblical parallels. However, Scripture does condemn those who live as if there were no God (Ps 10:4; Ps 53:1).¹²⁰⁰ The author did not mean any deity but referred to the God who first spoke through the OT prophets and then through his Son (Heb 1:1–3).¹²⁰¹

People living in the Ancient Near Eastern milieu did not question the existence of God. That idea developed in the Greco-Roman era. “That God exists” appears in the form of a creed like those developed in the Greek-speaking synagogues of that era.¹²⁰² For example, during the conflict between Antiochus IV and the Maccabees, a Jewish legal expert gave this testimony to the king, “We worship with due respect the only God who really exists” (4 Macc 5:24, CEB).

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) also alluded to this when he wrote: “In his before mentioned account of the creation of the world, Moses teaches us also many other things, and especially five most beautiful lessons which are superior to all others. In the first place, for the sake of convicting the atheists, he teaches us that the Deity has a real being and existence [Exod 3:14]. Now, of the atheists, some have only doubted of the existence of God, stating it to be an uncertain thing; but others, who are more audacious, have taken courage, and asserted positively that there is no such thing; but this is affirmed only by men who have darkened the truth with fabulous inventions.”¹²⁰³

Our belief requires far more than intellectual assent. It involves drawing near to the Lord in worship and service as we diligently pursue a relationship with him.¹²⁰⁴ Consequently, the author of Hebrews added this second aspect of faith, “And to the ones who continually seek (*ekzēteō*) him, he becomes a rewarder.”¹²⁰⁵ Seeking God involves religious devotion and prayer. Deuteronomy 4:29; Ps 34:4; and Ps 69:32–33 all employ the same word in the Greek translation of the OT.¹²⁰⁶

The word “rewarder” (*misthapodotēs*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and rarely in secular Greek. It literally means “a paymaster,” one who delivers a just wage.¹²⁰⁷

Thus, a life of faith necessitates confidence that the Lord shall deliver what he promises to his people.¹²⁰⁸ Throughout the book of Hebrews, the author declared that God is worthy of our trust (Heb 1:8–12; Heb 2:14–18; Heb 5:7–9; Heb 9:11–14; Heb 10:11–18).¹²⁰⁹ Enoch not only

¹¹⁹⁷Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 576.

¹¹⁹⁸Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 376.

¹¹⁹⁹Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 531.

¹²⁰⁰Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 577.

¹²⁰¹Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 286–7.

¹²⁰²Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 338.

¹²⁰³Philo, “On the Creation of the World,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, vol. 1 (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), section 170, 51,

<https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft#page/50/mode/2up>.

¹²⁰⁴Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 531.

¹²⁰⁵Present active participles in Greek depict a repeated or continuous action.

¹²⁰⁶Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 577.

¹²⁰⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “μισθαποδοτής” (*misthapodotēs*), *BDAG*, 653.

¹²⁰⁸Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 376–7.

¹²⁰⁹Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 287.

relied upon the Lord but experienced him as the source of his greatest delight.¹²¹⁰ God promises that those who seek him with all their hearts shall receive the exceedingly great joy of finding him (Ps 17:15; Ps 43:4).¹²¹¹

Consider Ps 37:4. What is the greatest desire of those who delight themselves in the Lord? Is it not God himself? For believers, to live in the presence of the Lord comprises our greatest aspiration (Rev 21:1–5).

Read Heb 11:5–6. Why does the quotation here differ from Gen 5:24? How does walking with God bring him pleasure? What does it mean to have faith in God? How did Enoch exemplify this? In what ways are we like Enoch?

Methuselah

5) Gen 5:25–27: Methuselah experienced the longest recorded life in the Bible. Based upon the genealogy in Gen 5, the patriarch who lived on earth for the shortest time produced the biblical person who dwelt upon the planet the longest.

In the Old Testament, longevity typically signifies divine favor (Ps 91:14–16; Deut 6:1–2; Prov 10:27).¹²¹² However, even the oldest patriarch lived less than a “day” (*yom*) by the Lord’s accounting (Ps 90:1–6). This prevented these men from achieving a God-like status (Gen 3:17–19; Gen 5:5).¹²¹³ Those who reside in the Lord’s presence—as Enoch did—receive far greater benefits than a long life on earth (Gen 5:21–24).¹²¹⁴

Read Gen 5:25–27. In contrast to the account of Enoch, how does the record of Methuselah remind us of the effects of sin upon humanity?

¹²¹⁰Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 338.

¹²¹¹Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 287.

¹²¹²Note an exception in 1 Ki 14:12–14, where the Lord ended a child’s life to spare him from greater calamity.

¹²¹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257–8.

¹²¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

Chapter 5: Groaning and Grieving (Genesis 5:28–6:8)

Genesis 5 begins with “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” This introductory formula denotes that we have entered a new major segment of Genesis.¹²¹⁵ Since the word “generations” derives from the verb which connotes “fathering offspring,” it connotes a family or clan history.¹²¹⁶ Genealogies in the Ancient Near East suggested continuity and relationship to increase a person’s power and prestige.¹²¹⁷

Moses began this chapter by returning to the sixth day of creation. He wrote, “On the day when God created humanity, in the likeness of God he created him. Male and female, he created them. And he blessed them, and he called their name ‘human’ on the day they were created.”

Unlike the animals, which God created in various species and kinds, Moses described people in terms of gender. Therefore, this verse affirms that the Lord created both men and women in his image to rule over creation (Cf. Gen 1:26–28).¹²¹⁸ He also designed us to experience community with each other. This enables us to express all that it means to be fully human, whether we marry or remain single.¹²¹⁹

Moses concluded Adam’s biography by writing, “And it was that the days of Adam after his fathering of Seth [were] 800 years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And so it was that all the days of Adam which he lived [were] 930 years. And he died.” Here we finally see the physical death resulting from the fall. The refrain, “and he died” at the end of the description of even the oldest patriarch points to the universality of the impact of sin upon Adam.¹²²⁰

Once again, Moses surveyed the era of Gen 4 but from the vantage point of the line of Seth.¹²²¹ Unlike Cain’s cursed line, which prominently features two murderers, the promised lineage of Seth links the two founders of humanity: Adam and Noah.¹²²² Thus, Moses recognized Noah as the legitimate seed who built a godly culture.¹²²³

By limiting the Gen 5 and Gen 11 accounts to ten generations of people of importance or who lived at critical times, Moses presented the flood as the important dividing line of primeval history.¹²²⁴ These genealogies contain broken lines of descent which include only the most significant ancestors. This enables us to recognize that the periods of time from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham almost certainly differ in length.¹²²⁵

The long lives of the descendants of Seth may depict that they were unusually godly people or that the curse of death gradually took its hold upon humanity.¹²²⁶ By recording precise numbers, this genealogical record conveys that Moses discussed real people.¹²²⁷ While God’s blessing remained upon them in terms of their fruitfulness, Moses reminds us that the effects of sin remained by repeating the refrain, “and he died.”¹²²⁸ We know virtually nothing about the

¹²¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

¹²¹⁶Schreiner, “תולדות” (*toledot*), *TDOT*, 15:582–8, 582–3.

¹²¹⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹²¹⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138–9.

¹²¹⁹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83

¹²²⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 135.

¹²²¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 189.

¹²²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 112.

¹²²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 109.

¹²²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111.

¹²²⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 10–1.

¹²²⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 282.

¹²²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 134.

¹²²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 284.

men listed in Gen 5 through v. 20 aside from the meaning of a few of their names.¹²²⁹ They simply form links in the chain between Seth and Noah.

In contrast, Enoch walked in fellowship with God; and God walked in close communion with Enoch.¹²³⁰ Both parties experienced mutually satisfying intimate communication.¹²³¹ Yet, Enoch lived for a relatively short time since “Enoch walked with God, and he [was] not, because God took him.” Precisely because Enoch walked with God, he did not suffer the fate of Adam and his other descendants.¹²³² Thus, Enoch found true life in the midst of the curse of death.¹²³³ The greatest honor is not a long life but to be lifted into the presence of God without dying.¹²³⁴

Seeking Relief

1) Gen 5:28–32: Moses began this section by writing, “And Lamech lived 182 years, and he fathered a son.” This Lamech differed greatly from the one depicted in Gen 4:19, 23–24.¹²³⁵ The one who came from the lineage of Seth desired deliverance from God’s curse upon the ground, instead of seeking revenge (Gen 3:17–19).¹²³⁶

As a result of Adam’s choice to pursue wisdom on his own without depending upon the Lord (Gen 3:1–7),¹²³⁷ human mastery over creation was subjected to frustration (Gen 1:26–28),¹²³⁸ replaced by alienation from our environment (Rom 8:19–22).¹²³⁹ Land blessed by God is well-watered and fertile (Gen 2:8–10; Deut 33:13–16). Under his curse, it becomes dry and unproductive (Deut 28:17–18).¹²⁴⁰

Since God removed his protection and favor, the ground yielded produce only through hard labor.¹²⁴¹ No longer a delight, work had become an enemy.¹²⁴² Since inedible growth replaced plants needed for food, people constantly toiled to sustain life (Prov 24:30–34).¹²⁴³

For the first time in Gen 5, a father explained his rationale for the name he chose for his son.¹²⁴⁴ Lamech “called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one shall relieve us from our work and from the painful toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has put under a curse.’” Lamech used the same Hebrew word which described what Eve and Adam experienced: “pain” (*itsabon*) (Gen 3:16–17).¹²⁴⁵

¹²²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

¹²³⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 114–5.

¹²³¹ F. J. Helfmeyer, “הַלֵּיכָה וְהַלֵּיכָה” (*halakh and halikhah*) *TDOT* 3:388–403, 394.

¹²³² Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

¹²³³ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 118.

¹²³⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257.

¹²³⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

¹²³⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹²³⁷ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 143–4.

¹²³⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹²³⁹ Dietrich 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), 133–4.

¹²⁴⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹²⁴¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

¹²⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹²⁴³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹²⁴⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 258.

¹²⁴⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֲצָבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *BDB*, 781,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

Due to Noah's importance in the book of Genesis, Moses repeatedly related the sound of his name to important theological themes in Gen 6–10.¹²⁴⁶ Noah's name sounds like the Hebrew word which means "comfort" or "relieve" (*nuah*). However, it does not derive from it.¹²⁴⁷

The desire to receive rest from one's toil conspicuously appears in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature.¹²⁴⁸ In *Enuma Elish*, the boisterous antics of some lesser gods disturbed the rest of Apsu, the chief god. 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!"¹²⁴⁹

Tiamat reacted to his desire to kill the other gods by rebelling. Consequently, the absence of rest led to primordial conflict before the gods created people.¹²⁵⁰ After the battle, Marduk announced to the other gods that people "shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!"¹²⁵¹ Freed from the menial tasks of managing the earth and providing food for themselves, the gods could rest.¹²⁵²

Similarly, the Akkadian myth *Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess* 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!"¹²⁵³ Thus, in ANE thought, people labored so the gods could rest.¹²⁵⁴

The biblical concept that God intended for humans to participate in his rest is unique in the ANE (Gen 2:1–3; Exod 20:8–11).¹²⁵⁵ It appears that Israel first kept the Sabbath during their time in the wilderness (Exod 16:22–30).¹²⁵⁶ Therefore, Lamech most likely did not observe days of rest from his toil, nor did he conceive the possibility of such a luxury. Perhaps Lamech prophesied that his son Noah would introduce new agricultural practices (Gen 9:20).¹²⁵⁷ On the other hand, his words may reflect his desperate desire for relief from his miserable life of servitude to the ground, as it needed constant tending to produce food.¹²⁵⁸

Moses returned to the standard format of this genealogy by writing, "And Lamech, after fathering Noah, lived 595 years. And he fathered [other] sons and daughters." Just as with the linear genealogies of Cain and Shem (Gen 4:19–22; Gen 11:26), the tenth generation in Seth's ancestral record names three sons. Moses wrote, "And Noah was 500 years old. And he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth."¹²⁵⁹ Then, the genealogical record of Noah comes to a halt. It shall not

¹²⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

¹²⁴⁷Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, "נִוַּח" (*nuah*), 628–9, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/628/mode/2up>.

¹²⁴⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 5:32.

¹²⁴⁹"The Creation Epic" (*Enuma Elish*), *ANET*, tablet 1:35–40, 61, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n85/mode/2up.

¹²⁵⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

¹²⁵¹"The Creation Epic" (*Enuma Elish*), *ANET*, 6:8, 68, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

¹²⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

¹²⁵³E. 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.

¹²⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 53.

¹²⁵⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

¹²⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

¹²⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹²⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 259.

¹²⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 129.

resume until after the deluge (Gen 9:28–29). This indicates that Moses inserted the flood narrative here to expand the account of the descendants of Seth.¹²⁶⁰

Read Gen 5:28–32. Why did Lamech name his son Noah? How does the biblical notion of rest differ from the concept in other ANE literature? Do you think that Lamech was prophesying or expressing his desperation? How would you have felt in his place?

Groaning for a Redeemed Body

2) Rom 8:23–25: In the previous verses (Rom 8:18–22), the Apostle Paul expressed that both we and all the sub-human creation desperately yearn for the deliverance which shall come when God fully reveals the glory of his people.¹²⁶¹ He began v. 23 by writing, “And not only [creation] but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, we also within ourselves are groaning, eagerly awaiting adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” By repeating “we also ourselves” Paul made his statement highly emphatic.¹²⁶²

First fruits (*aparchē*) consisted of the earliest part of a harvest. Immediately after Passover each year, a priest waved a sheaf of barley before the Lord to dedicate that harvest. Fifty days later, Israelites held a similar ceremony for the first fruits of the wheat harvest (Exod 23:14–19; Lev 23:5–11, 15–21). Seven weeks and one day separated these rites, so people called the second one the Feast of Weeks (Num 18:26). Highlighting the importance of these festivals, God commanded every man in Israel to gather to celebrate them every year (Deut 16:16).¹²⁶³

The Greek name for the Feast of Weeks is Pentecost, a term meaning “fiftieth”.¹²⁶⁴ Significantly, the Holy Spirit came upon the earliest Christians during the first Pentecost after Jesus’s resurrection (Acts 2:1–4). Therefore, Paul used the term “first fruits” as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit living within God’s people (2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14). In an interesting twist, God gifts us with the presence of the Holy Spirit as a pledge of greater things in the future. This first fruit does not signify what we offer to the Lord.¹²⁶⁵ God has already begun his redemptive work within us, which shall finally reach its culmination in the age to come (Rom 8:11–13; Tit 3:5–7).¹²⁶⁶

Paul wrote, “We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, we also within ourselves are groaning.” These utterances connect us with the rest of creation (Rom 8:18–21).¹²⁶⁷ Although we have received the great blessing of salvation, we still experience the sin and death of this

¹²⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 259–60.

¹²⁶¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 518–9.

¹²⁶²Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:417.

¹²⁶³Richard O. Rigsby, “First Fruits,” *ABD* 2:796–7.

¹²⁶⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “πεντηκοστή” (*pentēkostē*), *BDAG*, 795.

¹²⁶⁵Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 224.

¹²⁶⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 520.

¹²⁶⁷Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419.

fallen world (2 Cor 4:7–12).¹²⁶⁸ As a result, we endure the frustrations of living in the “now and not yet” era of the kingdom of God (Phil 1:21–24).¹²⁶⁹

Our groaning does not occur despite possessing the Spirit but precisely because he dwells within us.¹²⁷⁰ Due to his presence, we experience the anguish of knowing what we are missing (2 Cor 5:1–8). A friend of mine likened this to recognizing that you have great needs and seeing a huge pile of presents bearing your name under the Christmas tree...in November.

In the age to come, God shall display our current status as his vice-regents—the sons and daughters of the Lord—to everyone (Eph 1:5–6).¹²⁷¹ This concept of sonship closely relates to image-bearing (Gen 5:3). Similarly, Scripture describes the son of God as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15).¹²⁷² In the covenant which the Lord made with David, God promised to the king’s descendant, “I shall be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:12–16). Later in Israel’s history, the Lord applied the designation “my son” not only to the royal messiah, but also to the end-time people of God (Hos 1:10).¹²⁷³

In keeping with Deut 30:6, the author of a second century BC Jewish manuscript wrote: “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.”¹²⁷⁴

This concept of being a son or daughter of God did not originate with the New Testament (NT). The Lord had promised to redeem righteous Jews from their exile in a second exodus, joining them with the gentiles as God’s people (Isa 2:1–4; Zech 8:20–23).¹²⁷⁵ Jewish scholars recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel. Yet, they welcomed and included believing gentiles (Josh 2:1, 8–14; Josh 6:25; Ruth 1:4, 16–18; Ruth 4:13–17).¹²⁷⁶

By applying several Old Testament texts to gentiles (Isa 52:11 and 2 Sam 7:14),¹²⁷⁷ with an overt expansion to include women by adding the word “daughters,” Paul demonstrated that all believers equally comprise the heirs of God (2 Cor 6:16–18; Gal 3:26–29).¹²⁷⁸ Although the Lord has adopted us (Rom 8:14–17),¹²⁷⁹ the full benefit of our new status remains in the future (Rom 8:10–11, 28–30). Sonship can already be ours yet be the object of our hope.¹²⁸⁰

As a result, we long for “the redemption of our bodies” at the time when God makes all

¹²⁶⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 520.

¹²⁶⁹Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 474.

¹²⁷⁰Moo, *Romans*, 267.

¹²⁷¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

¹²⁷²Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

¹²⁷³J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 104.

¹²⁷⁴Robert Henry Charles, trans., “The Book of Jubilees, or The Little Genesis” (Edinburgh; London: Black, 1902), 1:22–24, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofjubileesor00char#page/6/mode/2up>.

¹²⁷⁵Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, 272.

¹²⁷⁶Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 269–70.

¹²⁷⁷Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 771.

¹²⁷⁸Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 406.

¹²⁷⁹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419.

¹²⁸⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 521.

things new and we experience put on Jesus’s perfection (1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:42–55; Rev 21:5–7; 1 John 3:2–3).¹²⁸¹ Only then shall we receive complete redemption (Phil 3:20–21).¹²⁸²

Paul explained that our expectant waiting should not surprise us, writing, “For in hope we were saved.”¹²⁸³ The full enjoyment of our salvation lies in the future.¹²⁸⁴ Employing wordplay, he wrote, “Hope which is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees?” Hope remains a certain prospect which we do not yet possess (Heb 11:1),¹²⁸⁵ and simultaneously, an attitude which we display.¹²⁸⁶

“But if we hope for what we do not see, then patiently (*hypomonē*) we eagerly wait (*apekdechomai*).” For the third time in seven verses, Paul used the term “eagerly wait.”¹²⁸⁷ A rare word outside of the NT, it connotes an “expectation of the end” (1 Cor 1:4–9),¹²⁸⁸ as if people attending a parade crane their necks to see what comes next. Since the hope of believers relies upon God—rather than on us—we can endure the intense pressure of the trials of this life (Rom 5:1–5; Heb 12:1–3; James 1:2–4).¹²⁸⁹

a) Read Rom 8:23–25. What does it mean to have the first fruits of the Spirit? Why does having the Holy Spirit within us cause us to groan? What are the implications of our adoption by God? How did Paul use the word hope in two different ways? What does our hope produce in us? How are you like Lamech (Gen 5:28–29)?

Helped in Our Weakness

b) Rom 8:26–27: Paul observed, “And in the same way also the Spirit helps us in our weakness.” Hope enables us to endure suffering. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit sustains us in our frailty (Rom 8:23–25).¹²⁹⁰ The word which Paul used to depict the helping work of the Spirit (*synantilambanomai*) literally means “to take up with.”¹²⁹¹ It appears elsewhere in the New Testament (NT) only in Luke 10:40.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the term describes the support which seventy elders gave to Moses as he went about his duties (Exod 18:22; Num 11:16–17).¹²⁹² Thus,

¹²⁸¹Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 474.

¹²⁸²Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 225.

¹²⁸³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 521.

¹²⁸⁴Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419–20.

¹²⁸⁵Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, eds., “Hope,” *DBI*, 399.

¹²⁸⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 522.

¹²⁸⁷Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 476.

¹²⁸⁸Walter Grundmann, “ἀπεκδέχομαι” (*apekdechomai*), *TDNT*, 2:56.

¹²⁸⁹Moo, *Romans*, 268.

¹²⁹⁰Moo, *Romans*, 268.

¹²⁹¹Gerhard Delling, “συναντιλαμβάνομαι” (*synantilambanomai*), *TDNT*, 1:376.

¹²⁹²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “συναντιλαμβάνομαι” (*synantilambanomai*), *BDAG*, 965.

the word connotes taking on the burden of another to transfer or share its weight (Ps 89:20–21).¹²⁹³ This word commonly appeared in Greco-Roman literature, where it describes lending aid to someone.¹²⁹⁴

For example, Josephus (37–100 AD) employed the term when he wrote, “As for those laws which Moses left concerning our common conversation and intercourse one with another...I propose to myself, with God's assistance (*synantilambanomai*), to write, after I have finished the work I am now upon.”¹²⁹⁵

Within the NT, the word translated as “weakness” (*astheneia*) usually refers to the totality of the human condition, rather than just a person's physical state.¹²⁹⁶ Paul applied it earlier in this chapter to convey the insufficiency of the Mosaic law (Rom 8:3). Our frailty in body, mind, and spirit reminds us that we are creatures, rather than the creator.¹²⁹⁷

As an example of our weakness, Paul wrote, “For what it is necessary for us to pray for, we do not know.” The apostle addressed the content of our entreaties, rather than referred to the style of our prayers.¹²⁹⁸ We often cannot ascertain the will of God in order to pray accordingly (Matt 6:10; 2 Cor 12:7–9; Rom 1:9–13).¹²⁹⁹

When we don't know how to pray, “The Spirit itself intercedes on our behalf with wordless groans.”¹³⁰⁰ Thus, in a few short verses, Paul linked creation, believers, and the Holy Spirit with one common characteristic: as we wait patiently for the new creation, we groan (Rom 8:22–27).¹³⁰¹ Despite this literary parallel, the purpose of the Spirit's groaning remains vastly different from ours and from nature's.¹³⁰²

The word translated as “interceding on our behalf” (*hyperentunchanō*) occurs only here in the NT.¹³⁰³ Furthermore, no earlier example occurs in secular Greek.¹³⁰⁴ Therefore, we cannot tell whether it means that the Spirit helps us by aiding our prayers or by doing the praying for us. However, Paul added another word unique to the NT to describe the Spirit's groaning.¹³⁰⁵ He called it “unexpressed” or “wordless” (*alalētōs*).¹³⁰⁶

While the Holy Spirit can certainly illuminate our minds to understand how to pray, instead the Spirit often works through our weakness by entreating for us.¹³⁰⁷ We experience this whenever we cry out to God in bewilderment.¹³⁰⁸ Although we remain unaware of the Spirit's

¹²⁹³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 522–3.

¹²⁹⁴Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 476.

¹²⁹⁵Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (trans. William Whiston; The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 4.8.4, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston+chapter%3D8%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

¹²⁹⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

¹²⁹⁷Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 477.

¹²⁹⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

¹²⁹⁹Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 225.

¹³⁰⁰Moo, *Romans*, 268. In Greek, the word “Spirit” is neither male nor female but neuter.

¹³⁰¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:420–1.

¹³⁰²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

¹³⁰³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ὑπερεντυγχάνω” (*hyperentunchanō*), *BDAG*, 1033.

¹³⁰⁴Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 478.

¹³⁰⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 524.

¹³⁰⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀλάλητος” (*alalētōs*), *BDAG*, 41.

¹³⁰⁷Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 477–8. A corollary to this is that we cannot consider the ability to give eloquent prayers a sign of the Spirit's presence in a person.

¹³⁰⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 524.

groans on our behalf, God hears them.¹³⁰⁹ Thus, we have both the Son and the Spirit pleading for us in accordance with God’s will before the Father (Heb 7:24–25; Rom 8:31–34).¹³¹⁰ Even when we ask for things which are not in our best interest, we can trust the Spirit’s ministry of intercession to make things right (Rom 8:27).¹³¹¹

Read Rom 8:26–27. How do these verses provide comfort and hope to you?

Sons of God or Sons of the Gods?

3) Gen 6:1–2: This passage contains numerous parallels to other documents from the Ancient Near East (ANE). As a result, the original audience understood much of the ambiguity we encounter. However, these similarities do not imply that Moses copied from those sources, as stark differences occur.¹³¹²

The section from Gen 6:1–8 not only recalls the great evil which arose from the line of Cain (Gen 4:17–24), it creates a transition from the genealogy of the godly line of Seth to the account of the flood (Gen 6:9–9:17).¹³¹³ In Gen 3, Moses recounted the fall of humanity; in Gen 4, he depicted the fall of the family; and here he demonstrated the fall of society via institutionalized oppression.¹³¹⁴

Moses employed wordplay to indicate that people obeyed the mandate to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).¹³¹⁵ The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land (*adamah*), and daughters were born to them....”

This meshes perfectly with the account of life before the flood in the Atrahasis Epic. It begins by stating, “The land became wide, the peop[le became nu]merous, the land bellowed like wild oxen, the god [Enlil] was disturbed by their uproar.”¹³¹⁶

While in Gen 5 the focus fell upon men, here the emphasis shifts to women and what happened to them.¹³¹⁷ “And the sons of the gods saw the daughters of men, that they [were] beautiful. And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.” “The sons of the gods” can also be translated as “the sons of God” (Ps 29:1; Ps 89:7).¹³¹⁸

This occurs because the generic name of God (*El*) usually appears in the Old Testament (OT) as a plural (*Elohim*) even though it denotes only one God.¹³¹⁹ In reference to the God of Israel, “*Elohim*” appears 2,372 times; the singular “*El*” occurs only fifty-seven times, mostly in the book of Job.¹³²⁰

¹³⁰⁹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:423–4.

¹³¹⁰Moo, *Romans*, 269.

¹³¹¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 526.

¹³¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹³¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹³¹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

¹³¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁶E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Atrahasis Epic (Old Babylonian Version),” in *ANET*, tablet 2, col i, lines 1–3, 104. https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n129/mode/2up.

¹³¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁹Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 399.

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/398/mode/2up>.

¹³²⁰Terence E. Fretheim, “אֱלֹהִים” (*elohim*), *NIDOTTE* 1:405.

Apart from the OT, *Elohim* never refers to only one god in the ANE. Instead, the singular “*El*” commonly designates a deity. In Poems about Baal and Anath, the poet wrote, “Oh, my father Bull *El*! I have no house [like] the gods [*Elohim*].”¹³²¹

Based upon the Hebrew, we cannot ascertain whether Gen 6:2 refers to the God of Abraham, Noah, and Moses, or to other deities.¹³²² This contributes to the difficult task of determining exactly the identity of “the sons of God/the gods.”¹³²³ Although this issue has been described as “one of the thorniest in the OT,”¹³²⁴ their appearance without any explanation indicates that Moses’s first readers knew the answer.¹³²⁵ Hebrew grammar permits three different interpretations.¹³²⁶ We shall explore each in turn.

Descendants of Seth as the Sons of God

b) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: This chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of God/the gods saw the daughters of humanity, that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.”

One option for identifying “the sons of God/the gods” asserts that these men hailed from the godly descendants of Seth (Gen 5), in contrast to the godless men from the line of Cain (Gen 4:17–24).¹³²⁷ Beginning in the third century AD, this comprised the dominant Christian understanding.¹³²⁸ Augustine (354–430) popularized the notion in his great work *The City of God*.¹³²⁹ Other proponents of this view included Luther and Calvin.¹³³⁰

Corporate sonship of the nation of Israel does appear in several Old Testament texts, lending credence to this concept (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1).¹³³¹ If correct, the sin consisted of marriages between godly men and ungodly women.¹³³² However, this option restricts the word “humanity” (*adam*) in Gen 6:1 to a specific group of men in Gen 6:2. This also requires understanding the “daughters of humanity” as “daughters of descendants of Cain.” Furthermore, Moses never specifically delineated men from the lineage of Seth as “the sons of God.”¹³³³

In addition, this view ignores any other lines of descent from Adam and Eve (Gen 5:4). It assigns an evil nature to every descendant of Cain, while presuming the godliness of everyone from Seth’s line. Finally, it fails to explain why Moses employed the phrase “daughters of humanity” to describe wicked people, especially since the text calls them “good” (*tov*), a positive quality associated with marriageability.¹³³⁴

Nevertheless, until nineteenth century archaeologists unearthed great quantities of

¹³²¹H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 18–9, 129.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n153/mode/2up.

¹³²²Helmer Ringgren, “אֱלֹהִים” (*elohim*), *TDOT* 1:276–84, 276.

¹³²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³²⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115–6.

¹³²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³²⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³²⁹Augustine, *The City of God, 2 Vols*, 15, 2:62, <https://archive.org/stream/TheCityOfGodV2#page/n73/mode/2up>.

¹³³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³³¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³³²Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 264.

¹³³⁴I. Höver-Johag, “טוֹב” (*tov*) *TDOT* 5:296–317, 306.

Ancient Near Eastern cuneiform tablets and Egyptian hieroglyphics, this view held sway.¹³³⁵ Today, few experts advocate this interpretation.¹³³⁶

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses for the view that these men were descendants of Seth who intermarried with the descendants of Cain:

strengths—

weaknesses—

Fallen Angels as the Sons of God

c) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: This chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of God/the gods saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.”

The term “sons of God” does occasionally refer to angels in the Old Testament (Job 38:4–7; Ps 89:6).¹³³⁷ Therefore, a second view of this passage asserts that “the sons of God” consisted of fallen angels or spirits (Job 1:6).¹³³⁸ In this case, they sinned by transgressing the boundaries between the material world of humanity and the spiritual arena of the heavenly realm.¹³³⁹ Throughout Genesis 3–11, people sought to overstep this boundary to achieve divine status. Here we see the opposite: members of the angelic world illicitly seeking to impose upon humanity.¹³⁴⁰

Until the second century AD, scholars teaching this passage unanimously claimed that fallen angels engaged in sex with women.¹³⁴¹ According to the second century BC Jewish work the Testament of Reuben:

“Women...overcome by the spirit of fornication...allured the Watchers [angels] who were before the Flood; for as these continually beheld them, they lusted after them, and they conceived the act in their mind; for they changed themselves into the shape of men and appeared to them when they were with their husbands. And the women lusting in their minds after their forms, gave birth to giants.”¹³⁴²

Early Christians also attributed the fall of Satan’s subordinates to their lust for “the daughters of men.”¹³⁴³ For example, Justin Martyr (100–165 AD) wrote:

“God, when He had made the whole world, and subjected things earthly to man, and arranged the heavenly elements for the increase of fruits and rotation of the seasons and appointed this divine law—for these things also He evidently made for man—committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them.

“But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons; and besides, they afterwards subdued the human

¹³³⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 291–3.

¹³³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140.

¹³³⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³³⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 263.

¹³⁴¹Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³⁴²R. H. Charles, trans., “Testament of Reuben,” in *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Black, 1908), 1–16, 5.2–7, 11–2, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/10/mode/2up>.

¹³⁴³Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 141.

race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they enslaved by lustful passions; and among men they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate needs, and all wickedness.”¹³⁴⁴

Some modern scholars, such as Gordon Wenham, hold this view. They contend that unless Moses meant angels, the text says that “the sons of some men” married “the daughters of other men.” Wenham notes that, in Ugaritic texts, the “sons of *El*” refers to lesser gods in the divine pantheon.¹³⁴⁵

However, the ones serving in *El*’s Council are not angels but gods.¹³⁴⁶ A frequently cited text says, “The offering which we offer, the sacrifice which we sacrifice, it ascends to the (father of the *bn zl* [sons of the gods]), it ascends to the dwelling of the *bn zl*, to the assembly of the *bn zl*.” Scholars often cite this text as a parallel to Gen 6:1–4, yet *bn zl* describes gods.¹³⁴⁷ Hence, a recent translation says, “May it be borne aloft [to the father of the gods, may it be borne aloft to the pantheon of the gods, may it be borne aloft to the assembly of the gods.”¹³⁴⁸

Furthermore, interpreting the “sons of God/the gods” as angels does not fit the context of the flood.¹³⁴⁹ This passage in Gen 6:1–6 focuses upon the intensification of human sin.¹³⁵⁰ Accordingly, the Lord judged “flesh” (*basar*) in Gen 6:3, not spirit beings.¹³⁵¹ Although angels can eat and drink (Gen 19:1–3),¹³⁵² Jesus clarified that they do not marry (Luke 20:34–36).¹³⁵³

The conviction that angels could not indulge in sexual activity led second century AD Jewish scholars to reject this explanation in favor of another interpretation.¹³⁵⁴ Christian commentators distanced themselves from it soon afterward but, as we have already seen, took a differing view.¹³⁵⁵

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses for interpreting the “sons of God” as fallen angels:

strengths–

weaknesses–

Kings as Sons of the Gods

d) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of the gods/God saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to

¹³⁴⁴Justin Martyr, “The Second Apology,” in *ANF01* (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds.; revised by A. Cleveland Coxe; Buffalo, NY; Edinburgh: Christian Literature, 1884), 363, https://archive.org/stream/TheApostolicFathersWithJustinMartyrAndIrenaeus/apostolic_fathers_with_justin_martyr_and_irenaeus#page/n359/mode/2up.

¹³⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³⁴⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³⁴⁷H. Haag, “*ben*,” *TDOT* 2:145–59, 2:157–8.

¹³⁴⁸N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit, 2nd Ed.* (BibSem; New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 345.

¹³⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁵⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 292.

¹³⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁵²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

¹³⁵⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

themselves wives, whomever they chose.” This leads us to the third possibility: that “the sons of the gods” refers to kings and other rulers.¹³⁵⁶

Since the nineteenth century, archaeologists have unearthed over a million cuneiform tablets in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Prior to then, no evidence affirmed this view.¹³⁵⁷ Today, most Jewish experts and many Christian scholars hold it.¹³⁵⁸ In the ANE, people believed that a king enjoyed a father-son relationship with a god. After all, that god generated him.¹³⁵⁹

For example, an Akkadian man lamented, “When I lie down at night my dream is terrifying. The king, the very flesh of the gods, the sun of his peoples, his heart is enraged (with me) and cannot be appeased.”¹³⁶⁰ This man considered his monarch a deity. Such equivalence occurred widely in the ANE.¹³⁶¹

Pre-flood kings’ lists included god-rulers.¹³⁶² The Sumerian King List opens by saying, “When kingship was lowered from heaven....”¹³⁶³ This continued after with flood, with designations such as “the divine Gilgamesh.”¹³⁶⁴ The Sumerian king Gudea, who ruled from 2144–2124 BC, wrote of himself as, “The offspring of the goddess Gutumdug, dowered with sovereignty and the scepter supreme by the god Gal-alim.”¹³⁶⁵ When the Ugaritic King Keret mourned the loss of his children, the chief god noticed his pain. According to the legend, “His father El, [replied], “E[nough] for thee of weeping, Keret; of crying, Beloved, Lad of El.”¹³⁶⁶

Numerous pharaohs from before and after Moses’s era called themselves the sons of a god, whether of Atum, Amon-Ra, or Re.¹³⁶⁷ According to one of the pyramid texts, a deceased pharaoh, “is the being of a god, the son of a god, the messenger of a god.”¹³⁶⁸ Finally, a contemporary of Moses, Tukulti-Nunurta of Assyria claimed to be “The eternal image of [the god] Enlil...Enlil, like a physical father, exalted him second to his firstborn son.”¹³⁶⁹

People considered ANE kings divine progeny.¹³⁷⁰ Claiming descent from the gods conferred legitimacy to a monarch’s rule. Consequently, rulers’ inscriptions claim divine ancestry from Sumerian times (2500–2000 BC), through the Old Babylonian era (2300–1670

¹³⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

¹³⁵⁷Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*, 205.

¹³⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

¹³⁵⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁶⁰W. G. Lambert, trans., “I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,” in *ANET*, 1:594–6, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n627/mode/2up.

¹³⁶¹Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 35–39, 42–43, 45, 47–48.

¹³⁶²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 186.

¹³⁶³Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n289/mode/2up.

¹³⁶⁴Jacobsen, “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265–6, 266, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n291/mode/2up.

¹³⁶⁵Gudea, “Inscription on Statue A of the Louvre,” in *Records of the Past, Being Ancient Translations of the Ancient Monuments of Egypt and Western Asia, 2nd Series, Vol. II*, (Archibald Henry Sayce; London: Samuel Bagster, 1888), col ii, lines 16–9, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/rp/rp202/rp20221.htm>.

¹³⁶⁶H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “The Legend of King Keret,” in *ANET*, 2.59–62, 143, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n167/mode/2up. Italics original.

¹³⁶⁷Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 38–9.

¹³⁶⁸Samuel A. B. Mercer, trans., *The Pyramid Texts* (London: Forgotten Books, 2008), utterance 471, line 920a, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/pyt/pyt25.htm>.

¹³⁶⁹Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 47–8. Niehaus quoted from W. G. Lambert’s *Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*.

¹³⁷⁰Meredith G. Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” *WTJ* 24, no. 2 (1 May 1962): 191–2, http://www.meredithkline.com/files/articles/Divine-Kingship-and-Genesis-6_1-4.pdf.

BC), and in both the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods (1392–612 BC). Being a son of a god was a royal prerogative.¹³⁷¹ Gilgamesh provides an excellent example of this. He reigned over the city of Uruk. Two texts describe him as “the flesh of the gods.”¹³⁷² Officially, “Two-thirds of him is god, [one-third of him is human].”¹³⁷³

Although the Bible gives no credence to such claims of semi-divinity, even Israel employed such rhetoric.¹³⁷⁴ For example, the psalmist Asaph called Israel’s judges “gods” and “sons of the Most High.” Yet, contrary to other ANE writers, Asaph never implied they were anything more than human (Ps 82). Furthermore, the Lord called the future king from David’s line “God’s son.” His need for discipline indicates this did not refer exclusively to Jesus (2 Sam 7:12–17).¹³⁷⁵

As a result of this evidence, the highly-regarded Hebrew theological dictionary *TDOT* concluded that the author of Gen 6:1–4 wrote of kings as sons of the gods.¹³⁷⁶ Given the tremendous evil perpetrated by these men, their possession by demonic forces remains a strong option (Cf. 1 Pet 3:18–22).¹³⁷⁷ Moses did not report mythological unreality. Instead, he remained faithful to his historical context.¹³⁷⁸

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses of the view that the sons of the gods consisted of ancient human rulers.

strengths–

weaknesses–

After reviewing all three options (descendants of Seth, fallen angels, and human kings), what do you conclude?

Taking Wives for Themselves *Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.*

e) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of the gods saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives (*isha*), whomever they chose.” Based upon the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context of Genesis, the “sons of the gods” (*bene ha elohim*) in Gen 6:1–4 refers to kings.¹³⁷⁹

What exactly was their transgression? Moses reported, “And they took for themselves

¹³⁷¹Walton, *Genesis*, 293–4.

¹³⁷²Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 9.2.10–4; Assyrian version 1.5–7, 88, 90, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n113/mode/2up and https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n115/mode/2up.

¹³⁷³Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.2.1, 73,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n97/mode/2up.

¹³⁷⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹³⁷⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140.

¹³⁷⁶Haag, “בְּנֵי” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:157.

¹³⁷⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁷⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 264.

¹³⁷⁹Haag, “בְּנֵי” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:157.

wives, from all whom they chose.” “Taking a wife” usually meant getting married (Gen 11:29).¹³⁸⁰ Some scholars contend that the sin of these tyrannical rulers consisted of incorporating great numbers of women into their harems.¹³⁸¹ However, ANE cultures viewed polygamy as an acceptable, albeit imperfect, practice even within Israel (Gen 30:1–13; 2 Sam 3:2–5).¹³⁸²

The key lies in the phrase, “all whom they chose.” Both the pharaoh whom Sarah encountered, and David added married women to their harems (Gen 12:10–20; 2 Sam 11:2–5, 27).¹³⁸³ The Lord prevented one king from violating Sarah because Abraham had tricked him into adding her to his wives (Gen 20:1–9). Therefore, this phrase appears to include already-married women. In the “right of the first night,” a king or other government official could demand to spend a woman’s bridal night with her before she went to her husband.¹³⁸⁴

The Epic of Gilgamesh provides insight into this practice of oppressive rulers.¹³⁸⁵ Just after noting that Gilgamesh is primarily a god, the epic states:

“The onslaught of his weapons verily has no equal. By the *drum* are aroused [his] companions. The nobles of Uruk are worried in [their chamb]ers, ‘Gilgamesh leaves not the son to [his] father. [Day] and [night] is unbridled his arro[gance]. [Is this Gilga]mesh, [the shepherd of ramparted] Uruk? Is this [our] shepherd, [bold, stately, wise]? Gilgamesh] leaves not [the maid to her mother], the warrior’s daughter, [the noble’s spouse]!’

“The [gods hearkened] to their plaint. The gods of heaven Uruk’s lord [they...]: ‘Did not [the gods, the *Aruru*] bring forth this strong wild ox? [The onslaught of his weapons] verily has no equal. By the *drum* are aroused his [companions]. Gilgamesh leaves not the son to his father; Day and night [is unbridled his arrogance]. Is this the shepherd of [ramparted] Uruk? Is this their [...] shepherd, bold, stately, (and) wise?... Gilgamesh leaves not the maid to [her mother], the warrior’s daughter, the noble’s spouse!’

“When [the god Anu] had heard out their plaint, the great *Aruru* (goddess of pregnancy and childbirth) they called, ‘Thou, *Aruru*, didst create [the man]. Create now his double; His stormy heart let him match. Let them contend, that Uruk may have peace!..For Gilgamesh, king of broad-marted Uruk, the *drum* of the people is free for nuptial choice, that with lawful wives he might mate! He is the first, the *husband* comes after. By the counsel of the gods it has (so) been ordained. With the cutting of his umbilical cord it was decreed for him!’”¹³⁸⁶

Even in this tale of a great hero, the text conveys the oppressive nature of Gilgamesh’s divinely-ordained right to sleep with any woman he chose on her wedding night.¹³⁸⁷ This horrific practice continued for many years. Close to 425 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus reported that a group of people in Libya “show the king all virgins that are to be married. The king then takes the virginity of whichever of these pleases him.”¹³⁸⁸

¹³⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140–1. Note that *isha* can mean “wife,” “woman,” or “female” per *BDB* (<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/60/mode/2up>).

¹³⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 263.

¹³⁸²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁸³Walke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁸⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

¹³⁸⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁸⁶Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.8–32; 4:31–9, 73–4, 78,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n103/mode/2up. Italics original.

¹³⁸⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

¹³⁸⁸Herodotus, “The Histories,” in *Herodotus with an English Translation* (trans. A. Godley; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 4.168.2,

Even the *Babylonian Talmud* acknowledges the practice, stating: “What [was the] danger? If I say that [the Roman authorities] said, ‘a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall be killed,’ [then how state] ‘they made it a custom’? ‘We should abolish it entirely!’—Said Rabbah, ‘[That] they said, ‘a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall have the first sexual intercourse with the prefect.’ [You call] this danger? [Surely] this [is a case of] constraint!—Because there are chaste women who would rather surrender themselves to death’” (*b. Kethuboth* 3b).¹³⁸⁹

Violence could easily erupt from this tyrannical practice (Gen 6:13).¹³⁹⁰ According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, when a mighty man named Enkidu arrived in Uruk: “The men were clustered about him, and kissed his feet...Suddenly a handsome young man arrived...Enkidu blocked the entry to the marital chamber, and would not allow Gilgamesh to be brought in. They grappled with each other at the entry to the marital chamber, in the street they attacked each other.” Gilgamesh lost the fight. He and Enkidu became friends and set off on their epic journey.¹³⁹¹

By separating the account of the forbidden unions from that of the resulting offspring in Gen 6:4, Moses emphasized the sinfulness of the actions of these men.¹³⁹²

Read Gen 6:1–2. How would you describe what Moses depicted in these verses? What does God’s reaction in Gen 6:5–7 tell you about his concern for those who experience sexual assault?

Limiting Human Life Spans

f) Gen 6:3: Due to the behavior of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–2), “The Lord said, ‘My spirit shall not strive with humanity forever because he is flesh. And it shall be that his days will be 120 years.’” While many words of this sentence have been controversial, in recent years Hebrew scholars are developing a consensus.¹³⁹³

Since God’s spirit produces life,¹³⁹⁴ Moses emphasized the Lord’s life-giving power. He did not refer to the Holy Spirit in this instance (Cf. Gen 2:7; Ps 104:27–30). Although one can translate the verb *din* as “abide” instead of “strive,”¹³⁹⁵ many modern scholars conclude that God said he would not contend with humans forever (Cf. Prov 22:10; 2 Sam 19:9).¹³⁹⁶ In either case,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D168%3Asection%3D2>.

¹³⁸⁹https://halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_3.html#PARTb.

¹³⁹⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 185.

¹³⁹¹Maureen Gallery Kovacs, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), tablet 2, <http://jewishchristianlit.com/Texts/ANEmyths/gilgamesh02.html>.

¹³⁹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 265–6.

¹³⁹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141.

¹³⁹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141–2.

¹³⁹⁶V. Hamp, “דִּין” (*din*), *TDOT* 3:187–8. This is contra *BDB*.

the same result ensued.

In Hebrew, the word translated as “flesh” (*basar*) has multiple meanings. Usually it refers to physicality, such as of an animal or human body (Exod 21:28; Gen 2:21).¹³⁹⁷ Since weakness, inadequacy, and a transitory nature all characterize flesh, *basar* also conveys the necessity of a total dependence upon the Lord for strength and life itself (Ps 56:4; Isa 40:6–8). An ethical aspect to the word also occurs in connection with the human tendency to commit sin (Ps 78:37–41; Jer 17:5; 2 Chron 32:7–8).¹³⁹⁸

God’s judgment in Gen 6 indicates that both human frailty and sinfulness result from our existence as fleshly creatures.¹³⁹⁹ We cannot survive without God sustaining us (Job 34:12–15; Isa 40:6–8; Luke 12:16–21).¹⁴⁰⁰ By calling even powerful kings “flesh,” the Lord not only emphasized their mortality but mocked their divine aspirations.¹⁴⁰¹

Noah lived for 500 years old by the time he fathered his three sons (Gen 5:32). The flood occurred when he reached 600 years old (Gen 7:6). Therefore, some commentators hold that the phrase “his days shall be 120 years” reflects a period of grace before the flood would begin,¹⁴⁰² giving people time to repent, just as in the days of Jonah (Jon 3:4–6).¹⁴⁰³ They conclude Noah spent those 120 years building the ark to warn people of impending judgment (2 Pet 3:3–9).¹⁴⁰⁴

However, we have no indication that Noah built the ark over a period of 120 years.¹⁴⁰⁵ It appears that Noah’s sons were born before he received the Lord’s command (Gen 6:10–13). That would leave a maximum of 100 years between God’s command to build the ark and the flood.

By limiting human life spans, individuals had less time to accrue power and foist their corrupt practices upon others.¹⁴⁰⁶ We should probably take the meaning of “his days shall be 120 years” at face value. God would no longer permit extraordinarily long lives.¹⁴⁰⁷ Tyrants could no longer oppress and terrorize others for hundreds of years.¹⁴⁰⁸

With this interpretation, we immediately run into a problem. Several biblical patriarchs who lived after the flood survived for more than 120 years. For example, Abraham survived for 175 years; Isaac for 180; and Jacob for 147 years (Gen 25:7; Gen 35:28; Gen 47:28).¹⁴⁰⁹ As God’s chosen men, the Lord may have blessed these patriarchs with life spans beyond what he promised to others.¹⁴¹⁰ On the other hand, God may have gradually implemented this edict, just as Adam did not physically die on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:19; Gen 5:3–5).¹⁴¹¹ In the generations after Jacob, the bible records only Aaron exceeding 120 years (Num 33:39). Even Moses lived for only the maximum set by God (Deut 34:7).¹⁴¹²

¹³⁹⁷Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “דִּין” (*din*), *BDB*, 192, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/192/mode/2up>.

¹³⁹⁸N. P. Bratsiotis, “בָּסָר” (*basar*), *TDOT* 2:328–9.

¹³⁹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 268.

¹⁴⁰⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 188.

¹⁴⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴⁰⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹⁴⁰⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴⁰⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

¹⁴⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴⁰⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

¹⁴¹⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

Parallels also exist in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts. A tablet from Emar recounts this conversation between the god Enlil and a man named Namzitarra: “[Enlil says,] ‘Your fate will be allotted to you [like your name]...you will have silver, you will have lapis lazuli gems, you will have cattle, you will have sheep.’ [To which Namzitarra replies, ‘Where will I have taken your silver, your lapis lazuli, your sheep? The days of mankind are declining, day after day they are diminishing. Month after month they are diminishing. Year after year they are diminishing. [The days of mankind]—they are diminishing. 120 years—that is the limit of mankind’s life, its term, from that day till now, as long as mankind has existed. So, I am going home. Do not stop me.’”¹⁴¹³

This ancient Syrian text affirms the decrease in the limit to human life spans reported by Moses: 120 years.¹⁴¹⁴

Read Gen 6:3. Do you think that the 120 years refers to a limit of people’s life spans or a period of grace before the flood? Why?

Nephilim in the Land *Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.*

g) Gen 6:4: Moses wrote, “The Nephilim were in the land in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of the gods went into the daughters of men. And they bore to them those mighty ones from of old, men of renown.” Some scholars remain uncertain how this verse fits with those preceding it (Gen 6:1–3).¹⁴¹⁵ While, “In those days” refers to the period before the flood, the phrase “And also afterward” indicates that such people reemerged from among the descendants of Noah.¹⁴¹⁶

This brings us to another point of contention. Who exactly were the Nephilim? Were they typical people living at that time, the sons of the gods themselves, or the progeny resulting from illicit unions between kings and the women they assaulted?¹⁴¹⁷

Within the Old Testament (OT), only the account of the men who did reconnaissance prior to Israel entering Canaan also mentions Nephilim (Num 13:30–33).¹⁴¹⁸ The Greek translation of the OT called these men in the book of Numbers “giants” (Num 30:33).¹⁴¹⁹ “Nephilim” derives from a verb which means “to fall” (*naphal*),¹⁴²⁰ making a literal translation “fallen ones” (Deut 22:4).¹⁴²¹ Their name connotes that anything so gigantic and exalted must fall (Jer 46:6; Ezek 26:15–18; Ezek 31:16–18).¹⁴²²

¹⁴¹³Yoram Cohen, “‘Enlil and Namzitarra’: The Emar and Ugarit Manuscripts and A New Understanding of the ‘Vanity Theme’ Speech,” *RA* 1, no. 104 (2010): lines 11–28, 87–97, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23281403?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹⁴¹⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:3.

¹⁴¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143.

¹⁴¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴¹⁹Brannan, et al., *LES*, Num 13:33.

¹⁴²⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נָפַל” (*naphal*), *BDB* 656–8, 656, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/656/mode/2up>.

¹⁴²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 270.

¹⁴²²H. Seebass, “נָפַל” (*naphal*), *TDOT* 9:488–97, 497.

Many commentators identify the Nephilim as children of the violent tyrants of Gen 6:2.¹⁴²³ Their designation refers to particular characteristics of people—¹⁴²⁴ men of great physical prowess and military might—¹⁴²⁵ rather than depicting their ethnicity. Some compare these heroic warriors to knights from the Middle Ages who wandered in search of great quests.¹⁴²⁶

After the parenthetical comment about these mighty men, Moses again described the sin of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–4). He noted that they “went into” the daughters of men. While the word *bo* has many meanings, here it serves as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.¹⁴²⁷ When human sexuality did not involve reciprocal enjoyment but reproduction or lust, Scripture employs the phrases “go into” (*bo*) (Gen 16:2; Deut 22:13; Ruth 4:5, 13)¹⁴²⁸ or “lie with” (*shakav*) (Gen 39:7–12; 2 Sam 11:4).¹⁴²⁹ This verb alone exonerates Bathsheba as an unwilling participant in David’s sin.¹⁴³⁰

Due to the actions of the sons of the gods, women “bore to them those mighty ones (*gibor*) from of old.” While the word *olam* usually depicts a long duration into the future, it can also denote remote antiquity.¹⁴³¹ Examples of this occur in Josh 24:2 and 1 Sam 27:8.¹⁴³² Although prior to the flood Moses named none of these individuals, we have several examples of these “mighty ones” later in history. Gilgamesh represents the epitome of these men.¹⁴³³ His epic describes him as “accomplished in strength, [who] like a wild ox, lords it over the folk.”¹⁴³⁴

In Gen 10:8–12, Moses depicted Nimrod as one “mighty on the earth.” Nimrod’s activities included great hunting exploits and founding eight municipalities. Several of those cities became the most prominent of antiquity. Instead of the Bible treating legend as history, it appears that actual events have been transformed into the mythologies of the Ancient Near East.¹⁴³⁵

Read Gen 6:4. Who were the Nephilim? How did Moses describe the offspring of the sons of the gods and the daughters of men?

Rebellious Angels

2) Jude 6–7: The author of this letter exhorted its recipients to defend the faith by removing the false teachers who infiltrated their congregation (Jude 3–4).¹⁴³⁶ He compared those in error with

¹⁴²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴²⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:4.

¹⁴²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116–7.

¹⁴²⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:4.

¹⁴²⁷H. D. Preuss, “בּוֹא” (*bo*) *TDOT* 2:21–49, 21.

¹⁴²⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בּוֹא” (*bo*), *BDB*, 98,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/98/mode/2up>.

¹⁴²⁹Holladay, “שָׁכַב” (*shakav*), *CHALOT*, 368.

¹⁴³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 220.

¹⁴³¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עוֹלָם” (*olam*), *BDB*, 761–3, 761,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/760/mode/2up>.

¹⁴³²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143.

¹⁴³³Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹⁴³⁴Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.4.36–9, 75,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n99/mode/2up.

¹⁴³⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴³⁶Robert L. Webb, “Jude” *DLNT*, 611–21, 611.

notorious sinners from the Old Testament (OT).¹⁴³⁷

This short epistle makes heavy use of apocryphal works popular in his day.¹⁴³⁸ Jude typically alluded to them, rather than citing them directly.¹⁴³⁹ However, this does not mean that he necessarily agreed with everything which appears in those books.¹⁴⁴⁰ In effect, he did the same thing preachers do today when they reference popular culture to make a specific point in their sermons.¹⁴⁴¹ The great theologian Jerome (347–420 AD) wrote, “Many things in sacred Scripture...are said in accordance with the opinion of the time in which the events took place, rather than in accordance with the actual truth of the matter.”¹⁴⁴²

Since the nineteenth century, archaeologists have unearthed over a million cuneiform tablets in the Ancient Near East which confirm that “the sons of the gods” in Gen 6:1–4 refers to powerful kings. Prior to then, no evidence affirmed this view.¹⁴⁴³ During Jude’s lifetime, people believed that “the sons of God” consisted of angels who engaged in sexual activity with human women. The interpretations of earlier Jewish authors reached their culmination in *1 Enoch*.¹⁴⁴⁴

Notably, John Calvin omitted any reference to Gen 6:1–4 or the “sons of God” in his commentary on Jude 6–7.¹⁴⁴⁵ However, in Calvin’s commentary on Genesis, he wrote, “That ancient figment, concerning the intercourse of angels with women, is abundantly refuted by its own absurdity; and it is surprising that learned men should formerly have been fascinated by ravings so gross and prodigious.”¹⁴⁴⁶

Jude began v. 6 by comparing false teachers to “angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their own dwelling places.” In their rebellion against the Lord, they left their positions in the heavenly spheres which God entrusted to them.¹⁴⁴⁷ As a result, those angels crossed proper boundaries.¹⁴⁴⁸

Jude appears to have based this teaching upon 1 Enoch 15:2–3, where the Lord commanded Enoch to confront the Watchers of heaven. He asked, “Wherefore have ye left the high, holy, and eternal heaven, and lain with women, and defiled yourselves with the daughters of men and taken to yourselves wives, and done like the children of earth, and begotten giants (as your) sons?”¹⁴⁴⁹ As a result, 1 Enoch provides the basis for the New Testament concept that evil spirits consist of angels who have fallen away from serving the Lord.¹⁴⁵⁰ However, Jude

¹⁴³⁷Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 239.

¹⁴³⁸Richard J. Bauckham, “Jude, Epistle of,” *ABD* 3:1098–1103, 1099.

¹⁴³⁹Webb, “Jude,” *DLNT*, 614.

¹⁴⁴⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 450.

¹⁴⁴¹Webb, “Jude,” *DLNT*, 614.

¹⁴⁴²Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* (Michael Graves; Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 28:10–1, 173.

¹⁴⁴³Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*, 205.

¹⁴⁴⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁴⁵John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (trans. John Owen; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software), 435–6, <https://archive.org/stream/JohnCalvinInstitutesOfTheChristianReligion/John%20Calvin%20-%20Peter%2C%20John%2C%20James%2C%20Jude#page/n281/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴⁶John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. John King; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 238.

<https://archive.org/stream/JohnCalvinInstitutesOfTheChristianReligion/John%20Calvin%20-%20Genesis%20Volume%201#page/n131/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁴⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 448.

¹⁴⁴⁹Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” 15:2–3, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe018.htm>. Note that the Aramaic term “watcher” appears in Dan 4:23.

¹⁴⁵⁰George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, Rev. Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 653.

emphasized the guilt of the false teachers in the church for a similar dereliction of duty.¹⁴⁵¹

Regarding fallen angels, Jude wrote, “for judgment of the great day, he has kept them in chains, eternally under darkness.” The term “the great day” refers to what others called “The day of the Lord.” God shall intervene at the end of human history to complete the salvation of his people and deliver retribution to those who rebelled against him (Isa 13:6–9; Zeph 1:14–18).

Nevertheless, their punishment has already begun. Rather than literal shackles, Jude depicted the misery and impotence of those who once exulted in God’s marvelous light but have been plunged into profound darkness (Jude 12–13).¹⁴⁵² Although the Lord has cast them into a state of torment, they remain free to carry out their evil deeds.¹⁴⁵³

In Greek thought, this “darkness” (*zophos*) referred to the underworld of Hades, where the spirits of the dead reside.¹⁴⁵⁴ The great playwright Aeschylus (ca. 525–456 BC), wrote these lines for the ghost of the Persian king Darius, “As for me, I depart to the darkness (*zophos*) beneath the earth. Farewell, Elders, and despite your troubles, rejoice while each day is yours; for wealth does not profit the dead at all.”¹⁴⁵⁵

Once again, the concept found in Jude occurs in 1 Enoch: “And again the Lord said to [the angel] Raphael, “Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert...and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire.”¹⁴⁵⁶

Although false teachers already suffer affliction by God, doom awaits them (Rev 20:10–15).¹⁴⁵⁷ Note Jude’s grim play on words: those who did not keep (*tēreō*) their proper place are now kept (*tēreō*) in chains. The punishment fits the crime (Cf. 1 Cor 3:17; Rev 16:4–7).¹⁴⁵⁸ Since no one can sin with impunity, all of us must resist false teaching (Jude 19–21).¹⁴⁵⁹

Jude then compared the judgment awaiting the infiltrators of the church to that of infamous sinners. He wrote, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and also the cities around them, these in the same way indulged in illicit sexual relations and went after other flesh. They are exhibited as an example, undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

People in Israel regarded Sodom and Gomorrah as the paradigm of those who incur divine judgment (Gen 19:23–25; Deut 29:22–25; Lam 4:6; Luke 17:28–30).¹⁴⁶⁰ Of the surrounding cities, God spared only Zoar (Gen 19:15–22).¹⁴⁶¹ The men of Sodom sought to rape Lot’s visitors (Gen 19:4–9). Similarly, Jude charged the false teachers with sexual immorality.¹⁴⁶²

How to interpret “other flesh” (*sarx heteros*) has generated some controversy. Some

¹⁴⁵¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 52.

¹⁴⁵²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 448–9.

¹⁴⁵³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd Ed., 416.

¹⁴⁵⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁵⁵Aeschylus, *Persians* (vol. 1 of *Aeschylus, with an English Translation, in Two Volumes*; trans. Herbert Weir Smyth; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), lines 839–40, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0012%3Acard%3D800>.

¹⁴⁵⁶R. H. Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 10:1–6, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe013.htm>.

¹⁴⁵⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 51.

¹⁴⁵⁸Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 53.

¹⁴⁵⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 449.

¹⁴⁶⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 53.

¹⁴⁶¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 451.

¹⁴⁶²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

scholars see the issue as men desiring sex with angels.¹⁴⁶³ However, most commentators view it as lusting for flesh other than that of women (Rom 1:27).¹⁴⁶⁴ After all, the men of Sodom had no idea that Lot’s guests were angels (Gen 19:1–5).¹⁴⁶⁵ Furthermore, angels do not have flesh,¹⁴⁶⁶ and it is highly unlikely that the false teachers of Jude’s era desired sex with angels.¹⁴⁶⁷

Jude’s contemporaries regarded the continued desolation of the area where Sodom had been as evidence of God’s sentiment concerning sexual sin.¹⁴⁶⁸ This zone south of the Dead Sea remained a place of sulfurous devastation.¹⁴⁶⁹ According to Philo (20 BC–40 AD), “Even to this day there are seen in Syria monuments of the unprecedented destruction that fell upon them, in the ruins, and ashes, and sulphur, and smoke, and dusky flame which still is sent up from the ground as of a fire smoldering beneath.”¹⁴⁷⁰

Josephus (37–100 AD) described Lake Asphaltites (the Dead Sea), which yielded much bitumen. Then he wrote, “The country of Sodom borders upon it. It was of old a most happy land, both for the fruits it bore and the riches of its cities, although it be now all burnt up. It is related how, for the impiety of its inhabitants, it was burnt by lightning; in consequence of which there are still the remainders of that Divine fire, and the traces [or shadows] of the five cities are still to be seen.”¹⁴⁷¹

Although we cannot ascertain that the false teachers of Jude’s era committed the same kinds of sin perpetrated by the men of Sodom, these sites constantly reminded people in Israel of the reality of the judgment which awaits those who rebel against God.¹⁴⁷²

a) Read Jude 6–7. Why would a New Testament author allude to sources which were not regarded as part of the Bible? What did people in the time of Jude believe about “the sons of God” (pp. 113–114)? Why did later theologians disagree (pp. 115–116)? How were the false teachers like the men of Sodom? What would happen to them?

Guilty of Misconduct

b) Jude 8: In this verse, Jude applied the examples from Jude 6–7 to the church’s situation.¹⁴⁷³ He wrote, “But in the same way, these [people] also by dreaming defile flesh, and reject

¹⁴⁶³Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54.

¹⁴⁶⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁴⁶⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 453.

¹⁴⁶⁶Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 60.

¹⁴⁶⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54.

¹⁴⁶⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

¹⁴⁶⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54–5.

¹⁴⁷⁰Philo, “On the Life of Moses, II,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: H. G. Bohn, 1854), 85, <https://archive.org/stream/workphilojudaeu03philuoft#page/84/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷¹Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 4.8.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8%3Awhiston%20section%3D4>.

¹⁴⁷²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 453–4.

¹⁴⁷³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

authority, and speak irreverently of glories.” Jude named the sins of the false teachers. By their sexual misconduct, mistreatment of angels, and defiance of God’s authority, they committed the same sins as some men in Sodom (Gen 19:1–9).¹⁴⁷⁴

It appears that the false teachers cited prophetic revelations to justify their behavior. Although the Lord can use dreams as a means of authentic disclosure (Gen 40:5–8, 20–22; Dan 2:27–29), more often the Old Testament (OT) denounces those who appealed to their dreams as false prophets (Deut 13:1–5; Jer 23:25–32; Zech 10:1–2).¹⁴⁷⁵ Claiming to have experienced a dream from the Lord cannot validate what someone teaches,¹⁴⁷⁶ particularly when that revelation contradicts Scripture (Col 2:18–19; 1 Thess 5:19–21).¹⁴⁷⁷

Evidently, these teachers appealed to their dreams for permission to indulge in sexual immorality. They asserted that God himself granted them sexual freedom, rather than recognizing that their behavior defiled them. This viewpoint enabled them to transcend the morality which applied to others.¹⁴⁷⁸ Even today, we see this on occasion: “God told me to divorce my wife and marry my girlfriend.”

In keeping with that attitude, the false teachers rejected authority. Jude did not employ the typical word for “authority” (*exousia*) here, which can refer to human governance, such as that of church officials.¹⁴⁷⁹ Instead, he used the term *kyriotēs*, which derives from the same root as “Lord” (*kyrios*). Hence it signifies that these debauched people despised the majestic authority of God.¹⁴⁸⁰ They denied the lordship of Christ by the way they lived (Jude 4).¹⁴⁸¹

By writing that the false teachers “speak irreverently of glories,” Jude employed jargon familiar to his readers. Since they participate in the majesty of God, “glories” serves as a euphemism for angels (Heb 9:5).¹⁴⁸² Indeed, the Greek word *doxa* means both “glory” and “a transcendent being deserving of honor.”¹⁴⁸³ The apocryphal Testament of Judah states, “For he saw in a vision concerning me that an angel (*doxa*) of might followed me everywhere, that I should not be overcome.”¹⁴⁸⁴

Jude did not mince words: these people blasphemed (*blasphēmeō*) angels. “Blasphemy” carries the nuance of “slander, revile, defame, speak irreverently/impiously/disrespectfully of or about.”¹⁴⁸⁵ A person can blaspheme the Spirit by attributing the work of God to the devil (Matt 12:22–32) and the Bible by acting as if it endorses sin (Tit 2:3–5).¹⁴⁸⁶ Only here and in 2 Pet 2:10 did New Testament (NT) authors apply this concept to angels instead of to the Lord or the Word of God (Rev 13:3–6).¹⁴⁸⁷ These false teachers failed to give angels the honor due to them.¹⁴⁸⁸

¹⁴⁷⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 454–5.

¹⁴⁷⁵Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 55.

¹⁴⁷⁶Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 455–6.

¹⁴⁷⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 56.

¹⁴⁷⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 456.

¹⁴⁷⁹Werner Foerster, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *TDNT* 2:560–75, 566.

¹⁴⁸⁰Werner Foerster, “κυριότης” (*kyriotēs*), *TDNT* 3:1096–7.

¹⁴⁸¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 456.

¹⁴⁸²Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 57.

¹⁴⁸³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “δόξα” (*doxa*), *BDAG*, 256–8, 258.

¹⁴⁸⁴Rutherford H. Platt Jr., trans., “The Testament of Judah,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha House, 1926), 1:25. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe277.htm>.

¹⁴⁸⁵Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “βλασφημέω” (*blasphēmeō*), *BDAG*, 178.

¹⁴⁸⁶Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 244.

¹⁴⁸⁷Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, “βλασφημέω” (*blasphēmeō*), *TDNT* 1:621–5, 621–2.

¹⁴⁸⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 244.

Due to the context of Jude 9, the author was referring specifically to demons.¹⁴⁸⁹ Thus, their sin consisted of belittling the supernatural forces of evil.¹⁴⁹⁰ Even though participation in evil deforms the majesty of demonic forces, some of that glory remains.¹⁴⁹¹ One can indeed slander Satan (2 Pet 2:9–11).¹⁴⁹²

Notably, throughout Jude 6–8, the author never claimed that angels engaged in sexual activity with human women.¹⁴⁹³ Consequently, even with this passage, most NT scholars reject that “the sons of God/the gods” in Gen 6:1–4 consist of fallen angels. They conclude that Jude did not endorse 1 Enoch as truth but cited popular tradition to make his point about the false teachers.¹⁴⁹⁴ As a result, the NT does not contradict the predominant view of OT scholars that “the sons of the gods” were human rulers.¹⁴⁹⁵

Read Jude 8. How were the false teachers like the men of Sodom? What would happen to those leaders? When is it dangerous to accept a person’s claims of inspired revelation as true? Why do most current NT scholars reject the idea that “the sons of God” were angels?

God Grieves

Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.

5) Gen 6:5–6: This passage asserts that the flood resulted from the wickedness perpetrated by the people living at that time,¹⁴⁹⁶ specifically sexual assault and further violence (Gen 6:1–4). Even during the Old Testament (OT) era, the Lord never acted arbitrarily. Divine judgment came in response to great evil (Gen 15:13–16; Deut 9:4–5).¹⁴⁹⁷

The contrast with Gen 1:31—where all was the very best it could be—could not be starker.¹⁴⁹⁸ Moses wrote, “And the Lord saw that great was the evil of humanity on the earth, and all of the purpose of the thoughts of their hearts was every day only evil.”¹⁴⁹⁹ Humanity reeked of corruption. Fully aware of the situation upon the earth,¹⁵⁰⁰ God detected the extent and the depth of human sin (Gen 19:13; Ps 53:2–3).¹⁵⁰¹ Where the phrase “the Lord saw” occurs

¹⁴⁸⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 457.

¹⁴⁹⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 57–8.

¹⁴⁹¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 458.

¹⁴⁹²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 245.

¹⁴⁹³Walton, *Genesis*, 297.

¹⁴⁹⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 249.

¹⁴⁹⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 297.

¹⁴⁹⁶Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed.*, 133.

¹⁴⁹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁴⁹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁴⁹⁹“Their hearts” is singular (“its heart”) in the Hebrew text since it views humanity as a collective entity. I have substituted plurals for easier reading.

¹⁵⁰⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

elsewhere, the author conveys the idea that God knew of the problem for some time and had at last determined to take decisive action (Cf. Gen 29:31; Exod 3:7–9).¹⁵⁰²

Not only did people act wickedly, vile images consumed their attention (Matt 15:18–19).¹⁵⁰³ The biblical concept of the heart (*lev*) included all of an inner person: mind, will, and emotion.¹⁵⁰⁴ By repeating “all/every” (*kol*) and “evil” (*raah*) Moses emphasized that these people were entirely wicked all of the time.¹⁵⁰⁵ This provides an excellent description of total depravity (Gen 8:21; Ps 14:1–4; Jer 17:9–10).¹⁵⁰⁶ What the text does not say is also important. Moses mentioned neither idolatry, nor a false conception of God, nor a human/spirit hybrid form of life.¹⁵⁰⁷ The Lord’s motivation stemmed from humanity’s lack of morality.¹⁵⁰⁸

Other Ancient Near Eastern flood texts lack this moral focus.¹⁵⁰⁹ In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the survivor of the flood tells the protagonist, “their heart led the great gods to produce the flood.”¹⁵¹⁰ Later in that tablet, the god Ea decreed, “Let not [the god] Enlil come to the offering, for he, unreasoning, brought on the deluge and my people consigned to destruction.”¹⁵¹¹

The version of the flood story in the Atrahasis Epic says: “Twelve hundred years had not yet passed [after the gods created humanity] when the land extended and the peoples multiplied. The land was bellowing like a bull, the god got disturbed with their uproar. Enlil heard their noise and addressed the great gods, ‘The noise of humankind has become too intense for me, with their uproar, I am deprived of sleep.’”¹⁵¹²

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the gods acted arbitrarily. The Atrahasis Epic noted that a human population boom disturbed the sleep of the gods.¹⁵¹³ According to those sagas, sin did not bring about the flood.

Yet, the biblical text does not portray the Lord acting on impulse in a fit of anger.¹⁵¹⁴ Instead, “The Lord was sorry that he had made humanity on the earth. He was vexed to his heart.” The verb for “was sorry” (*naham*) derives from the same word as Lamech’s desire for Noah to bring relief (*naham*) from his painful toil (*itsabon*) (Gen 5:29). This is related to the term used to describe the Lord’s vexation (*itsab*). Thus, Lamech’s hope corresponds to the creator’s anguish.¹⁵¹⁵

This brings us to another quandary. How can our unchanging God regret what he has done (Heb 13:8)? In the OT, there are nine occasions when the form of the verb *naham* which appears here refers to the Lord being sorry for what he has done or choosing to alter his earlier decision

¹⁵⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143–4.

¹⁵⁰³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁵⁰⁴Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לֵב” (*lev*), *BDB*, 524, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/524/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁵Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 395, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/394/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵⁰⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵⁰⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁵⁰⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵¹⁰Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, tablet xi, lines 11, 93, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

¹⁵¹¹Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, tablet xi, lines 166–9, 95, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁵¹²W.G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, trans., “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” in *Readings of the Ancient Near East (RANE)* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 26.

¹⁵¹³Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵¹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

(e.g. 1 Sam 15:10–11, 29; Ps 106:40–45; Exod 32:7–14; Jon 3:4–10).¹⁵¹⁶

Throughout the OT, this complex word carries a wide range of meaning. One popular Bible, the NIV, translates *naham* in ten different ways. In fact, some of these mean the opposite of the others.¹⁵¹⁷ The most authoritative Hebrew dictionary lists these definitions for this specific form of the verb: “become remorseful, repent of something, regret, be sorry, feel sorrow or sympathy, find comfort, be comforted.”¹⁵¹⁸

By viewing these definitions as an accountant would, John Walton finds that each of them fit together rather than oppose each other. In essence, the debits and credits of personal, national, and cosmic accounts must remain in balance. Good things resulting from the difficult situation counterbalance personal losses (Gen 24:67). When the Lord determines that judgment is due, repentance by the offenders brings the ledger back into balance, leading God to extend grace by revoking the intended punishment (Jer 26:12–13; Joel 2:11–19). However, those who fail to repent suffer the consequences (Jer 18:7–11).¹⁵¹⁹

The unchanging God invariably feels the pain of human sin. For those who refuse to repent, he will always alter his plans to deliver good things to them.¹⁵²⁰ In the same way, he will choose not bring harm to evil people who have a change of heart. When the Lord repents, he begins to act differently (Ezek 33:11–20).¹⁵²¹ A paradox exists: the unchangeable God is quite willing to change his mind.¹⁵²² Nevertheless, the Lord is never impulsive or fickle (Num 23:19). It appears that 100 years passed between when he resolved to destroy humanity and when the flood came (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:11–12). This gave people time to repent. Divine repentance follows a human change of heart, for better or for worse.¹⁵²³

Due to the evil perpetrated by the sons of the gods, the Lord “was vexed to his heart.” This verb is related to the noun which means “pain.” Therefore, *atsab* indicates severe emotional or mental distress (Gen 45:5; 1 Sam 20:3).¹⁵²⁴ Just as Adam and Eve felt pain due to their sin (Gen 3:16–17), so does the Lord over the sin of humanity. God is neither aloof nor beyond the ability to grieve.¹⁵²⁵

In Hebrew thought, the heart was the center of a person’s thoughts, feelings, morals, and will.¹⁵²⁶ God grieved over the brutality which he witnessed until he felt bitterly indignant, reacting with a combination of anguish and rage. This same word describes God’s emotions in Ps 78:40–41 and Isa 63:10. Dinah’s brothers felt this way after Shechem raped her (Gen 34:1–7).¹⁵²⁷

Due to sexual assaults and the resulting violence, human sin reached the point where God would inevitably intervene.¹⁵²⁸ The deep love of the Lord spurred him to take drastic action.¹⁵²⁹ It was time for the accounts to be put back into balance (Dan 5:27). Justice would be served.¹⁵³⁰

¹⁵¹⁶H Simian-Yofre and H. J. Fabry, “נָחַם” (*naham*), *TDOT* 9:340–55, 343.

¹⁵¹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 309.

¹⁵¹⁸Simian-Yofre and Fabry, “נָחַם” (*naham*), *TDOT* 9:342.

¹⁵¹⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 309–10.

¹⁵²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵²¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁵²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 275.

¹⁵²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁵²⁴C. L. Meyers, “אַצַּב” (*atsab*), *TDOT* 11:278–80, 279.

¹⁵²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 274.

¹⁵²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144–5.

¹⁵²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

¹⁵³⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 310–1.

a) **Read Gen 6:5–6.** What characterized the people during this time? How did the Lord feel about their thoughts and actions? What comfort does this give to those who have experienced violence? How can God be unchanging and yet change his mind?

Wiping Out Everyone

b) **Gen 6:7:** Due to the brutal oppression of women by mighty men (Gen 6:1–4), God determined that humanity’s idolatry of power and violence could not continue (Gen 6:5–6).¹⁵³¹ Moses wrote, “The Lord said, ‘I shall wipe away (*makhah*) humanity, which I have created, from all of the face of the earth.’” The verb *makhah* connotes washing away a spot or stain.¹⁵³²

Since Moses’s original readers had lived in Egypt, they likely recognized this concept. When a scribe made an error on a sheet of papyrus, he took a wet rag tied to his waist and removed the wet ink.¹⁵³³ People employed the word to describe erasing people’s names from official records and even to depict cleaning dishes (Exod 17:14; Exod 32:30–36; 2 Ki 21:10–13).¹⁵³⁴ God can wipe away a person’s sins (Ps 51:1–2, 9; Isa 43:25). However, in this case, the Lord intended to blot out sinners.¹⁵³⁵ The term which God used foreshadowed how he would wipe them away. He intended to annihilate humanity with water (Gen 7:4, 23).¹⁵³⁶

The Lord foretold a wide scope of destruction: “from humanity to animals to creeping things, and to flying creatures of the sky, because I am sorry that I have made them.” Virtually all humans and animals would cease to exist.¹⁵³⁷ God would reverse his creative activity (Gen 1:20, 24–30).¹⁵³⁸ Just as the ground suffered the consequences of human sin (Gen 3:17–18; Gen 5:29), so would the creatures which the Lord had made.¹⁵³⁹ It remains unclear whether the animals contributed to the depravity of the world or were innocent victims.¹⁵⁴⁰

Read Gen 6:7. What made God’s proclamation that he would wipe out humanity an apt metaphor? Who would he include in that judgment?

¹⁵³¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 189.

¹⁵³²L. Alonso-Schökel, “מַחַח” (*makhah*), *TDOT* 8:229–31, 229.

¹⁵³³E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 53–4.

¹⁵³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 275.

¹⁵³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

Noah Found Favor

c) Gen 6:8: By Noah’s era, a great number of Seth’s descendants had deserted his godly way of living, until the people of God neared extinction (Gen 5; Gen 6:1–7).¹⁵⁴¹ However, at the end of God’s catastrophic announcement came a glimmer of hope:¹⁵⁴² “But Noah had found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” The Hebrew construction of this verse indicates that Noah received grace from God long before Moses mentioned it at this point of the narrative.¹⁵⁴³ As Lamech had hoped, his son Noah would provide relief for the plight of humanity (Gen 5:28–29).¹⁵⁴⁴

The phrase “to find favor in someone’s eyes” occurs forty-three times in the Old Testament (OT).¹⁵⁴⁵ This formal expression refers either to a person making a request of a superior or to an authority assisting someone of lower status (Gen 33:8–10; Gen 39:2–4).¹⁵⁴⁶ In either case, the relationship occurs between two parties of unequal rank.¹⁵⁴⁷ Note the significant difference between Noah “finding” (*matsa*) favor with God and “winning” it.¹⁵⁴⁸

An alternate translation for “favor” is “grace” (*khen*),¹⁵⁴⁹ an undeserved gift which someone gives freely and unilaterally (Exod 33:12–19; Num 11:10–15; Judg 6:11–18).¹⁵⁵⁰ Noah received God’s grace; he did not strive to attain it.¹⁵⁵¹ Despite his righteousness, his character did not tip the scales in his favor (Gen 6:9).¹⁵⁵² If Moses wrote Gen 6:8 and Gen 6:9 in reverse order, the text would say that Noah’s righteousness earned the Lord’s favor.¹⁵⁵³ However, even Noah’s uprightness was a gift from God (Ps 80:14–19; Phil 2:12–13; 1 Cor 15:10; Heb 13:20–21).¹⁵⁵⁴

Moses is one of the very few people whom the OT asserts found favor in God’s eyes (Exod 33:12–17). Therefore, this statement puts Noah on the same level as Moses. In the context of Gen 6, it also suggests that Noah would survive the great deluge, enabling him to begin a new era in human history.¹⁵⁵⁵ In a world terrorized by evil people, Noah stands as a model of righteousness. Although he could not stop the progression of human depravity, he stood firm.¹⁵⁵⁶ We too must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit within our culture, whatever the cost (Gal 5:16–26).¹⁵⁵⁷

Read Gen 6:8. How did Noah offer a glimmer of hope in his generation? On what basis did he find God’s grace? How does this passage encourage and challenge you today?

¹⁵⁴¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 210.

¹⁵⁴²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵⁴³Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 455,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/454/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁴⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵⁴⁵S. Wagner, “מָצָא” (*matsa*) *TDOT* 8:465–83, 469.

¹⁵⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵⁴⁷Wagner, “מָצָא” (*matsa*) *TDOT* 8: 469.

¹⁵⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁴⁹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “כֶּן” (*khen*), *BDB*, 336,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/336/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁵⁰John S. Kselman, “Grace: Old Testament,” *ABD* 2:1084–6, 1085.

¹⁵⁵¹Wagner, “מָצָא” (*matsa*), *TDOT*, 470.

¹⁵⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁵⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145, 147.

¹⁵⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* 120.

¹⁵⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

Difficult Times in the Last Days

6) 2 Tim 3:1–4: Recognizing that his life would soon end in martyrdom, Paul wrote 2 Timothy with a sense of urgency (2 Tim 4:6–9).¹⁵⁵⁸ This letter represents the apostle’s last will and testament, as he passed the responsibility for standing firm for the gospel to his spiritual heir (2 Tim 3:10–17).¹⁵⁵⁹ As Paul’s top lieutenant, Timothy worked in Ephesus to counteract the effects of false teachers who had infiltrated the church since Paul’s visit with the elders of that church (Acts 20:17, 28–30; 2 Tim 2:14–26).¹⁵⁶⁰

The apostle began by identifying them,¹⁵⁶¹ then he created a vice list. Greco-Roman authors commonly applied this literary technique.¹⁵⁶² Although it may resemble a standard catalog of offenses, Paul tailored it to fit the situation in Ephesus (2 Tim 3:6–9).¹⁵⁶³ A vice list consisted of a string of numerous evils to avoid. Since authors crafted them for an oral culture, they employed repetition of sounds and other rhythmic literary devices to produce a memorable impact.¹⁵⁶⁴ Eleven of the evils begin with the Greek letter “a,” which like the English prefix “un,” negates the quality associated with it.¹⁵⁶⁵ The inventory concludes with a stern warning: “these people avoid.”

People in the early church believed that wickedness would intensify in the last days. In addition, many individuals within their congregations would fall away (Matt 24:9–14; 2 Thess 2:3–4; Jude 17–19).¹⁵⁶⁶ Due to sin within the church, Paul believed that he and Timothy lived in the last days.¹⁵⁶⁷ Consequently, the apostle began this section of his letter by writing, “But know this: that in the last days, difficult times shall come.” Due to the conflict and moral decay which Timothy encountered in Ephesus,¹⁵⁶⁸ Paul asserted, “the future is now” (1 Tim 4:1–6).¹⁵⁶⁹ Old Testament writers identified the final period of the world as the “last days.”¹⁵⁷⁰ At that time, the messiah would come to set all things right, restoring the godly and judging sinners (Mic 4:1–5; Zeph 1:14–18).¹⁵⁷¹

New Testament (NT) authors described the last days in various ways. Peter pinpointed their onset with the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (1 Pet 1:20–21; Acts 2:16–21). The author of Hebrews cited the ministry of Jesus as beginning this era (Heb 1:1–2). John specified that the last days had arrived because antichrists had appeared (1 John 2:18–22). Paul simply noted that the last days are here (1 Cor 10:11).¹⁵⁷² Thus, the last days consist of the period of time between Christ’s birth and his return to earth.¹⁵⁷³

When he comes, Jesus shall execute judgment while fully completing the salvation of

¹⁵⁵⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 2 Tim.

¹⁵⁵⁹Jerome D. Quinn, “Timothy and Titus, Epistles to,” *ABD* 6:560–71, 562.

¹⁵⁶⁰Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 2 Tim.

¹⁵⁶¹Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 552.

¹⁵⁶²Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 269.

¹⁵⁶³William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2000), 542.

¹⁵⁶⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 552–3.

¹⁵⁶⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543.

¹⁵⁶⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

¹⁵⁶⁷Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 552.

¹⁵⁶⁸Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543.

¹⁵⁶⁹Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 268.

¹⁵⁷⁰Walter Elwell et al. (eds.), *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (BEB)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1310.

¹⁵⁷¹Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 269.

¹⁵⁷²Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 553.

¹⁵⁷³Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 544.

believers (Matt 25:31–46; Rom 2:5–10; 1 Cor 4:5).¹⁵⁷⁴ Therefore, in this present age, God calls us to use every available opportunity to share Christ with those who do not belong to him (Gal 1:3–5; Eph 5:6–16).¹⁵⁷⁵

By stating, “In the last days, difficult times shall come,” Paul reminded Timothy that this period of distress would remain for a long duration.¹⁵⁷⁶ The word translated as “difficult” (*kalepos*) appears elsewhere in the NT only in Matt 8:28. It connotes being “hard to bear,” “cruel,” or “dangerous.”¹⁵⁷⁷

Although strong commonalities exist with the list of vices in Rom 1:28–32, note that Paul attributed the evils mentioned in these verses to those who claimed to follow Christ.¹⁵⁷⁸ As a result, this passage provides a convenient catalog of sins which believers must avoid today.¹⁵⁷⁹ A word study of each character trait included in this list reveals that authors during or close to Paul’s era charged their contemporaries with committing every sin on this list.¹⁵⁸⁰

Two types of misguided love—for self and for pleasure—appropriately bookend the series of vices,¹⁵⁸¹ for a self-centered lack of morality emerges as a prominent theme. When a person places love for self and greed at the forefront of life, all the other vices follow.¹⁵⁸² Paul ended his catalog of sins with this powerful conclusion: “loving pleasure rather than loving God.”¹⁵⁸³ This brings us full circle back to self-love, the first vice in the list.¹⁵⁸⁴ Although the word “loving pleasure” (*philēdonos*) occurs only here in the NT,¹⁵⁸⁵ Scripture condemns the concept (Luke 8:14; Tit 3:3; Jas 4:1–3).¹⁵⁸⁶ People in the Greco-Roman milieu also criticized those intent upon the pursuit of pleasure.¹⁵⁸⁷ In fact, they often charged their philosophical opponents with valuing self-gratification above virtue or wisdom.¹⁵⁸⁸

Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40–112 AD) sarcastically wrote of the type of behavior a king should avoid at all costs:

“Let his steps also be guided by Delusion, a very beautiful and enticing maid, decked out in harlot’s finery, smiling and promising a wealth of good things and making him believe that she is leading him to the very embrace of happiness, till unexpectedly she drops him into the pit, into a morass of foul mud, and then leaves him to flounder about in his garlands and saffron robe. In servitude to such a tyrant and suffering such tribulation those souls wander through life... enslaved to pleasure, pleasure-loving (*philēdonos*), and carnally-minded, go on living a disgraceful and reprehensible life, not from choice, but because they have drifted into it.”¹⁵⁸⁹

¹⁵⁷⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 553.

¹⁵⁷⁵Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 269.

¹⁵⁷⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

¹⁵⁷⁷Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “χαλεπός” (*kalepos*), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Abridged (NIDNTA)* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 600.

¹⁵⁷⁸Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 555.

¹⁵⁷⁹Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 276.

¹⁵⁸⁰I originally examined each character trait listed but the result is too long and boring to publish.

¹⁵⁸¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

¹⁵⁸²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543–5.

¹⁵⁸³Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 546.

¹⁵⁸⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

¹⁵⁸⁵Result of Logos 7 word study of φιλήδονος (*philēdonos*).

¹⁵⁸⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

¹⁵⁸⁷Gustav Stählin, “φιλήδονος” (*philēdonos*), *TDNT* 2:918.

¹⁵⁸⁸Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

¹⁵⁸⁹Dio Chrysostom, “The Fourth Discourse on Kingship,” in *Orations*, 5 vols. (LCL; trans. H. Lamar Crosby; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 1:221–3, <https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.57799/2015.57799.Dio-Chrysostom-Vol-1#page/n225/mode/2up>.

“Lovers of God” (*philotheos*) alludes to Deut 6:4–9. Jesus denoted loving God as the most important commandment (Mark 12:28–34). Indeed, when people replace love for the Lord with the love of self, money, and pleasure, the other vices naturally follow.¹⁵⁹⁰

Read 2 Tim 3:1–4. How would you briefly characterize the type of people Paul described in these verses? What warning does this passage give to you? How do we know that Paul believed that he lived in the last days? In what ways are our last days like the time before the flood?

Having a Form of Godliness

b) 2 Tim 3:5: Paul concluded his vice list in 2 Tim 3:1–5 by describing the false teachers as “having a form of godliness but its power having denied.” These leaders maintained a mask as a protective shell.¹⁵⁹¹ This gave them an external appearance of piety without the inner renewal of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹²

In Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, “godliness” (*eusebeia*) refers to a specific way of living which derives from belief in the gospel (Cf. 1 Tim 3:16). Reverent conduct results from that confession.¹⁵⁹³ Thus, Paul utilized “godliness” as a technical term for true faith (1 Tim 2:1–6; Tit 1:1).¹⁵⁹⁴

Amazingly—despite their vices—these people exhibited a pretense of piety.¹⁵⁹⁵ They likely enjoyed religious discussions and practices, assuming their righteousness because they engaged in asceticism and sacred rituals (1 Tim 4:1–7).¹⁵⁹⁶ However, on close inspection, their behavior unmasked them (Tit 1:16; 2 Pet 2:1–3, 18–19).¹⁵⁹⁷ To achieve their evil ends, such people tend to make their vices appear as virtues (2 Cor 11:3–4, 13–15).¹⁵⁹⁸

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) described certain people who claimed to believe the entire universe belongs to God. He wrote, “These are the doctrines, not of men who are halting between two opinions, but of those who are occupied in a firm and sure faith; since, even now, there are some persons among those who make a show and pretense of piety.”¹⁵⁹⁹

As a result of our personal union with Christ, we receive the power of God (2 Tim 1:7–8).¹⁶⁰⁰ Our proclamation of the gospel and lives transformed by the Holy Spirit to conduct ourselves in obedience to God’s commands mark true believers. A close connection exists between right thinking and right living.¹⁶⁰¹ When people’s behavior fails to match their words,

¹⁵⁹⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹¹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹²J. Behm, “μόρφωσις” (*morphōsis*), *TDNT* 4:754–5.

¹⁵⁹³Werner Foerster, “εὐσέβεια” (*eusebeia*), *TDNT* 7:175–85, 182–3.

¹⁵⁹⁴Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹⁵Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 271.

¹⁵⁹⁶Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹⁷Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559–60.

¹⁵⁹⁸Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 98.

¹⁵⁹⁹Philo, “On Planting,” in *The Works of Philo, Vol. 1* (LCL; trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 430, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft#page/430/mode/2up>.

¹⁶⁰⁰Walter Grundmann, “δύναμις” (*dunamis*), *TDNT* 2:284–317, 310.

¹⁶⁰¹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

how they act reveals what they truly believe.

By rejecting the power of godliness in the past, the false teachers remained estranged from the Lord (2 Tim 2:12).¹⁶⁰² Their sinful behavior revealed the truth concerning the nature of their faith (Matt 7:15–23).¹⁶⁰³ Lacking the presence of the Holy Spirit, they possessed counterfeit spirituality (1 Cor 4:20).¹⁶⁰⁴ After detailing the attitudes and behaviors of false teachers in his vice list, Paul affirmed that he and Timothy lived in the end times.¹⁶⁰⁵

Then he wrote, “Such [people] as these avoid (*apotrepō*).”¹⁶⁰⁶ Once again, Paul used a term which appears only here in the New Testament.¹⁶⁰⁷ Fortunately, Greco-Roman sources shed light on its meaning. When describing the destruction of a city, Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote, “In hopes of Titus’ giving them his right hand for their security, and out of a consciousness that they had not given any consent to the war, they avoided (*apotrepō*) fighting.”¹⁶⁰⁸ An apocryphal book captures another nuance of the term, asking, “How is it that when we are attracted by foods that we aren’t allowed to eat, we can walk away from (*apotrepō*) the pleasure that we would get from them?” (4 Macc 1:33, CEB).

Consequently, in this passage Paul repeated his commands to Timothy to deliberately turn away from associating with false teachers (1 Tim 6:20–21; 2 Tim 2:16–18).¹⁶⁰⁹ This charge confirms that the unbelievers he described associated themselves with the church of Ephesus.¹⁶¹⁰

Earlier in his ministry, Paul commanded that the church in Corinth hand such people into Satan’s sphere of influence (1 Cor 5:9–13). They likely accomplished this by banning them from worship and especially from participating in the Lord’s Supper.¹⁶¹¹ As a result, the apostle advocated their removal from the congregation (1 Cor 5:1–6; 1 Tim 1:18–20).¹⁶¹²

Sadly, that such imposters infiltrate our churches no longer seems surprising.¹⁶¹³ Psychopathic people often present themselves as intelligent, attractive, and trustworthy. Yet they possess no moral core. While swearing to remain forever true, they produce chaos in the lives of others with no sense of guilt.¹⁶¹⁴ Christians tend to be easy prey, for we often have a false sense of security that those within our congregations are honorable and reliable. Thus, we must take proper precautions to protect the vulnerable among us, remaining on guard (Matt 18:1–6).¹⁶¹⁵

Read 2 Tim 3:1–5. How would you describe the type of people Paul depicted? What makes them so dangerous? How can you protect yourself and your church from them?

¹⁶⁰²Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 560. In Greek grammar, the perfect tense indicates that an action has occurred in the past with effects which continue to the present time.

¹⁶⁰³Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁶⁰⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 560–1.

¹⁶⁰⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 548.

¹⁶⁰⁶The word “such” (*toutous*) occurs in the masculine plural form, which can apply to only men or to a group of men and women.

¹⁶⁰⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀποτρέπω” (*apotrepō*), *BDAG*, 124.

¹⁶⁰⁸Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 3.10.5,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D3%3Awhiston+chapter%3D10%3Awhiston+section%3D5>.

¹⁶⁰⁹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 548.

¹⁶¹⁰Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 271.

¹⁶¹¹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 229.

¹⁶¹²Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 561.

¹⁶¹³Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 274.

¹⁶¹⁴Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 97.

¹⁶¹⁵Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 276.

Chapter 6: The Promise of a Covenant (Genesis 6:9–22) *This has a trigger warning*

Adam chose to pursue wisdom on his own without depending upon the Lord (Gen 3:1–7).¹⁶¹⁶ As a result, human mastery over creation was subjected to frustration,¹⁶¹⁷ replaced by alienation from our environment (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 3:17–19; Rom 8:19–22).¹⁶¹⁸ Cursed land becomes dry and unproductive.¹⁶¹⁹ Thus, the ground yielded produce only through hard labor,¹⁶²⁰ resulting in anguishing brokenness for humanity.¹⁶²¹ Lamech named his son Noah, which rhymes with the Hebrew word which means “comfort” or “relief” (*naham*).¹⁶²² He said, “This one shall relieve us from our work and from the painful toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has put under a curse” (Gen 5:28–29).

In Gen 3, Moses recounted the fall of humanity; in Gen 4, he depicted the fall of the family; and in Gen 6, he demonstrated the fall of society through institutionalized oppression.¹⁶²³ Throughout the Ancient Near East, people believed that their king enjoyed a father-son relationship with a god because that god had generated him.¹⁶²⁴

Moses reported, “And the sons of the gods saw the daughters of men, that they [were] beautiful. And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose” (Gen 6:1–2). In the “right of the first night,” a king or other official could demand that he spend a woman’s bridal night with her before she went to her husband.¹⁶²⁵ Violence could easily erupt from this tyrannical practice.¹⁶²⁶ Due to the behavior of these kings, the Lord limited human life-spans to 120 years (Gen 6:3).¹⁶²⁷ This gave individuals less time to accrue power and to foist their corrupt practices upon others.¹⁶²⁸ God would not permit tyrants to oppress and terrorize others forever.¹⁶²⁹

Moses wrote, “The Nephilim were in the land in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of the gods went into the daughters of men. And they bore to them those mighty ones from of old, men of renown” (Gen 6:4). “Nephilim” describes particular traits of people, rather than referring to their ethnicity.¹⁶³⁰ They were men of great physical prowess and military might.¹⁶³¹ Due to the actions of the sons of the gods, women “bore to them those mighty ones from of old.”

As a result of sexual assaults and the resulting violence, human sin reached the point where God intervened.¹⁶³² The deep love of the Lord spurred him to take drastic action.¹⁶³³ He

¹⁶¹⁶John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 143–4.

¹⁶¹⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹⁶¹⁸Dietrich 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), 133–4.

¹⁶¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹⁶²⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

¹⁶²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202–3.

¹⁶²²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 636–7, 637.

¹⁶²³Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

¹⁶²⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹⁶²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

¹⁶²⁶Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 185.

¹⁶²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁶²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

¹⁶²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁶³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:4.

¹⁶³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116–7.

¹⁶³²Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁶³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

would bring justice (Gen 6:5–7).¹⁶³⁴ Many of Seth’s descendants in Gen 5 deserted his godly way of living until the people of God were nearly extinct.¹⁶³⁵

Moses noted, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). As Lamech had hoped, his son represented relief for the plight of humanity, beginning a new era in history. In a world terrorized by evil people, Noah stands as a model of righteousness. Although he could not stop the progression of human depravity, he stood firm.¹⁶³⁶ We too must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit within our culture, whatever the cost.¹⁶³⁷

Righteous and Blameless

1) Gen 6:9–10: These verses portray Noah as both the first man in a new genealogy and as someone unique in his generation.¹⁶³⁸ By writing, “This is the book of the generations of Noah,” Moses communicated that he was beginning a new section of Genesis (Cf. Gen 2:4; Gen 5:1; Gen 10:1).¹⁶³⁹ After racing through millennia between the creation of Adam and these verses, Moses abruptly slowed the narrative to nearly a standstill. He devoted almost three chapters to Noah’s six hundredth year.¹⁶⁴⁰

The conclusion of the typical formula to depict a person’s life, such as in Gen 5:6–8, shall not appear until Gen 9:29.¹⁶⁴¹ Overall, the flood narrative occupies as much text as the period of time from Adam to Noah and during the era from Noah to Abraham.¹⁶⁴² The intervening material consists of a masterful account of repeating patterns.¹⁶⁴³ For example, the entire flood story forms a chiasm, a mirror image highlighting that “God remembered Noah”.¹⁶⁴⁴

- A Transitional introduction (6:9a)
- B Noah and his world just prior to the flood (6:9b–12)
- C Provision for the flood with a divine monologue establishing God’s covenant to sustain Noah, preceded by observations on Noah and human behavior (6:13–22)
- D Embarkation (7:1–5)
 - E Beginning of the flood with Noah and animals as main actors (7:6–16)
 - F The rising flood: (7:17–24)
 - X God remembered Noah (8:1a)**
 - F´ The receding flood (8:1b–5)
 - E´ Ending of the flood with Noah and birds as main actors (8:6–14)
 - D´ Disembarkation (8:15–19)
- C´ Provision for the post-flood world with a divine monologue to sustain the earth, with observations on human behavior (8:20–22)
- B´ Noah and world conditions following the flood (9:1–17)
- Á Transitional introduction (9:18–19)¹⁶⁴⁵

¹⁶³⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 310–1.

¹⁶³⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 210.

¹⁶³⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* 119–20.

¹⁶³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

¹⁶³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 277.

¹⁶³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 155.

¹⁶⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

¹⁶⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

¹⁶⁴²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 212.

¹⁶⁴³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 125. We will examine several of these when we reach those sections of the text.

¹⁶⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

¹⁶⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 125.

This structure reveals that the Lord’s intervention saved Noah, not a boat.¹⁶⁴⁶ Furthermore, the main purpose of the flood narrative concerns why God preserved Noah, not why he sent the deluge.¹⁶⁴⁷

Moses wrote, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.” In Hebrew, this section begins and ends with Noah’s name, putting him in the spotlight.¹⁶⁴⁸ The contrast with his contemporaries anticipates the coming judgment.¹⁶⁴⁹

Surprisingly, the words translated as “righteous” (*tsadiq*) and “blameless” (*tamim*) do not appear in the Bible prior to this.¹⁶⁵⁰ Yet “righteous” frequently occurs in the Old Testament (OT), occurring 206 times.¹⁶⁵¹ Typically, a righteous person keeps the moral law and avoids sin, living according to God’s standards (Ezek 18:5–9).¹⁶⁵² Such people intentionally live for the benefit of creation, their neighbors, and to please the Lord. They are willing to place themselves at a disadvantage to aid others (Prov 12:10; Lev 19:9–18).¹⁶⁵³ Indeed, the Lord used the righteousness of Noah to save the world.¹⁶⁵⁴

Not only was Noah righteous, “he was blameless (*tamim*) in his generation.” Usually, this trait describes sacrificial animals free from any defect (Exod 12:5; Lev 3:1).¹⁶⁵⁵ By coming after the pronouncement of Noah’s uprightness, this phrase carries the similar meaning of “sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity” (Job 12:4; Prov 11:5; Prov 13:6).¹⁶⁵⁶ Thus, the term connotes Noah’s wholehearted commitment to his relationship with God.¹⁶⁵⁷ Only those who abstain from sin and live in a manner pleasing to the Lord can dwell in his presence (Ps 15; Ps 119:1–3; Acts 3:17–21; Rev 6:15–17).¹⁶⁵⁸

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Noah never committed sin.¹⁶⁵⁹ After all, even David could make this claim after committing adultery and murder (Ps 51; 2 Sam 11:2–4, 14–15; Ps 101:1–4).¹⁶⁶⁰ Instead, Noah was blameless in comparison to the people living around him (Gen 7:1; Ps 14:1–3; Rom 3:9–12).¹⁶⁶¹ God expected blamelessness from every Israelite (Deut 18:13), although only a few achieved this goal (Job 2:3).¹⁶⁶² Among all the people in the Old Testament, only Job comes close to Noah’s stature (Job 1:1).¹⁶⁶³

Due to his behavior, those living close to Noah had no excuse to criticize his ways. As a “seed of the woman” living among the “seed of the serpent,” Noah provides a model for believers living in a hostile world (Gen 3:15).¹⁶⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 157.

¹⁶⁴⁷Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 124.

¹⁶⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 277.

¹⁶⁴⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 169.

¹⁶⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁶⁵¹Result of Logos 7 word study on צַדִּיק (*tsadiq*).

¹⁶⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 169–70.

¹⁶⁵³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁶⁵⁴B. Johnson, “צַדִּיק” (*tsadiq*), *TDOT* 12: 239–64, 258.

¹⁶⁵⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 277.

¹⁶⁵⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “צַדִּיק” (*tsadiq*), *BDB*, 843, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/842/mode/2up>.

¹⁶⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁶⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁶⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 277.

¹⁶⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁶⁶¹Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

¹⁶⁶²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁶⁶³Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

¹⁶⁶⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

The quality of Abraham’s righteousness provides further clarity to Noah’s situation (Gen 15:6). God crediting him as righteous points to a pattern in which the Lord bestows his favor and then chooses to see a person as upright in character and conduct as result of that person’s trust in him (Cf. Gen 6:8–9 with Gen 12:1–3). Such faith results in a change of heart which subsequently leads to righteous action.¹⁶⁶⁵

Both Noah and Abraham serve as exemplars of a trusting relationship with the Lord which resulted in salvation despite their occasional failures (Gen 9:20–21 and Gen 16:1–4). Just as Israel did not particularly deserve exaltation to the position of God’s chosen people (Deut 7:6–8), so the Lord chose Noah from among all the people on earth.¹⁶⁶⁶

As a righteous and blameless man, Noah would not suffer the destruction about to come upon the rest of the people.¹⁶⁶⁷ Yet, God did not save him for his sake alone, but for the preservation of humanity and even animals in a new era.¹⁶⁶⁸

Moses continued the description of this great man, writing, “With God Noah walked.” Apart from Enoch (Gen 5:22–24), Scripture depicts no one else this way.¹⁶⁶⁹ As with Enoch, the Hebrew form of the verb indicates that Noah and the Lord walked in fellowship with each other.¹⁶⁷⁰ While God saved Enoch from mortality, he prevented Noah from drowning.¹⁶⁷¹ Intimate communion with the Lord brings deliverance from death.¹⁶⁷²

Thus, Genesis attests that walking with God in a relationship based upon trusting him results in a state of salvation and a concomitant change of heart to reflect the character of God (Hab 2:4). Our obedience to the Lord flows from the righteousness which God grants to us as people of faith. While upright character and conduct proceed from justification, those whom the Lord deems righteous do not perfectly practice them. Nevertheless, the pattern of behavior which the virtuous exhibit stands in stark contrast to that of the wicked whom God will destroy. In a world terrorized by evil people, we must remain committed to Christ even at great risk.¹⁶⁷³

As in Gen 5, at the end of ten named generations of only one ancestor each, three sons stand at a turning point of history. This section of the genealogical record concludes with, “And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” By repeating Gen 5:32, Moses named the male passengers on the ark.¹⁶⁷⁴

Commentators disagree concerning the spiritual condition of Noah’s sons. Moses recorded no overt statement about their righteousness.¹⁶⁷⁵ Some conclude their father resembled that of their father, for Moses mentioned them before he detailed the corruption of the human population in Gen 6:11–12 (Cf. Ezek 14: 19–20).¹⁶⁷⁶ Others note they may have come under God’s protection as a reward for Noah’s righteousness (Gen 19:12–15; Josh 2:1–6, 12–14).¹⁶⁷⁷

¹⁶⁶⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 330

¹⁶⁶⁶Warren Malcolm Clark, “The Righteousness of Noah,” *VT* 21, no. 3 (7 January 1971): 261–80, 277.

¹⁶⁶⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

¹⁶⁶⁸Clark, “The Righteousness of Noah,” 277.

¹⁶⁶⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁶⁷⁰Pratico and van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, 2nd Ed.*, 385.

¹⁶⁷¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁶⁷²Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 58.

¹⁶⁷³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 120.

¹⁶⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁶⁷⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

¹⁶⁷⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁶⁷⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

Read Gen 6:9–10. How do we know that the flood story has been inserted into Noah’s genealogical record? Describe the relationship between righteousness and blamelessness. What results from walking with God?

New Creatures in Christ

2) 2 Cor 5:17: The paragraph in which this verse appears touches upon many different topics within one central theme: Christ has inaugurated a new age in world history.¹⁶⁷⁸

Scholars note that 2 Cor 5–7 forms a thematic parallel to Isa 40–66, with reconciliation in Christ fulfilling the promised restoration from exile. Although Paul wrote about reliving the sufferings of Jesus during his ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 11:23–33), the theme of salvation runs concurrently through 2 Cor 5:15–21.¹⁶⁷⁹

This verse occurs in the context of Paul’s announcement that, “[Christ] died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Cor 5:15). Then the apostle pronounced the effect of our redemption: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”¹⁶⁸⁰

God has changed our status, making all his people—both men and women—adopted sons of God (Rom 3:21–26; Eph 1:3–8; Gal 3:23–29).¹⁶⁸¹ Paul included himself as a prime example of this transformation. Until he encountered the risen Lord, he persecuted those who worshiped Jesus as God (Acts 9:1–6; 1 Tim 1:12–16).¹⁶⁸² According to Paul, a new relationship with God through faith in Christ makes a person into a restored creation (Cf. Rom 5:12–21). A mere change in moral conduct does not.¹⁶⁸³

Paul further explained, “The old [things] passed away; behold, it has become new.” Jesus’s death and resurrection divide history into two eras (2 Cor 3:5–6).¹⁶⁸⁴ As believers, we already participate in the new covenant, the era of the kingdom of God (Luke 17:20–21; Rev 1:9). Due to the incursion of the new creation into this evil age,¹⁶⁸⁵ the reign of sin and death has been broken. Yet, we still feel the effects of their power unless we live in close communion with the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16–26).¹⁶⁸⁶

Ultimately, the new creation foreseen by Isaiah shall come at the end of this age when Christ returns to earth (Isa 65:17–25; Isa 66:22; Rom 8:16–23). However, the true Israel—the church—has already been ushered into the presence of God (Rom 9:6–8; Eph 2:4–7).¹⁶⁸⁷ This

¹⁶⁷⁸Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians, 2nd Ed.* (WBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 318.

¹⁶⁷⁹J. V. Fesko, “N. T. Wright on Imputation,” *RTR* 66, no. 1:2–22, 10.

¹⁶⁸⁰Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 312.

¹⁶⁸¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 159.

¹⁶⁸²Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 298.

¹⁶⁸³Werner Foerster, “κτίσις” (*ktisis*), *TDNT*, 3:1000–35, 1034.

¹⁶⁸⁴Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 298.

¹⁶⁸⁵Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 243.

¹⁶⁸⁶Martin, *2 Corinthians, 2nd Ed.*, 312.

¹⁶⁸⁷Peter Balla, “2 Corinthians,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 766.

truth shall remain hidden to many until the resurrection of all humanity (2 Cor 4:14–5:10). Therefore, Paul made this impassioned plea, “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).¹⁶⁸⁸

Beginning at the moment of our union with Jesus by faith, believers grow more and more into Christ’s likeness with the aid of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:12–18; Rom 8:9–19).¹⁶⁸⁹ Our obedience and separation from evil testify to the work of God within us (2 Cor 6:14–7:1). This moral transformation verifies our incorporation into the new creation (Eph 2:1–10).¹⁶⁹⁰

a) Read 2 Cor 5:17. What does it mean to be “a new creation in Christ”? How has Jesus’s death and resurrection affected world history?

Receiving Christ’s Righteousness

b) 2 Cor 5:21: The Lord has transformed his people into new creations because, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their sins” (2 Cor 5:19).¹⁶⁹¹ Consequently, this verse serves as both the climax and the theological foundation for this section of the letter.¹⁶⁹² It explains why God no longer counts the guilt of those in Christ against us.¹⁶⁹³

Paul wrote, “The one who did not know sin on behalf of us sin he made, that we should become the righteousness of God in him.” Scholars consider this sentence one of the most significant in all of Paul’s letters.¹⁶⁹⁴ However, they disagree whether the verse derives from a previously existing confessional creed,¹⁶⁹⁵ or whether it represents the apostle’s adaptation of tradition.¹⁶⁹⁶ That the verse nearly forms a chiasm suggests the latter. Elsewhere Paul modified a hymn or poem by adding interpretative comments or corrections to break the symmetry (Cf. Rom 3:24–26; Phil 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20).¹⁶⁹⁷

In these few words, Paul articulated the power of the gospel:¹⁶⁹⁸

The one who did not know sin	(a)
on behalf of us	(b)
sin	(c)
he (God) made	(d)
that we	(a’)
should become	(d’)
the righteousness of God	(c’)
in him	(b’) ¹⁶⁹⁹

¹⁶⁸⁸Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 298–9.

¹⁶⁸⁹Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 298–9.

¹⁶⁹⁰Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 244.

¹⁶⁹¹Fesko, “N. T. Wright on Imputation,” 10.

¹⁶⁹²Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 312.

¹⁶⁹³Martin, *2 Corinthians, 2nd Ed.*, 142.

¹⁶⁹⁴Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 312.

¹⁶⁹⁵Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 138–9.

¹⁶⁹⁶Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 312.

¹⁶⁹⁷Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 138.

¹⁶⁹⁸Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 312.

¹⁶⁹⁹Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 138.

In “the one who did not know” (*ginōskō*), “to know” adheres to the Old Testament (OT) sense of “one who had acquaintance with something” (Lev 4:22–23; Lev 5:3–5; Rom 7:7; Rev 2:24).¹⁷⁰⁰ Therefore, this verse attests to Christ’s sinless life (Heb 4:15; 1 John 3:4–5).¹⁷⁰¹

Amazingly, cosmic reconciliation resulted from the death of this one who knew no sin, for he was made sin by God (John 1:29; Rev 5).¹⁷⁰² The OT sacrificial system as a means of atonement prefigured Jesus’s death (Lev 4:13–14, 19–21; Lev 5:5–7, 10).¹⁷⁰³ However, within the OT, Isa 53:4–12 best describes the redemption of corrupt people by the charging of transgressions to a blameless substitute.¹⁷⁰⁴ By his death, God made Christ a sin offering for us (Mark 10:45; 1 Cor 11:23–26; Eph 1:7; Col 1:19–20).¹⁷⁰⁵

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 8:56–58).¹⁷⁰⁶

As a result of Jesus’s sacrifice for those of us who place our faith in him, we became “the righteousness of God in him” (Heb 7:26–27; 1 Pet 2:21–25).¹⁷⁰⁷ The apostle announced the reality of this exchange without detailing how it happened.¹⁷⁰⁸ Since Christ became a curse for us, we receive his virtue (Gal 3:13–14).¹⁷⁰⁹ Just as Adam’s disobedience was imputed to us so that God deemed us sinners (Gen 3:17–19), so has Christ’s obedience resulted in us being considered righteous. While all people since Adam have sinned on their own, Paul likely referred to the Jewish concept of corporate solidarity, in which the acts of our representative head count as ours (Lev 4:3; Rom 5:12–21; Gal 3:27–29).¹⁷¹⁰

Therefore, when the Father sees us in Christ, he views us with Jesus’s perfection (Col 2:13–14).¹⁷¹¹ As a result, he shall declare us righteous at the final judgment (John 5:24; 1 John 4:15–19; Heb 10:11–22). The reality of living in Christ yields a firm conviction that God shall confirm our acceptance when we stand before him as our judge (Phil 3:17–21; 2 Tim 1:8–14).¹⁷¹² To become a new creation in Christ requires being declared legally righteous in God’s sight and beginning to live in keeping with the Lord’s standards (2 Cor 5:17).¹⁷¹³

First Corinthians 1:30 closely parallels 2 Cor 5:21.¹⁷¹⁴ In that verse Paul emphatically proclaims God’s grace: “By his doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Since our standing with God derives solely “from him,” we can boast only in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31). We possess righteousness, holiness, and redemption exclusively through our union

¹⁷⁰⁰Rudolf Bultmann, “γινώσκω” (*ginōskō*), *TDNT* 1:689–719, 698–9, 703.

¹⁷⁰¹Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 313–4.

¹⁷⁰²Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 304.

¹⁷⁰³Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 248.

¹⁷⁰⁴Fesko, “N. T. Wright on Imputation,” 12.

¹⁷⁰⁵Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 248.

¹⁷⁰⁶Edward 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.

¹⁷⁰⁷Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 314.

¹⁷⁰⁸Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 144–5.

¹⁷⁰⁹Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 251.

¹⁷¹⁰Douglas Moo J., *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 327–8.

¹⁷¹¹Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 248.

¹⁷¹²Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 141.

¹⁷¹³Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 251.

¹⁷¹⁴Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 140.

with Jesus. Therefore, we stand legally acquitted, set apart for God’s service, and redeemed from slavery to sin (Rom 6:5–7, 15–23).¹⁷¹⁵ Consequently, our obedience to God flows from the positional righteousness we enjoy as people of faith (Ps 32:1–2; Hab 2:4). The Lord grants us the presence of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live new lives characterized by holiness (1 Cor 2:12–16; Gal 5:16–26).¹⁷¹⁶

In fact, to claim that God declares us righteous without living accordingly denotes the fraudulence of our professions of faith (Rom 8:1–14).¹⁷¹⁷ Over time, a genuine continuity develops between God’s righteousness and ours.¹⁷¹⁸ We are found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own but that which comes from God through faith (Rom 4:22–25; Phil 3:9).¹⁷¹⁹ The empowering of the Holy Spirit enables us to live as “a new creation” in accordance with the age to come, yet in this present age.¹⁷²⁰ Now able to face God’s glory without perishing, the Lord transforms us into the image of Jesus (2 Cor 3:7–18).¹⁷²¹ No longer can we partner with lawlessness. Being righteous requires living righteously (2 Cor 6:14–7:1).¹⁷²²

In 2 Cor 8:9, Paul demonstrated this integration of being and doing while appealing to the generosity of the Corinthians. He accomplished this with another statement of Jesus’s sacrifice to spur them to action on behalf of others.¹⁷²³

Not only does Christ deliver us from sin, he incorporates us into a new world-wide covenant community (Eph 1:18–23; Eph 3:8–11).¹⁷²⁴ By stating, “As the father has sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21), Jesus commissioned us to demonstrate who he is to the world: God’s righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption.¹⁷²⁵

Read 2 Cor 5:21. How could Christ be made sin for us? What are the results of that? How does this truth affect our understanding of Noah’s righteousness and blamelessness (Gen 6:8–9)?

¹⁷¹⁵Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 108–9.

¹⁷¹⁶Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*, 194.

¹⁷¹⁷Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*, 209.

¹⁷¹⁸Thomas J. Stegman, S. J., “Paul’s Use of *Dikaio*-Terminology: Moving Beyond N.T. Wright’s Forensic Interpretation,” *TS* 72, no. 3 (1 September 2011): 496–524, 503,

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Paul%27s+use+of+dikaio-+terminology%3A+moving+beyond+N.+T.+Wright%27s...-a0265290416>.

¹⁷¹⁹Don Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ? A Response to John Piper,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 12, no. 4 (1 December 2003): 45–113, 78, http://www.thepaulpage.com/files/Piper_Rejoinder.pdf.

¹⁷²⁰Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 52.

¹⁷²¹Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 250.

¹⁷²²Morna D. Hooker, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: Another Look at 2 Cor 5:21,” *NovT* 50, no. 4 (1 December 2008): 358–85, 373, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25442615?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹⁷²³Hooker, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: Another Look at 2 Cor 5:21,” 374, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25442615?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹⁷²⁴Richard B. Hays, “Justification,” *ABD* 3:1129–33, 1132.

¹⁷²⁵Hooker, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: Another Look at 2 Cor 5:21,” 375, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25442615?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

Violence Filled the Earth *This post has a trigger warning*

3) Gen 6:11–12: In Gen 6:9–10, Moses portrayed Noah with the purity of freshly fallen snow.¹⁷²⁶ However, the remainder of humanity resembled filthy sleet (Gen 6:1–7).¹⁷²⁷ Indeed, these two verses form a succinct summary of the collective state of humanity ever since the fall (Gen 3:1–6:4). In Gen 6:11–13, “the earth” (*haerets*) occurs six times and the verb “ruin” (*shakhath*) appears in five places.¹⁷²⁸

Victor Hamilton captures the idea by translating these verses as, “*Gone to ruin* was the earth...indeed, it had *gone to ruin*...all flesh had *ruined* its way...I will *ruin* them.”¹⁷²⁹ Moses began this section by writing, “And the earth was ruined in the sight of God, and the earth was filled [with] violence.”

The first two instances of “the earth was ruined” describe the condition brought about by sinful humans, making the planet unusable (Jer 13:1–11).¹⁷³⁰ Just as a potter remakes a spoiled pot into something beautiful, so the Lord would destroy and remake the earth (Jer 18:1–4).¹⁷³¹ The parallelism which Moses employed in this verse indicates that humanity’s moral corruption took the form of violence.¹⁷³² Thus, this type of sin offends God not only because it attacks him directly but also because it assaults his creation.¹⁷³³ Ironically, violence filled the earth rather than people and animals (Gen 1:21–22, 27–28).¹⁷³⁴

The term “violence” (*khamas*) is broader than only physical assault (Isa 59:2–8; Prov 10:6; Prov 16:29). Yet, it can encompass bloodshed (Gen 34:25; Gen 49:5; Judg 9:4–5, 23–24). Overall, *khamas* denotes “a cold-blooded and unscrupulous infringement of the personal rights of others, motivated by greed and hate and often making use of physical violence and brutality.”¹⁷³⁵ As a result, any antisocial or exploitative acts can be considered violence.¹⁷³⁶ Based upon the context, this brutality consisted of sexual assault committed by powerful kings and officials followed by acts of revenge (Gen 6:1–4).

Moses wrote, “God saw the earth and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.” This verse deliberately forms a strong contrast with Gen 1:31, heightening the sense of tragedy.¹⁷³⁷ By shedding innocent blood, people defiled the earth (Gen 4:9–12; Deut 21:1–9; Isa 21:2).¹⁷³⁸ The pending divine judgment would complete the self-destruction which humanity initiated.¹⁷³⁹

That they were “flesh” (*basar*) emphasizes their fragile mortality.¹⁷⁴⁰ Based upon the extent of the destruction, the term appears to include both people and animals (Gen 6:17–19).¹⁷⁴¹

¹⁷²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁷²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170.

¹⁷²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170–1.

¹⁷²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 278.

¹⁷³⁰J. Conrad, “שָׁחַת” (*shakhath*), *TDOT* 14:583–95, 592.

¹⁷³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 278.

¹⁷³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 134.

¹⁷³³Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 16.

¹⁷³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁷³⁵H. Haag, “חָמָס” (*khamas*), *TDOT* 4: 482–6, 482.

¹⁷³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁷³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁷³⁸Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed.*, 134.

¹⁷³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁷⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 134.

¹⁷⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 279.

Violence begets violence. For example, a person who feels powerless at work may go home and release the resulting hostility in the presence of family members. A child bullied by that parent takes it out on a younger sibling. That tot delivers a swift kick to the family dog, who chases the cat. Those who feel helpless in their experience of abuse tend to hurt those around them. No one carries more potential for violence than a victim (Cf. Gen 4:23–24).¹⁷⁴²

Adults who experienced neglect or abuse as children are three times as likely to report that they have abused their children. They are 50% more prone to committing intimate partner violence.¹⁷⁴³ Unjustly treated people may have short fuses and long memories.¹⁷⁴⁴

a) Read Gen 6:11–12. Why was the earth ruined? Who was guilty? How can sexual assault and other forms of violence lead to more brutality?

The End was Near

b) Gen 6:13: Reports of a massive deluge are almost universal in the ancient world, although few come from Africa.¹⁷⁴⁵ In fact, the closest parallels between other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts and Scripture concern the flood.¹⁷⁴⁶ Three which hail from Mesopotamia bear the most striking similarities to the Genesis account: the Eridu Genesis from Sumer (ca. 2300 BC), the Atrahasis Epic from Akkad (17th century BC), and the Epic of Gilgamesh from Old Babylonia (2150–1400 BC).¹⁷⁴⁷ Scholars believe their authors derived them from even earlier material.¹⁷⁴⁸

Enough major differences occur between ANE versions of the flood and Gen 6–9 to lead some scholars to conclude that they did not issue from common documents.¹⁷⁴⁹ However, others hold that all four texts either refer to a shared tradition or that Genesis reflects a deliberate revision of the Mesopotamian accounts.¹⁷⁵⁰

Those assuming the accuracy of the second view assert that the differences arise from Moses's theological viewpoint.¹⁷⁵¹ For example, the biblical account is simpler and shorter than the other ANE renderings due to the omission of numerous gods.¹⁷⁵²

¹⁷⁴²Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 56–7.

¹⁷⁴³Izabela Milaniak and Cathy Spatz Widom, "Does Child Abuse and Neglect Increase Risk for Perpetration of Violence Inside and Outside the Home?" *Psychology of Violence* 5, no. 3 (July 2015): 246–55, 250, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4504697/>.

¹⁷⁴⁴Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 60.

¹⁷⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 132.

¹⁷⁴⁶Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels, Second Ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 224,

https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/misc_gilgamesh.pdf.

¹⁷⁴⁷Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 132. Note that the British Museum's copy of the Gilgamesh flood tablet dates from the 7th Century BC.

¹⁷⁴⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:16.

¹⁷⁴⁹Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

¹⁷⁵⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 168.

¹⁷⁵¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:16.

¹⁷⁵²Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

In the Genesis flood narrative, the Lord delivered four speeches. Surprisingly, the first time we hear from Noah occurs in Gen 9:25, where he pronounced, “Cursed be Canaan!” Overall, God spoke, and Noah acted.¹⁷⁵³ The Lord’s first speech began by summarizing Gen 6:11–12.¹⁷⁵⁴ Then God informed Noah of his plan to destroy all corruption yet preserve a righteous remnant. This included the creation which the Lord intended humanity to steward (Gen 1:26–28).¹⁷⁵⁵

Moses recorded, “God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before me, because the earth is filled with violence from them. And behold, I am about to cause them to be destroyed [with] the earth.’” At this point, God made an irrevocable decision.¹⁷⁵⁶ Humanity’s progressive degradation called for immediate action.¹⁷⁵⁷ A similar situation occurred in Canaan during Moses’s lifetime (Lev 18:24–25; Deut 20:16–18).

The word translated as “cause them to be destroyed” (*shakhath*) comes from the root suggesting ruin.¹⁷⁵⁸ When appearing in the Hiphil verb form, as it does here, it typically depicts the swift annihilation of people or cities through warfare or divine action (Gen 18:27–33; Gen 19:14).¹⁷⁵⁹ Since people ruined the earth by their sin, the Lord would complete its ruin.¹⁷⁶⁰ This is a textbook example of the punishment fitting the crime (*lex retalionis*) (Exod 21:23–25; Ezek 7:1–4).¹⁷⁶¹

According to the Atrahasis Epic, people making too much noise caused the flood. It says: “Twelve hundred years had not yet passed [after the gods created humanity] when the land extended and the peoples multiplied. The land was bellowing like a bull, the god got disturbed with their uproar. Enlil heard their noise and addressed the great gods, ‘The noise of humankind has become too intense for me, with their uproar, I am deprived of sleep.’”¹⁷⁶²

Some scholars hold that the commotion which bothered the deity consisted of people crying out for justice.¹⁷⁶³ Nevertheless, the god’s selfish impulsiveness strongly contrasts with the moral tone of God’s rationale for the flood (Cf. Gen 6:1–7).¹⁷⁶⁴

In the Babylonian and Sumerian flood accounts, the gods intended to keep their plan of destruction a secret from all of humanity. However, one deity disagreed with their scheme and revealed it to the Noah figure in the story.¹⁷⁶⁵

The Sumerian account of Enki’s intervention says: “At that time, Ziusudra was king and [aton]ing priest...As he stood there regularly day after day something that was not a dream was appearing: conversation a swearing of oaths by heaven and earth...And as Ziusudra stood there beside it, he went on hearing, ‘Step up to the wall to my left and listen! Let me speak a word to you at the wall and may you grasp what I say, may you heed my advice! By our hand a flood will sweep over the cities...and the country; the decision, that mankind is to be destroyed has been made. A verdict, a command of the assembly cannot be

¹⁷⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 280.

¹⁷⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁷⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 122.

¹⁷⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁷⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 126.

¹⁷⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 278.

¹⁷⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁷⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁷⁶¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁷⁶²Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atrahasis,” 26.

¹⁷⁶³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:13.

¹⁷⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 164.

¹⁷⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

revoked, an order of [the gods] An and Enlil is not known ever to have been countermanded.”¹⁷⁶⁶

Similarly, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the gods decided to hide their plan to wipe out humanity. However, one dissenting god thwarted their effort. The man equivalent to Noah, Utnapishtim, told this tale of the god’s crafty intervention:¹⁷⁶⁷

“I will reveal to thee, Gilgamesh, a hidden matter and a secret of the gods will I tell thee...When their heart led the great gods to produce the flood. [There] were Anu, their father, valiant Enlil, their counselor, Ninurta, their assistant, Ennuge, their irrigator. Ninigiku-Ea was also present with them. Their words he repeats to the reed-hut, ‘Reed-hut, reed-hut! Wall, wall! Reed-hut, hearken! Wall, reflect! Man of Shuruppak...tear down (this) house, build a ship! Give up possessions, seek thou life. Forswear (worldly) goods and keep the soul alive! Aboard the ship take thou the seed of all living things.’¹⁷⁶⁸

Read Gen 6:13. Why did God intend to ruin all flesh? How does his rationale in Genesis differ from other ANE accounts? Where do you see parallels between them?

Specifications for an Ark

c) Gen 6:14–16: In contrast to other Ancient Near Eastern ANE accounts, Noah’s salvation was neither an accident nor a thwarting of God’s plan (Gen 6:8–13).¹⁷⁶⁹ As a result, the Lord specified how to build the ark rather than leaving the plan of escape to Noah’s imagination.¹⁷⁷⁰

Moses recorded brief instructions, giving us minimal details.¹⁷⁷¹ However, they are specific enough to imply Noah’s lack of familiarity with shipbuilding.¹⁷⁷² God instructed Noah, “Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood.” The Egyptian word for a box, which we translate as an “ark,” (*tēbah*) occurs twenty-eight times in the flood narrative.¹⁷⁷³ The only other occurrence of the word appears in the description of the basket where Moses’s mother hid him when she placed him in the Nile River (Exod 2:3–5).¹⁷⁷⁴ Consequently, two remarkable biblical heroes escaped drowning in an ark.¹⁷⁷⁵

¹⁷⁶⁶Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “The Eridu Genesis,” in *The Harps That Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), lines 81–100, <http://www.piney.com/EriduGen.html>.

¹⁷⁶⁷Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

¹⁷⁶⁸Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:9–27, 93.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up,
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=309929&partId=1.

¹⁷⁶⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

¹⁷⁷⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁷⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁷⁷²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 281.

¹⁷⁷³H. J. Zobel, “תֵּבָה” (*tebah*), *TDOT* 15:550–552, 550–1.

¹⁷⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁷⁷⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 280.

“*Gopher*” does not occur anywhere else in the Bible.¹⁷⁷⁶ Commentators assume that it produced resinous lumber suitable for making boats.¹⁷⁷⁷ Throughout the ANE, shipbuilders preferred cypress and cedar due to their strength and durability.¹⁷⁷⁸ Some scholars note that Moses’s mother used reeds to make his basket, the same material for the ship built by Atrahasis.¹⁷⁷⁹

The Lord continued his instructions, saying, “Nests (*qēn*) you shall make [in] the ark.”¹⁷⁸⁰ In this case, “nests” appears to be a figurative term for individual chambers of protection against the coming deluge.¹⁷⁸¹ The Epic of Gilgamesh employs the same idea for the boat, saying, “Her floor plan I divided into nine parts.”¹⁷⁸² An ark containing rooms and decks denotes the relative complexity of this boat compared to other ships of antiquity.¹⁷⁸³

People constructed the earliest boats, which measured about ten feet long, from reeds or animal skins. They could safely sail along a river or through marshes. The art of Egypt’s Old Kingdom (ca. 2500 BC) first depicted seaworthy vessels. These wooden vessels reached a length close to 170 feet.¹⁷⁸⁴ A hint concerning Noah’s lack of nautical expertise comes here, when the Lord instructed him, “And you shall cover it inside and outside with pitch.” The phrase “inside and outside” consists of a technical construction term (Exod 25:11; 1 Ki 7:9).¹⁷⁸⁵ ANE shipbuilders routinely coated a sea-worthy vessel with pitch,¹⁷⁸⁶ as it functioned like caulk.¹⁷⁸⁷

God commanded, “And this is how you shall make it: three hundred cubits in length [for] the ark, fifty cubits [for] its width, and thirty cubits [for] its height.” A cubit was the standard measurement in Moses’s era. At eighteen inches, this ran the length from an average man’s fingertips to his elbow.¹⁷⁸⁸ These dimensions equal 440’ x 73’ x 44’.¹⁷⁸⁹ Including the end zones, the dimensions of an American football field measure 360’ x 160’. The ark was eighty feet longer and approximately half as wide. Assuming that the ark featured a flat bottom, it displaced 43,000 tons of water.¹⁷⁹⁰ The ark’s surface area measured three times greater than that of the tabernacle courtyard (Exod 27:9–13).¹⁷⁹¹

This ship had an enormous carrying capacity. Its proportions would have made it seaworthy,¹⁷⁹² even when faced with a monstrous flood.¹⁷⁹³ A 17th century Dutchman constructed an ark to 2/5 scale which proved the fitness of Noah’s ark for oceanic travel.¹⁷⁹⁴

¹⁷⁷⁶Result of Logos 7 word study on *gopher*.

¹⁷⁷⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁷⁷⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:14.

¹⁷⁷⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 281.

¹⁷⁸⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*qin*” (*qin*), *BDB*, 890,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/890/mode/2up>.

¹⁷⁸¹P. Mommer, “*qin*” (*qin*), *TDOT* 13:45–7, 46–7.

¹⁷⁸²Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, line 62, 93,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

¹⁷⁸³Walton, *Genesis*, 312.

¹⁷⁸⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:14–6.

¹⁷⁸⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173.

¹⁷⁸⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 312.

¹⁷⁸⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 281.

¹⁷⁸⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:16.

¹⁷⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 282.

¹⁷⁹⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:16.

¹⁷⁹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173.

¹⁷⁹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135–6.

¹⁷⁹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 282.

¹⁷⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173.

In contrast, the Epic of Gilgamesh records that the god Ea commanded, “The ship that thou shalt build, her dimensions shall be to measure. Equal shall be her width and her length...One (whole) acre was her floor space, ten dozen cubits the height of each of her walls, ten dozen cubits each edge of the square deck.”¹⁷⁹⁵ Thus, Utnapishtim’s boat formed a perfect cube of 180’.¹⁷⁹⁶ It displaced three or four times as much water as Noah’s ark,¹⁷⁹⁷ with five times the carrying capacity.¹⁷⁹⁸ A recently discovered Babylonian version of the Atrahasis Epic (ca. 1750 BC) describes the boat as a round vessel constructed from palm fibers placed over wooden ribs. Bitumen covered it to provide waterproofing. About two-thirds the size of a football field with 20-foot-high walls, it would have bobbed upon the water like a cork.¹⁷⁹⁹

Verse 16 begins with a word difficult to translate (*tsohar*), in large part because it appears in this form only here in the Old Testament.¹⁸⁰⁰ Most likely, the Lord said, “And make a vaulted roof, and complete it to a cubit from the top.” Many translations use “roof” or “window.” However, biblical authors used different words for a flat roof (*gag*) and for a window (*hallon*) (Josh 2:6; Gen 8:6). If Moses meant one of those, he likely would have chosen a less obscure term.¹⁸⁰¹ This leaves us with two strong possibilities. Either Noah constructed the roof to leave an eighteen-inch gap where it met the wall, and/or he made the roof to overhang the wall by that amount. The latter option fits with Gen 8:13.¹⁸⁰² Israelites built the roof of the tabernacle in a similar manner (Exod 26:13–14). In addition, God commanded Noah to “place a door in the side of it. You shall make lower, second, and third [decks].” A division into three parts also occurred in the tabernacle (Exod 40:17–21, 33).

The Epic of Gilgamesh refers to similar details but on a grander scale: “I laid out the contours (and) joined her together. I provided her with six decks, dividing her (thus) into seven parts. Her floor plan I divided into nine parts. I hammered water-plugs into her. I saw to the punting-poles and laid in supplies. Six ‘sar’ (measures) of bitu men I poured into the furnace, three sar of asphalt [I also] poured inside.”¹⁸⁰³

The Genesis account mentions no rudders or sails for Noah’s boat, indicating he would not navigate it. God held Noah’s fate in his hands.¹⁸⁰⁴ Utnapishtim, however, employed a navigator.¹⁸⁰⁵ As most of the gods sought to completely wipe out humanity, he could not depend upon the gods to save him.¹⁸⁰⁶

Read Gen 6:14–16. How is the biblical account of the ark’s specifications like those of other ANE versions? In what ways do they differ? How did Noah’s boat resemble Israel’s tabernacle? Why is the lack of sails or a rudder on the ark significant?

¹⁷⁹⁵Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:28–30, 57–8, 93, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

¹⁷⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 282.

¹⁷⁹⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:16.

¹⁷⁹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173.

¹⁷⁹⁹Irving Finkel, “Was the Ark Round? A Babylonian Description Discovered,”

<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/was-the-ark-round-a-babylonian-description-discovered/>.

¹⁸⁰⁰H Niehr, “תְּסוֹחָרִים” (*tsoharim*), *TDOT* 12:264–6.

¹⁸⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 282–3.

¹⁸⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173–4.

¹⁸⁰³Speiser, “Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:59–66, 93, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

¹⁸⁰⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁸⁰⁵Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:94–5, 94, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁸⁰⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:16.

A Deluge to Ruin All Flesh

d) Gen 6:17: Here we learn exactly why the Lord commanded Noah to build a gigantic boat in response to the Lord’s plan to destroy all flesh (Gen 6:6–7, 13–16).¹⁸⁰⁷ God said, “And I, behold, I am bringing the flood of water on the earth to ruin all flesh which [has the] breath of life from under the heavens. All which is on the earth shall perish.” By repeating the pronoun “I,” for emphasis,¹⁸⁰⁸ the Lord asserted that the deluge was neither an accident nor a force outside of his control.¹⁸⁰⁹

Since a definite article (“the”) almost always occurs with the Hebrew word for “flood” in Gen 6–11, this likely points to the renown of that specific deluge. The only exceptions come when the Lord promised to never again send a flood to destroy all life (Gen 9:11, 15).¹⁸¹⁰ “Flood” (*mabbul*) seems to derive from a form of the verb meaning “to rain hard.”¹⁸¹¹

Akin to Egyptian and Babylonian ideas, Israelites viewed the sky as a solid dome (Job 37:18),¹⁸¹² possibly of glass (Ezek 1:22; Dan 12:3).¹⁸¹³ 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.”¹⁸¹⁴ Overall, people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) believed that the cosmos consisted of three tiers:¹⁸¹⁵ the heavens; the earth; and the underworld.¹⁸¹⁶

Between the heavens and the earth stood “the vault (*raqia*) of heaven” (Isa 40:22),¹⁸¹⁷ which some translations call the “firmament.”¹⁸¹⁸ Ancient people thought this layer of the sky separated one type of water from another,¹⁸¹⁹ isolating the vapor which formed rain from the waters upon the earth (Gen 1:6–8).¹⁸²⁰ Furthermore, this intermediate expanse regulated humidity and sunlight.¹⁸²¹

Enuma Elish contains an interesting account of the creation of this layer. In this Babylonian text, the god Marduk formed the vault from the corpse of a rebellious water goddess. Even so, he needed restraints to prevent Tiamat from unleashing her waters.¹⁸²² Using a word related to the Hebrew verb “to separate,” (*badadh*) 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

¹⁸⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 174.

¹⁸⁰⁸Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 437,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/436/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 174.

¹⁸¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 283.

¹⁸¹¹P. Stenmans, “מַבּוּל” (*mabbul*), *TDOT* 8:60–5, 61.

¹⁸¹²Paul 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.

¹⁸¹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 20.

¹⁸¹⁴W. 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.

¹⁸¹⁵Annalee Newitz, “A Scientific Diagram of the Hebrew Cosmology,” <http://io9.com/5586362/a-scientific-diagram-of-the-ancient-hebrew-cosmos>.

¹⁸¹⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 1:8.

¹⁸¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 122.

¹⁸¹⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רָקִיעַ” (*raqia*), *BDB*, 956,

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

¹⁸¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 122.

¹⁸²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 62.

¹⁸²¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 1:8.

¹⁸²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 123.

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.”¹⁸²³ People believed that rain consisted of water leaking from the upper half of Tiamat’s body,¹⁸²⁴ which the vault normally kept in place.¹⁸²⁵

Consequently, the flood equated to a heavenly ocean which poured upon the earth.¹⁸²⁶ The release of that celestial sea caused the deluge.¹⁸²⁷ Aside from twelve occurrences in Gen 6–11, elsewhere in the bible the word “*mabbul*” (flood) occurs only in Ps 29:10,¹⁸²⁸ where it sits at Yahweh’s feet.¹⁸²⁹ Akkadian texts call the god Nergal, “king of the battle, lord of strength and might, lord of the Deluge (*abūbu*) (weapon).” They denote the god Ninurta as the “exalted lord who rides upon the Deluge.” Thus, inhabitants of the ANE personified floods as destructive cosmic events.¹⁸³⁰ Yet, even the gods did not always remain in control of such power.

According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, after unleashing their weapon, “The gods were frightened by the deluge, and, shrinking back, they ascended to the heaven of Anu. The gods cowered like dogs crouched against the outer wall. Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail, the sweet-voiced mistress of the [gods] moans aloud.”¹⁸³¹

In the Hebrew account, God announced that the breath (*ruach*) of life which he had given, he would take away (Gen 2:7; Ps 104:24–30).¹⁸³² By saying, “all which was on earth shall perish,” the possibility remained that aquatic creatures would survive.¹⁸³³ However, the sudden change in salinity would likely prove fatal.

“All on the earth shall perish” suggests a world-wide scope for the coming deluge. Yet, similar language occurs in Scripture depicting more limited events (Gen 41:56–57; Deut 2:25; 1 Ki 10:24; Dan 2:36–38).¹⁸³⁴ Therefore, the lack of convincing archaeological evidence for a world-wide deluge occurring at one time does not disprove that Noah’s flood actually took place in the ANE.¹⁸³⁵

Read Gen 6:17. How is the biblical account like other ANE versions? In what ways do they differ? Why doesn’t the lack of archaeological evidence disprove the historicity of Noah’s flood?

¹⁸²³“Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” *ANET*, 4.135–40, 67. Italics mine.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

¹⁸²⁴Min Suc Kee, “A Study on the Dual Form of Mayim, Water,” *JBQ* 40, no. 3 (1 July 2012): 183–89, 186,

http://jbbqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/403/jbq_403_mayim.pdf.

¹⁸²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 113.

¹⁸²⁶P. Stenmans, “מַבּוּל” (*mabbul*), *TDOT* 8:60–5, 63.

¹⁸²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁸²⁸P. Stenmans, “מַבּוּל” (*mabbul*), *TDOT* 8:60–5, 61.

¹⁸²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 283.

¹⁸³⁰Ignace J. Gelb, et al eds., “Abubu,” in *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (CAD)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), 77–81, 77, 80.

https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/cad_a1.pdf.

¹⁸³¹Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:113–7, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁸³²Note that the Hebrew word *ruach* means “breath,” “wind,” and “spirit/Spirit,”

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/924/mode/2up>.

¹⁸³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 174.

¹⁸³⁴Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁸³⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:17.

God Establishes a Covenant

d) Gen 6:18: In this verse, the Lord began to name those whom he would save through the flood. God said to Noah, “And I shall establish my covenant with you.”¹⁸³⁶ Although this is the first time the word “covenant” (*berith*) occurs in the Old Testament,¹⁸³⁷ many commentators believe the Lord enacted a covenant with Adam (Gen 1:26–30; Gen 2:15–17).¹⁸³⁸ The concept of a covenant between a deity and people remains unique to the biblical milieu. No record of such a compact appears in other religions and cultures.¹⁸³⁹

That the Lord called it “my covenant” emphasizes that the pact originated with him, not with Noah. God set its terms and sanctions.¹⁸⁴⁰ In it, the Lord chose to exempt Noah from what he would do to all flesh (Gen 6:5–13).¹⁸⁴¹

A covenant consists of a binding agreement between two parties.¹⁸⁴² As in Noah’s case, it formalizes and confirms an already existing relationship.¹⁸⁴³ One or both participants agreed under oath to either complete or abstain from certain activities.¹⁸⁴⁴ Covenants typically obligated their originators to fulfill specific commitments while the other party remained faithful (Gen 17:1–12).¹⁸⁴⁵

The Lord announced his covenant with Noah even before the deluge occurred. Thus, the pact which God made after the flood did not consist of an afterthought (Gen 9:8–17). Even before the rain began, the Lord intended to provide for the continuation of human and animal life.¹⁸⁴⁶ By means of an ark, God would save the righteous seed of the woman as well as representatives of the nonhuman creation (Gen 3:15; Gen 6:19–20).¹⁸⁴⁷

God continued, saying, “And you shall enter the ark: you and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.” By repeating the word “you,” the Lord stressed that he made his covenant with Noah, not with Noah’s wife or children.¹⁸⁴⁸ Nevertheless, God would preserve the family structure of humanity, extending salvation to them.¹⁸⁴⁹ The concept of the modern nuclear family did not exist in the Ancient Near East (ANE).¹⁸⁵⁰ Yet, even today, those who have married can attest that one does not wed an individual but into an entire family.

The Epic of Gilgamesh also notes the inclusion of additional passengers. It says, “All my family and kin I made go aboard the ship...All the craftsmen I made go aboard...I boarded the ship and battened up the entrance. To batten down the (whole) ship, to...the boatman.”¹⁸⁵¹

¹⁸³⁶M. Weinfeld, “בְּרִית” (*berith*), *TDOT* 2:253–79, 260.

¹⁸³⁷Result of Logos 7 word study of בְּרִית (*berith*).

¹⁸³⁸Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 107.

¹⁸³⁹Weinfeld, “בְּרִית” (*berith*), *TDOT* 2:253–79, 278.

¹⁸⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁸⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 283.

¹⁸⁴²Arnold and Beyer, *RANE*, 96.

¹⁸⁴³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁸⁴⁴George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, “Covenant,” *ABD* 1:1179–1202, 1179.

¹⁸⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 123.

¹⁸⁴⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁸⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

¹⁸⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 283–4.

¹⁸⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁸⁵⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

¹⁸⁵¹Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 84–5, 94, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

Read Gen 6:18. What constitutes a covenant? How would you describe the pact depicted here? How is this account like the story in the Epic of Gilgamesh? What differences are there?

Two of Every Kind

e) **Gen 6:19–22:** Noah at last discovered why God commanded him to build a boat far too large for him and his family (Gen 6:15).¹⁸⁵² The Lord extended his concern to the animal realm.¹⁸⁵³ God said, “And from all of the living, from all flesh, two from all you shall bring into the ark to keep them alive with you. Male and female they shall be.” All types of creatures would survive to repopulate the earth.¹⁸⁵⁴

Although God described people in terms of gender in Gen 1:27, this verse represents the first time Scripture depicted the nonhuman creation as “male and female” (Cf. Gen 1:20–25; Gen 2:18–20).¹⁸⁵⁵ The list of living things gradually becomes more specific and echoes the sequence of the first creation account.¹⁸⁵⁶

Moses reported, “From birds according to their kind, and from animals according to their kind, and from all of the creeping things of the ground according to their kind, two of all of them shall come to you in order to keep them alive.” The Hebrew term for “kind” (*min*) allows for a broader range than “species.”¹⁸⁵⁷ Significantly, God commanded reproduction “according to its kind” for plants and animals but not for humans (Gen 1:24, 26–28). This may indicate that God intended that vegetation and animals propagate more than the same species,¹⁸⁵⁸ as the term “kind” does not correspond to a scientific species or genus.¹⁸⁵⁹

These initial instructions omit God’s command to Noah to bring seven pairs of each type of clean animal into the ark (Gen 7:2–3).¹⁸⁶⁰ The text also does not indicate how Noah knew the difference between a clean and an unclean animal.¹⁸⁶¹ Not until Lev 11 does Scripture differentiate between them. Other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) peoples experienced fewer dietary restrictions than Moses’s readers faced.¹⁸⁶² For example, one Egyptian spell found inside a coffin states, “The pig is detestable to Horus.” Another insists that a certain incantation was “not to be said while eating pork.”¹⁸⁶³

¹⁸⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

¹⁸⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁸⁵⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

¹⁸⁵⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138.

¹⁸⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

¹⁸⁵⁷Swanson, “מין” (*min*), *DBLSDH*, 4786.

¹⁸⁵⁸P. Beauchamp, “מין” (*min*), *TDOT*, 8:288–90, 289.

¹⁸⁵⁹Mark D. Futato, “מין” (*min*), *NIDOTTE* 2:934–5, 934.

¹⁸⁶⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 313.

¹⁸⁶¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁸⁶²Walton, *Genesis*, 313.

¹⁸⁶³Raymond O. Faulkner, trans., *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Volume 1, Spells 1–354* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1973), 135, 137. Spells 157–158,

<https://archive.org/stream/TheAncientEgyptianCoffin1/The%20ancient%20Egyptian%20coffin1#page/n147/mode/2>

On the other hand, the Lord had not yet permitted meat for consumption (Gen 1:29–30). Thus, the increased number of clean creatures appears to ensure the availability of enough sacrificial animals (Gen 8:20–9:3).¹⁸⁶⁴

Noah surely experienced gratitude that he and his sons would not have to find and capture the animals. Instead, God would guide them to the ark,¹⁸⁶⁵ again demonstrating his power over nature.¹⁸⁶⁶ Since the Lord selected Noah to preserve life, Moses’s readers likely recognized a similarity to another of their ancestral heroes. God orchestrated Joseph’s sale into Egyptian slavery to preserve life (Gen 45:4–11; Gen 50:15–21).¹⁸⁶⁷

In the Atrahasis Epic, the god Enki promised, “I will rain down upon you here an abundance of birds, a profusion of fishes.” Yet the same text states that Atrahasis brought “whatever he had...clean animals...fat animals...he caught [and brought on board]. The winged birds of the heavens, the cattle...the wild creatures...he put on board.”¹⁸⁶⁸ In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Noah figure reported, “The beasts of the field, the wild creatures of the field...I made go aboard.”¹⁸⁶⁹

God ended his instructions by saying, “And you, take for yourself from all of the food which can be eaten, and gather it to yourself. And it shall be for you and for them for food.” Here we encounter another parallel with the story of Joseph, for he advised the Egyptians to gather and store grain due to the impending famine (Gen 41:33–37).¹⁸⁷⁰ Unlike in Joseph’s account, the text does not tell us how Noah and his family managed to do this, nor does it specify what types of food they collected.¹⁸⁷¹

Moses concluded this section by stating, “And Noah did according to all which God commanded him. Thus he did.” This brief statement provides insight into Noah’s character (Gen 6:8–9).¹⁸⁷² It serves as an emphatic affirmation of Noah’s complete obedience, indicating that Noah succeeded where Adam failed (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:6).¹⁸⁷³ Such declarations rarely occur in the Pentateuch (five books attributed to Moses). The only other equivalent statements appear when Moses oversaw the building of the tabernacle, when the Israelites camped around it, and when they observed Passover (Exod 39:32, 42–43; Num 1:53–54; Num 2:34; Num 9:5).¹⁸⁷⁴

Consider the tremendous effort which Noah and his family must have undertaken to accomplish this. They needed an incredible amount of timber and pitch. Building such an enormous structure completely by hand would have taken years, in addition to a considerable amount of money. Then, the effort necessary to gather various types of edible plants for people and many kinds of animals had to be exhausting. While the Epic of Gilgamesh focuses upon

up,

<https://archive.org/stream/TheAncientEgyptianCoffin1/The%20ancient%20Egyptian%20coffin1#page/n149/mode/2>

up.

¹⁸⁶⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 313.

¹⁸⁶⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁸⁶⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

¹⁸⁶⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

¹⁸⁶⁸Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” in *RANE*, 29.

¹⁸⁶⁹Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:85, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁸⁷⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁸⁷¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 131.

¹⁸⁷²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 285.

¹⁸⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁸⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

Utnapishtim’s extensive preparations, Moses’s account of the flood simply acknowledges Noah’s obedience to God’s commands.¹⁸⁷⁵

Read Gen 6:18–22. What echoes of Gen 1 occur in this text? How does this account compare to other ANE flood texts? What differences are there? How did Noah express his faith? What can you do to emulate Noah?

Receiving a Divine Warning

4) Heb 11:7: With this verse, the author of Hebrews concluded the account of heroes of faith who lived prior to the flood.¹⁸⁷⁶ Just like Noah, the recipients of this letter lived in a hostile environment and required encouragement.¹⁸⁷⁷ They needed to believe the Lord would do what he promised (Heb 10:32–39).¹⁸⁷⁸

This verse begins by stating, “By faith Noah, receiving a divine warning concerning [things] not yet seen, showing reverence, he constructed an ark for the salvation of his household.” Although Gen 6–9 never describes Noah’s faith, the flood account does attest that Noah pleased God (Gen 6:9).¹⁸⁷⁹ His obedience proved his belief.¹⁸⁸⁰ Some translations state simply that “Noah was warned” (*chrēmatisō*). Yet, whenever this verb appears in the passive tense in the New Testament, it implies that the person received a divine revelation (Matt 2:12, 21–22; Acts 10:22; Heb 8:4–5).¹⁸⁸¹

What was “not yet seen” refers to the deluge (Gen 7:12–13), a catastrophe never previously experienced by the people of the Ancient Near East.¹⁸⁸² This phrase points to the forward-looking aspect of faith.¹⁸⁸³ Noah believed that what the Lord disclosed in advance would certainly occur (Gen 6:13–22).¹⁸⁸⁴ As a result, Noah serves as another exemplar of Heb 11:1–2.¹⁸⁸⁵ Like the other heroes of old in Heb 11, Noah could pursue the correct course of action because he saw beyond the visible world of material senses (Heb 11:13–16).¹⁸⁸⁶

He trusted in the divine revelation so firmly that he acted as if the flood was imminent.¹⁸⁸⁷ Belief in the word of God always results in action (Heb 6:10–12; James 2:14–26).

¹⁸⁷⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

¹⁸⁷⁶deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 390.

¹⁸⁷⁷Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 339.

¹⁸⁷⁸Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 287.

¹⁸⁷⁹Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 577.

¹⁸⁸⁰Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 339.

¹⁸⁸¹Bo Reicke, “*χρηματίζω*” (*chrēmatisō*) *TDNT* 9:480–2, 481. Confirmed by a Logos 7 word study.

¹⁸⁸²Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 287.

¹⁸⁸³Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 578.

¹⁸⁸⁴Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 339.

¹⁸⁸⁵Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 339.

¹⁸⁸⁶deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 387.

¹⁸⁸⁷Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 339.

We can translate the word which the author of Hebrews used to describe Noah's emotions (*eulabeomai*) as "to have fear" or "to have reverent awe."¹⁸⁸⁸ In the context of faith and the emphasis upon worship, "showing reverence" fits best.¹⁸⁸⁹ This term also occurs in Heb 5:7 and Heb 12:28.¹⁸⁹⁰

Noah expressed his reverent faith by obeying the divine revelation.¹⁸⁹¹ He constructed an ark. The word used here (*kataskeuazō*) often referred to the building and equipping of ships.¹⁸⁹² For example, during the Maccabean revolt,¹⁸⁹³ the king wrote a letter, saying, "Whereas certain scoundrels have gained control of the kingdom of our ancestors, and I intend to lay claim to the kingdom so that I may restore it as it formerly was, and have recruited a host of mercenary troops and have equipped (*kataskeuazō*) warships" (1 Macc 15:3, NRSVCE).

Noah's obedient trust provided salvation for his household, for the ark he built kept them safe through the storm (Gen 8:13–19).¹⁸⁹⁴ Furthermore, his reverent act was the means "by which he pronounced sentence on the world."¹⁸⁹⁵ Although the term "world" (*kosmos*) has multiple meanings in Greek, the sense here refers to "humanity" (Cf. Heb 11:38).¹⁸⁹⁶

Jewish and early Christian sources contended that Noah accomplished this by preaching to people who rejected his message to repent (2 Pet 2:5).¹⁸⁹⁷ According to Clement of Alexandria (150–215 AD), "Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved."¹⁸⁹⁸ Since only eight people received salvation, no one believed him apart from his immediate family and their wives (1 Pet 3:20).

Josephus (ca. 37–100 AD) also reported:

"Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; so he departed out of that land."¹⁸⁹⁹

Despite that tradition, the author of Hebrews did not seem to have preaching in mind, for the letter merely implies a call for bold witness.¹⁹⁰⁰ Instead, Noah judged his contemporaries by his example of faith and faithfulness (Cf. Heb 11:4–5).¹⁹⁰¹ By building such an enormous boat so far from the sea, Noah must have endured ridicule from his neighbors.¹⁹⁰²

As a result of persevering through the loss of prestige among those who watched him work, Noah attained honor in God's sight,¹⁹⁰³ and he delivered a prophetic rebuke to his

¹⁸⁸⁸Rudolf Bultmann, "εὐλαβέομαι" (*eulabeomai*), *TDNT* 2:751–4, 753.

¹⁸⁸⁹Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 578.

¹⁸⁹⁰Bultmann, "εὐλαβέομαι" (*eulabeomai*), *TDNT* 2:753.

¹⁸⁹¹Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 578.

¹⁸⁹²Danker et. al., "κατασκευάζω" (*kataskeuazō*), *BDAG* 527.

¹⁸⁹³See Intertestamental History at <https://redemptivehistorytheology.com/welcome/intertestamental-history/>

¹⁸⁹⁴deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* 391.

¹⁸⁹⁵Danker et. al., "κατακρίνω" (*katakrinō*), *BDAG*, 519.

¹⁸⁹⁶Hermann Sasse, "κόσμος" (*kosmos*), *TDNT* 3:867–95, 890.

¹⁸⁹⁷deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* 391.

¹⁸⁹⁸Clement, *Clement 1*, 7:6, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/6/mode/2up>.

¹⁸⁹⁹Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.74,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D3%3Awhiston%20section%3D1>.

¹⁹⁰⁰deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* 391.

¹⁹⁰¹Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 340.

¹⁹⁰²Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, Rev. ed.*, 287–8.

¹⁹⁰³deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* 388.

detractors.¹⁹⁰⁴ After all, the construction of the ark served as a warning of the judgment to come.¹⁹⁰⁵ Similarly, we who live faithfully to the Lord call others to consider their ways simply by the way we conduct ourselves in their midst (Phil 2:14–15; 1 Pet 2:11–17; 1 Pet 3:13–17).¹⁹⁰⁶

While Noah was judging the world, he “according to faith, was made an heir of righteousness.” This implies that God effected the change in Noah.¹⁹⁰⁷ The author of Hebrews asserted that righteous people trust in God as they persevere through difficult trials which refine their character. As a result, they become truly upright (Heb 10:32–39; Heb 12:7–14).¹⁹⁰⁸ Those who respond to the Lord in faith receive the righteousness which God bestows upon his people.¹⁹⁰⁹

The concept of inheritance comprises a major theme of Hebrews. Jesus has become “the heir of all things” (Heb 1:1–4). Christians are “heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14) and inheritors of God’s promises (Heb 6:10–12, 17–20; Heb 9:15).¹⁹¹⁰

Consequently, the author of Hebrews invites us to imitate Noah, calling us to trust God for salvation from the coming wrath and to witness to the world by living out our faith. As we prepare for that great day when we shall see Jesus face-to-face, may we too prove faithful.¹⁹¹¹

Read Heb 11:7. How does this verse relate to Heb 11:1–2? What had Noah not yet seen? How did he respond to the revelation he received? In what way did building an ark simultaneously judge the world and make him an heir of righteousness?

¹⁹⁰⁴Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 377.

¹⁹⁰⁵Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 340.

¹⁹⁰⁶deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 391–2.

¹⁹⁰⁷Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 580.

¹⁹⁰⁸deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 392.

¹⁹⁰⁹Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 341.

¹⁹¹⁰Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 341.

¹⁹¹¹deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews,”* 391.

Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Genesis 7:1–24)

The structure of the flood narrative in Gen 6–9 indicates that the main theme concerns why God preserved Noah, not why he sent the deluge (Gen 8:1).¹⁹¹² As a righteous and blameless person, Noah wholeheartedly committed himself to his relationship with the Lord (Gen 6:9).¹⁹¹³ Thus, he would not suffer the destruction which would come upon the rest of humanity (Gen 6:13–14).¹⁹¹⁴

By filling the earth with violence (Gen 6:11),¹⁹¹⁵ rather than with people and animals (Gen 1:20–22, 26–28),¹⁹¹⁶ humanity had ruined the planet in God’s sight (Gen 6:11–12).¹⁹¹⁷ Since they had spoiled the earth by their sin, the Lord would complete its destruction. This is a textbook example of the punishment fitting the crime.¹⁹¹⁸

Humanity’s progressive degradation called for immediate action,¹⁹¹⁹ and God made an irrevocable decision.¹⁹²⁰ However, the Lord informed Noah of his plan to destroy all that had been corrupted yet preserve a righteous remnant (Gen 6:14–18). This would include representatives of the creation that humanity was intended to steward (Gen 1:28; Gen 6:19–20).¹⁹²¹ Unlike in other Ancient Near Eastern flood accounts, Noah’s salvation was neither an accident nor a thwarting of God’s plan.¹⁹²²

As a result, the Lord specified how to build the ark rather than leaving the plan of escape to Noah’s imagination.¹⁹²³ The instructions are quite brief, giving us minimal details (Gen 6:14–16).¹⁹²⁴ However, they are specific enough to imply that Noah was not a shipbuilder by trade.¹⁹²⁵ No rudders or sails are mentioned for Noah’s boat, indicating that it was never intended to be navigated. Noah’s fate was in God’s hands (Gen 7:16).¹⁹²⁶

Only after receiving construction plans did Noah learn why the Lord commanded him to build a gigantic boat. He planned to bring a flood of water to ruin all flesh which had breath (Gen 6:17).¹⁹²⁷ Every human and animal would perish. The breath (*ruach*) of life which the Lord had given, he would take away.¹⁹²⁸

Noah then discovered why God ordered him to build a boat which was far too large for him and his family.¹⁹²⁹ The Lord began by saying, “And I shall establish my covenant with you.” Even before the rain began, the Lord intended to provide for the continuation of human and

¹⁹¹²Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 124.

¹⁹¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

¹⁹¹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

¹⁹¹⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 134.

¹⁹¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

¹⁹¹⁷Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed.*, 134.

¹⁹¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171–2.

¹⁹¹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 126.

¹⁹²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁹²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 122.

¹⁹²²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

¹⁹²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁹²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁹²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 281.

¹⁹²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁹²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 174.

¹⁹²⁸Note that the Hebrew word *ruach* means both “breath” and “spirit/Spirit,” <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/924/mode/2up>.

¹⁹²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

animal life.¹⁹³⁰ By means of an ark, God would save the righteous seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) as well as representatives of the nonhuman creation (Gen 6:18–20).¹⁹³¹

The Lord said, “And you shall enter the ark: you and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.” The Lord would preserve the family structure of humanity, extending salvation to Noah’s children.¹⁹³² Even today, those who have married can attest that a person does not marry one individual but into an entire family.

Noah was surely grateful that he and his sons would not have to find and capture two of every kind of animal.¹⁹³³ Instead, the Lord would guide them to the ark. On the other hand, they did gather and store enough food to sustain them and the animals (Gen 6:21). The effort necessary to build and equip the ark had to be expensive and exhausting.

Yet, “Noah did according to all which God commanded him. Thus he did” (Gen 6:22). This brief statement provides insight into Noah’s character.¹⁹³⁴ It emphatically affirms Noah’s complete obedience. Noah succeeded where Adam had failed (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:6).¹⁹³⁵

By Twos and Sevens

1) Gen 7:1–4: Genesis 7 presumes the completion of the ark.¹⁹³⁶ One hundred years have passed since Moses first introduced Noah (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:6). However, it remains unclear whether Noah dedicated all that time to building the boat. This third scene of the flood narrative consists of the Lord’s instructions for entering the boat Noah constructed. In the extended chiasm structure of Gen 6:9–9:19, it corresponds to Gen 8:15–17, when God commanded him to disembark.¹⁹³⁷

Previously, Moses declared Noah’s righteousness (Gen 6:8–9, 22). For the first time, the Lord described Noah’s integrity.¹⁹³⁸ “And the Lord said to Noah, ‘Enter, you and all of your household, into the ark, because you I have seen [as] righteous before me in this generation.’” Noah expressed his faith by building and equipping the ark as God commanded (Gen 6:14–22).¹⁹³⁹ In contrast to wickedness and corruption wherever he looked (Gen 6:5, 12), here the Lord saw an upright person on the earth.¹⁹⁴⁰

In Gen 6:19–20, God informed Noah that a pair of each kind of animal would come to the ark.¹⁹⁴¹ Now the Lord expanded that directive,¹⁹⁴² saying, “From all the clean animals, you shall take to yourself seven [pairs]. Seven males and their females. And from the animals which are not clean, [from] these two [pairs], males and their females. Also, from the birds of the heavens, seven [pairs]. Seven male and female, to preserve [their] seed on the face of the earth.”¹⁹⁴³

¹⁹³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁹³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

¹⁹³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

¹⁹³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

¹⁹³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 285.

¹⁹³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁹³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 287.

¹⁹³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁹³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 286.

¹⁹³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

¹⁹⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 286.

¹⁹⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁹⁴²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

¹⁹⁴³The Hebrew text says “male and his female” for both clean and unclean animals. I have translated them as plurals for easier reading.

“Clean” (*tahor*) usually refers to ritual purity.¹⁹⁴⁴ The most comprehensive lists of unclean animals appear in Lev 11 and Deut 14:3–20.¹⁹⁴⁵ Unclean birds tend to consume live prey or scavenge for dead animals.¹⁹⁴⁶ Not until after the flood receded would Noah understand the reason for the increased number of clean animals. First, Noah used a few birds to determine when everyone could leave the ark (Gen 8:6–12).¹⁹⁴⁷

After disembarking, he sacrificed clean animals, and God gave him permission to consume them. Therefore, Noah needed extra clean animals to repopulate the earth (Gen 8:17).¹⁹⁴⁸ However, the Lord saved even unclean animals from extinction.¹⁹⁴⁹ As with other aspects of Jewish ceremonial law, such as Sabbath observance and sacrificial offerings (Gen 2:1–3; Gen 4:3–4), the notion of ritual purity began long before God spoke to Moses.¹⁹⁵⁰ As a righteous man who walked with God, it appears that Noah understood this concept.¹⁹⁵¹

In a parallel Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) text, Atrahasis brought “whatever he had...clean animals...fat animals...he caught [and brought on board]. The winged birds of the heavens, the cattle...the wild creatures...he put on board.”¹⁹⁵²

After decades of Noah’s preparation, at last the foretold time arrived. The Lord said, “After seven days, I am sending rain on the earth [for] forty days and forty nights. And I shall wipe out all that subsists which I have made from the face of the ground.” Biblical Hebrew features fifteen different words which refer to rain. The one used here (*matar*), is the most common. It points to regular rainfall in terms of its strength (Job 38:26–27; Isa 30:23).¹⁹⁵³ However, in this case, it differed in duration.¹⁹⁵⁴

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Noah figure Utnapishtim explained: “[On the sev]enth [day] the ship was completed...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 in the battle, which it had fought like an army. The sea grew quiet, the tempest was still, the flood ceased. I looked at the weather: stillness had set in.”¹⁹⁵⁵

In that ANE account, Utnapishtim’s craftsmen built the enormous boat in seven days, a period equivalent to the duration of the flood. Given the scale of these monumental events, the amounts of time denoted in Genesis appear more realistic.¹⁹⁵⁶

a) Read Gen 7:1–4. Why did God see Noah as righteous? What made seven pairs of each kind of clean animal necessary? How was this rain different from a typical storm? What would be the result?

¹⁹⁴⁴H. Ringgren, “טָהוֹר” (*tahor*), *TDNT* 5:287–96, 291.

¹⁹⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

¹⁹⁴⁶Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven and London: Doubleday, 1991), 662.

¹⁹⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

¹⁹⁴⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 7:4.

¹⁹⁴⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 287–8.

¹⁹⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

¹⁹⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

¹⁹⁵²Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” in *RANE*, 29.

¹⁹⁵³H. J. Zobel, “מָטָר” (*matar*), *TDOT* 8:250–65, 250–1.

¹⁹⁵⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 288.

¹⁹⁵⁵Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:76, 127–32, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁹⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

A Reversal of Creation

b) Gen 7:5–16: This section comprises the fourth scene of the flood narrative. It describes Noah’s obedience, the passengers’ entrance into the ark, and the beginning of the flood.¹⁹⁵⁷ As with Gen 1, Moses used several literary devices. This indicates that he had either received a poem-like version of the flood story or that he added lyrical embellishments to the narrative account.¹⁹⁵⁸ As a result, this scene consists of poetic narrative, full of tension and emotion.¹⁹⁵⁹

Moses condensed all of Noah’s difficult work into this brief statement, “And Noah did according to all which the Lord had commanded him” (Gen 6:14–7:3). However, some details appear in Gen 7:6–9,¹⁹⁶⁰ such as the date of the flood’s beginning, Noah’s age, who occupied the ark, and how much time Noah had to fill it.¹⁹⁶¹ Noah did what the Lord commanded, and God did what he promised. Both proved faithful to fulfill what the Lord said should occur.¹⁹⁶²

Throughout Gen 7:6–16a, Moses employed extended parallelism. After briefly describing what took place in Gen 7:6–9, he returned to the same topics with greater detail.¹⁹⁶³ In this case, Gen 7:6a matches Gen 7:11a; Gen 7:6b parallels Gen 7:11b–12; Gen 7:7 goes with Gen 7:13; Gen 7:8 correlates with Gen 7:14; and Gen 7:9a is like Gen 7:15–16a.¹⁹⁶⁴ By repeating the same information with increasing precision, Moses heightened the tension of the narrative.¹⁹⁶⁵ We shall focus upon the more detailed verses.

Moses began Gen 7:10 by writing, “And it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.” The Lord had promised this seven-day period in Gen 7:4.¹⁹⁶⁶ This verse begins a small chiasm within the extended reverse parallelism of the flood account (Gen 6:9–9:19):

- A 7 days (time before flood after God commands Noah to enter the ark, Gen 7:10)
- B 40 days (raining on the earth, Gen 7:12, 17)
- C 150 days (waters prevail, Gen 7:24; Gen 8:3)
- Ḃ 40 days (Noah lifts the ark’s cover after landing on Ararat, Gen 8:6)
- Á 7 days (Noah dispatches a second dove, Gen 8:10, 12)¹⁹⁶⁷

Moses reported an amazingly precise date.¹⁹⁶⁸ He wrote, “In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this very day all of the springs of the great deep were broken open, and the windows of the heavens were opened.”

By including an exact date—which typically occurs in the Ancient Near East (ANE) only in the annals of kings—Moses imbued the account with historical credibility.¹⁹⁶⁹ Using the Hebrew calendar based upon the lunar cycle, the total length of time Noah spent on the ark totals

¹⁹⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

¹⁹⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

¹⁹⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

¹⁹⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 288.

¹⁹⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

¹⁹⁶²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 289.

¹⁹⁶³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

¹⁹⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

¹⁹⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

¹⁹⁶⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

¹⁹⁶⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 289–90.

¹⁹⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

¹⁹⁶⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

twelve months and eleven days (Gen 8:13–14).¹⁹⁷⁰ However, a lunar year lasts eleven days less than the time it takes for the earth to completely orbit the sun. Based upon our reckoning, the flood lasted exactly one year.¹⁹⁷¹

Moses named two sources of flooding. A massive eruption occurred due to the land over a subterranean ocean bursting open, and a tremendous downpour fell from above.¹⁹⁷² Both “springs (*mayin*) of the great (*rav*) deep (*tehom*)” and “windows (*arubah*) of the heavens (*shamay*)” appear in other poetic biblical accounts (Ps 78:15–16; Mal 3:10).¹⁹⁷³ This portrayal of underground springs conforms to the ANE view of land sitting upon subterranean waters (Gen 2:10; Ps 24:1–2).¹⁹⁷⁴

They gushed forth when God cleaved the springs open in a sudden explosion.¹⁹⁷⁵ By releasing these waters, the Lord returned the earth to its original chaos (Gen 1:2).¹⁹⁷⁶ Approximately 9,300 years ago, the Mediterranean broke through the Bosphorus into a shrinking freshwater lakebed, creating an enormous waterfall and deep erosion into one section of what is now the Black Sea. This resulted in cataclysmic flooding.¹⁹⁷⁷

Just as we describe the “setting of the sun,” “the windows of the heavens were opened” does not depict scientific language.¹⁹⁷⁸ The only other usage of the term “window of heaven” in the ANE occurs in an account of Baal erecting his home.¹⁹⁷⁹ It says, “He opens a casement in the house, a window within the pa[lace]. Baal op[ens] *rifts in* [the cloud]s. Ba[al gives] forth his holy voice, Baal discharges the *ut[erance of his li]ps*. His h[oly] voice [convulses] the earth...the mountains quake.”¹⁹⁸⁰

The language in Gen 7 regarding the two sources of water alludes to the imagery of Gen 1:6–7.¹⁹⁸¹ God was undoing his great act of separating the waters above from the waters below the earth.¹⁹⁸² Israel’s prophets alluded to the reversal of creation as an act of judgment (Isa 24:17–21; Jer 4:23–26; Amos 7:4–6).¹⁹⁸³

Moses’s original audience would have recalled this cosmic scene from Enuma Elish in which the god Marduk split the remains of the evil water goddess Tiamat:¹⁹⁸⁴ “When the lord [Marduk] paused to view her dead body that he might divide the monster and do

¹⁹⁷⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

¹⁹⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

¹⁹⁷²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

¹⁹⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

¹⁹⁷⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 126.

¹⁹⁷⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 292.

¹⁹⁷⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

¹⁹⁷⁷Yanchilina et. al., “Compilation of Geophysical, Geochronological, and Geochemical Evidence Indicates a Rapid Mediterranean-Derived Submergence of the Black Sea’s Shelf and Subsequent Substantial Salinification in the Early Holocene,” *Marine Geology* 1, no. 383 (1January 2017): 14–34, 32, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025322716302961>.

¹⁹⁷⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

¹⁹⁷⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

¹⁹⁸⁰Ginsberg, “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 7:26–31, 135,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n159/mode/2up. Italics original.

¹⁹⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

¹⁹⁸²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

¹⁹⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

¹⁹⁸⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 292.

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.”¹⁹⁸⁵

The flood which Noah experienced reversed the creation order. The waters above and below acted as the Lord commanded. By his word, God can control or release them (Isa 51:9–10; Ps 74:13–15).¹⁹⁸⁶ Moses reported, “And the downpour [fell] on the earth forty days and forty nights.” Unlike the general word for rain (*matar*) in Gen 7:4, the term used here (*geshem*) refers to heavy showers or a deluge (Job 37:5–6; Ezra 10:9; Zech 10:1).¹⁹⁸⁷ Torrential rains fell upon the earth.¹⁹⁸⁸

However, Moses’s emphasis lies upon the salvation of those inside the ark, rather than upon those who did not seek refuge there.¹⁹⁸⁹ He again described the entry of the passengers into the boat but with greater details, conferring a majestic tone to the account.¹⁹⁹⁰ Just as with the logistics of building the ark, Moses omitted the specific aspects of this embarkation.¹⁹⁹¹

The text conveys that Noah and his family served as grand marshals of this parade, with various types of animals proceeding behind them.¹⁹⁹² Disney’s decision to animate this scene to the tune of Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance” in *Fantasia 2000* seems fitting.¹⁹⁹³

Moses wrote, “On that very same day, Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, them and all of the living things according to their kinds. And every animal according to its kind, and every creeping thing which creeps upon the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every wing.” The phrase “on that very same day” signifies a memorable event (Gen 17:23; Exod 12:41; Deut 32:48–50).¹⁹⁹⁴

That Moses mentioned Noah’s sons before his wife and cited none of the women by name reflects the patriarchal emphasis of ANE cultures.¹⁹⁹⁵ Designating the younger women as “the three wives of his sons” indicates that they comprised a separate group within the family.¹⁹⁹⁶ Evidently, none of the younger couples had produced children by this time.¹⁹⁹⁷

Moses continued, “And they entered into the ark to Noah, two [by] two from all flesh in which [was] the breath of life. Those that went in, male and female of all flesh, entered as God commanded him.” Much like the Lord brought the animals to Adam to name them, so God led creatures to Noah to preserve them (Gen 2:19).¹⁹⁹⁸

Earlier, the Lord had announced that he would “destroy all flesh in which was the breath of life” (Gen 6:17). Now, he exempted a remnant from imminent extermination.¹⁹⁹⁹ In fact, God

¹⁹⁸⁵Speiser, “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” 4:135–40, 67, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

¹⁹⁸⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

¹⁹⁸⁷H. J. Zobel, “מָטָר” (*matar, geshem*), *TDOT* 8:250–65, 251.

¹⁹⁸⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

¹⁹⁸⁹Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 126.

¹⁹⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

¹⁹⁹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293–4.

¹⁹⁹²Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138–9.

¹⁹⁹³The video clip is available online.

¹⁹⁹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

¹⁹⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

¹⁹⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

¹⁹⁹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

¹⁹⁹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

¹⁹⁹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 294.

invisibly guided this great procession of male and female animals to protection.²⁰⁰⁰ Moses did not mention the seven pairs of clean creatures and birds here. However, everyone whom the Lord designated entered the ark (Gen 7:2–3, 16).²⁰⁰¹

This section ends on a dramatic note, saying, “And the Lord shut him in.” God’s act of sealing Noah and those with him into the ark emphasizes divine protection (Job 38:8–11).²⁰⁰² While the storm raged around them, the one who shut them in guaranteed their safety.²⁰⁰³

Other ANE flood heroes had very different experiences.²⁰⁰⁴ In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim said, “I watched the appearance of the weather. The weather was awesome to behold. I boarded the ship and battened up the entrance.”²⁰⁰⁵ According to the Atrahasis Epic, “The appearance of the weather changed. [The god] Adad roared in the clouds. As soon as [Atrahasis] heard Adad’s voice, pitch was brought to him to close the door. After he had bolted the door, Adad was roaring in the clouds. The winds became savage as he arose. He severed the mooring line and set the boat adrift.”²⁰⁰⁶ Unlike those great heroes, God’s favor saved Noah and his entourage (Gen 6:8).²⁰⁰⁷

Read Gen 7:5–16. What is the significance of Moses listing the exact date when the flood began? How was God reversing creation? Why is the fact that God shut the door important? How does that encourage you?

Not Knowing the Day or the Hour

2) Matt 24:36–39: During the time of Christ, Jewish scholars debated) whether they could predict the onset of the age to come.²⁰⁰⁸ While some asserted that no one could know,²⁰⁰⁹ the Pharisees believed the messiah would come to usher in the kingdom of God only when each of the Israelites kept themselves from sin.²⁰¹⁰ Consequently, Jesus’s disregard for ritual purity on the Sabbath enraged them (Matt 12:1–2).

According to one early Jewish text, the Lord said, “Though I have set a limit to ‘the end,’ that it will happen in its time regardless of whether they will do repentance or not...the Messiah will come if they keep just one Sabbath, because the Sabbath is equivalent to all the law” (Shemot Rabbah 25:12; Yerushalmi, Ta’anit 1:10).²⁰¹¹

²⁰⁰⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²⁰⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

²⁰⁰²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 226.

²⁰⁰³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²⁰⁰⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²⁰⁰⁵Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, 11:91–3, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁰⁰⁶Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atrahasis,” *RANE*, 29.

²⁰⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²⁰⁰⁸*Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 97a-99a, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>.

²⁰⁰⁹Keener, *JVPBCCNT*, Matt 24:36.

²⁰¹⁰Albrecht Oepke, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *TDNT* 5:858–71, 864.

²⁰¹¹J. Immanuel Schochet, “Hastening the Coming of Mashiach,” note 5.

http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article_cdo/aid/101681/jewish/Hastening-Mashiach.htm#footnote5a101681.

Yet, the *Babylonian Talmud* states:

“Our rabbis taught: ‘Seven things are hidden from men. These are they: the day of death, and the day of comfort, the [extent] of judgment; and a man does not know what is in his neighbor's heart; and a man does not know from what he will earn; and when the Davidic dynasty will return; and when the wicked kingdom will come to an end.’”²⁰¹²

Meanwhile, the Essenes of Qumran looked forward to the day when everyone would understand the meaning of the law and obey it perfectly. At that time, they believed the illegitimate high priests in power since the Maccabean Rebellion would be conquered and the rightful heir of David would emerge. They would join the messiah to overthrow demons and human enemies, ushering in God's kingdom.²⁰¹³

Earlier in this chapter, Christ discussed at length which signs do not indicate that he will return soon (Matt 24:1–28). Instead, they refer primarily to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.²⁰¹⁴ However, he gave one exception, saying, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole inhabited world as a witness to the people groups, and then the end shall come” (Matt 24:14).²⁰¹⁵ Therefore, our proclamation of the gospel shall hasten the return of Christ. Likewise, failure to share Jesus with others will delay his coming (2 Pet 3:9).²⁰¹⁶

Since Jesus returned to heaven (Acts 1:1–2, 9–11), the world has continually experienced evil and suffering. That fact has caused some believers throughout church history to speculate concerning an imminent return of Christ.²⁰¹⁷ Every generation eagerly awaits the cosmic signs of the end of this age (Matt 24:29–31).²⁰¹⁸

In response to the disciples' question in Matt 24:1–3, Jesus finally gave a direct answer.²⁰¹⁹ He said, “But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Frequently, the term “day” (*hēmera*) connotes the final judgment (Matt 7:21–23; Luke 10:12; 2 Tim 1:12).²⁰²⁰ However, in this instance, the sense of “day and hour” simply refers to an amount of time.²⁰²¹ Therefore, Christ asserted that we cannot determine the month or even the year of his return.²⁰²²

The Lord often keeps angels unaware of his plans. Despite their superhuman abilities, God limits their knowledge (1 Pet 1:10–12).²⁰²³ He restricts what they know and what they can do (Ps 91:11; Ps 103:19–21; Heb 1:5–7, 13–14).²⁰²⁴ On the other hand, it is astounding that Jesus—the central figure on the day of his return—did not know when that will occur.²⁰²⁵ Upon taking on flesh, Christ refused to utilize the attributes of God so he could fully experience

²⁰¹²*Babylonian Talmud*, Pesachim 54b, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>.

²⁰¹³Marius De Jonge, “Messiah.” *ABD* 4:777–88, 783.

²⁰¹⁴Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 88.

²⁰¹⁵Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (vol. 11 of *New Studies in Biblical Theology*; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 99.

²⁰¹⁶Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 344.

²⁰¹⁷Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 75.

²⁰¹⁸Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

²⁰¹⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 799.

²⁰²⁰Gerhard von Rad and Gerhard Delling, “ἡμέρα” (*hēmera*), *TDNT* 2:943–53, 952.

²⁰²¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ώρα” (*hōra*), *BDAG* 1102–3, 1102.

²⁰²²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

²⁰²³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

²⁰²⁴Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 411.

²⁰²⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 939.

humanity (Phil 2:5–7).²⁰²⁶ While living on earth, Jesus often set aside his omniscience.²⁰²⁷ He used his divine prerogatives only when the Father willed that he do so through the power of the Spirit (John 1:47–51; John 4:15–19).²⁰²⁸

Before becoming human, the Son of God possessed all the characteristics of God,²⁰²⁹ including his sovereign divine majesty (Phil 2:6–8).²⁰³⁰ Christ was equal to the Father in cosmic authority while in his pre-incarnate state. Rather than conveying that “equality with God” was something Jesus desired which he did not have, such parity was always his.²⁰³¹

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 their wills are unified.²⁰³² Where there is one, so are the other two, without any one being greater than the others.²⁰³³ As Augustine (354–430) stated, “Believe then that the Son is equal with the Father... For if he be not equal, he is not a true Son.”²⁰³⁴

A review of Philip Schaff’s massive work *The Creeds of Christendom* reveals that the currently popular notion that Christ was subordinate to the Father by obeying him prior to his birth does not appear. In fact, those few creeds in which any mention of subordination appears vigorously condemned it.²⁰³⁵

Contrary to what one would expect of a sovereign Lord, Jesus did not regard his equality with God as a right to be utilized.²⁰³⁶ To become incarnate, the Son “emptied himself” of what would have prevented him from becoming fully human.²⁰³⁷ This involved divesting himself of his divine privileges and prestige.²⁰³⁸ 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).²⁰³⁹

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).²⁰⁴⁰

The world’s fastest sprinter 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.²⁰⁴¹ In Christ we see God living a fully human life,²⁰⁴² in addition to a person living in complete reliance upon the Father and the Spirit (John 11:40–44; Luke 4:1).²⁰⁴³

²⁰²⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

²⁰²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

²⁰²⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

²⁰²⁹Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 114.

²⁰³⁰Behm, “μορφή” (*morphē*), *TNDT* 4:751.

²⁰³¹Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 207–8.

²⁰³²Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113.

²⁰³³William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Ed.* (ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 250.

²⁰³⁴Augustine, “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.

²⁰³⁵Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, 3 Vols.* (rev David S. Schaff; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1931), <https://archive.org/stream/creedsofchriste01scha#page/n7/mode/2up>.

²⁰³⁶Werner Foerster, “αργαμος” (*harpagmos*), *TNDT* 1:473–4, 474.

²⁰³⁷Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 145.

²⁰³⁸Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “κενόω” (*kenōō*), *BDAG*, 539.

²⁰³⁹Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 117.

²⁰⁴⁰Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 115.

²⁰⁴¹Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 670–1.

²⁰⁴²Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 213.

²⁰⁴³Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 658.

During Christ's time on earth, the Father did not want him to know the date of his triumphant return.²⁰⁴⁴ However, in our era, Jesus sits upon his glorious throne (Acts 2:32–36; Acts 7:55–56; Rom 8:33–34). He shall be the one to judge all people (Matt 16:27; Matt 25:31–46; Phil 2:9–11).²⁰⁴⁵

After his resurrection, the disciples asked if Jesus would restore the kingdom of God at that time. He responded that the Father had determined when that would be. It was not for them “to know the time or period of time which the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:6–7).²⁰⁴⁶ Notably, Christ did not say that he remained ignorant; only that we should.

Jesus then told three parables as illustrations. In the first, his return is completely unexpected, in the second, he comes back sooner than anticipated (Matt 24:45–51), and in the third, he arrives later than people predicted (Matt 25:1–13).²⁰⁴⁷ Since we cannot know the day of his return, we must remain ever vigilant.²⁰⁴⁸

a) Read Matt 24:36. Why didn't Jesus know the time of his return? Do you think he does now? Why or why not?

As in the Days of Noah

b) Matt 24:37–39: Jesus continued, explaining to his disciples, “For even as in the days of Noah, so shall be the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man.” Most people will ignore the signs and warnings of impending judgment. Yet—as with the flood—it shall affect everyone and everything on earth.²⁰⁴⁹

Parousia is a technical term for “the imminent coming of the exalted Lord in Messianic glory.”²⁰⁵⁰ Within the gospels, it occurs only in Matthew.²⁰⁵¹ This appears to derive from Greek classical literature, with 255 occurrences. In contrast, *parousia* occurs only four times in the Greek Old Testament, all in apocryphal books (e.g. Judith 10:18; 2 Macc 8:12–13).²⁰⁵² Greco-Roman usage of “*parousia*” referred primarily to the arrival of a hidden deity who made its presence known by a revelation of power.²⁰⁵³

For example, Diodorus Siculus (first century BC) wrote: “After he had secured the throne, he instituted the initiatory rites of [the goddess] Demeter... transferring their ritual from Egypt. And the tradition that an *advent* of the goddess into Attica also took place at that time is reasonable, since it was then that the fruits which are named after her were brought to Athens, and this is why it was thought that the discovery of the seed had been made again, as though Demeter had bestowed the gift. And the Athenians on their part

²⁰⁴⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

²⁰⁴⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 939.

²⁰⁴⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

²⁰⁴⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 718.

²⁰⁴⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

²⁰⁴⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

²⁰⁵⁰Oepke, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *TDNT* 5:858–71, 865.

²⁰⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 719.

²⁰⁵²Result of Logos 7 word study on “παρουσία” (*parousia*).

²⁰⁵³Arndt, Danker and Bauer, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *BDAG*, 780–1.

agree that it was...when a lack of rain had wiped out the crops, that Demeter came to them with the gift of grain.”²⁰⁵⁴

Eventually, “*parousia*” also could describe the visit of a high-ranking person, such as a king or emperor.²⁰⁵⁵ Polybius, a Roman historian (ca. 200–117 BC), recorded this event: “Cornelius with his colleagues went to king Philip. They met him near Tempe, and after speaking with him on the other matters about which they had instructions, they advised him to send an embassy to Rome, to ask for an alliance, in order to [deter] all suspicion of being...in expectation of the *arrival* of Antiochus.”²⁰⁵⁶

Since the time of Christ’s return remains unknown, many people will neglect to prepare.²⁰⁵⁷ Just as the flood overtook people who remained unaware of their peril, the Son of Man shall suddenly arrive without warning to render judgment (Dan 7:13–14).²⁰⁵⁸ In the days of Noah, only those who prepared in advance survived: everyone else perished (Matt 25:1–13).²⁰⁵⁹

“For as it was in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark.” The people of Noah’s era engaged in the normal activities of life.²⁰⁶⁰ Their affairs so consumed them that they failed to recognize spiritual realities.²⁰⁶¹ Christ continued, “They did not understand until the flood came and swept them all away. In this manner shall be the coming of the Son of Man.”

Noah’s contemporaries lived in ignorance of their precarious state until judgment fell upon them.²⁰⁶² In the same way, spiritually unprepared people who live at the time of Christ’s return shall not escape (1 Thess 5:1–6).²⁰⁶³

Read Matt 24:37–39. How does the meaning of “*parousia*” affect the way you view Christ’s return? What made Noah and his contemporaries a particularly apt illustration? Why does this parable add a sense of urgency to your call to share the gospel?

²⁰⁵⁴Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 1.29.3, 96,
[Http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1A*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1A*.html).

²⁰⁵⁵Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*παρουσία*” (*parousia*), *BDAG*, 780–1.

²⁰⁵⁶Polybius, *Histories* (trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh; London. New York: MacMillan, 1889), 18.48.4,
[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D18%3Achapter%3D48](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D18%3Achapter%3D48).

²⁰⁵⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

²⁰⁵⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591.

²⁰⁵⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

²⁰⁶⁰Osborne, *Matthew*, 904.

²⁰⁶¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

²⁰⁶²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 719.

²⁰⁶³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

One Will Be Left

c) Matt 24:40–41: Jesus continued to teach his disciples about the necessity of faithful living,²⁰⁶⁴ employing two illustrations based upon life in Israel.²⁰⁶⁵ The first parable says, “At that time, two men were in the field. One was taken (*paralambanō*) and one was left (*aphiēmi*). Two women were grinding grain with a hand mill. One was taken and one was left.”

Men routinely worked in a field and women ground grain, without any sense of threat.²⁰⁶⁶ In fact, women in small households considered milling flour a form of drudgery.²⁰⁶⁷ Families typically shared a courtyard and large grinding stones with their neighbors, who might have been relatives.²⁰⁶⁸ Just as a lit lamp indicated the presence of someone at home in the evening, so the sound of millstones revealed the presence of a woman (Jer 25:10–11; Rev 18:21–23). Grinding comprised a daily chore.²⁰⁶⁹

The Mishnah regulated this activity:

“One woman may lend to another who is suspected [not to observe properly the laws] of the Sabbatical year, a flour-sieve, a winnow, a handmill, and a stove, but she may not assist her to winnow or to grind. The wife of [one learned in, and observant of, the law] may lend to the wife of an unlearned person, a flour-sieve or a winnow, and may aid her to winnow, to grind, or to sift; but as soon as water is poured over the flour, she may not further assist her, for those who transgress the law are not to be aided in their transgressions (*m. Gittim* 5.9).

Women of varying religious commitments could grind grain together. In Jesus’s scenario, one of the two had prepared spiritually while the other had not. No middle ground exists (Matt 10:34–39).²⁰⁷⁰ At some future time, people will go about their daily routines when—without warning—God will take some while leaving others. This raises intriguing questions. What determines who the Lord takes?²⁰⁷¹ Is being taken a good or a bad thing?

Paralambanō means “to take with oneself,” usually in close fellowship (Matt 2:13; Matt 17:1; John 14:3).²⁰⁷² On the other hand, it can have the nuance of “take into custody” or “remove forcibly” (John 19:17–18).²⁰⁷³ Regarding the word “left” (*aphiēmi*), we can translate it as “to let go,” “to abandon,” “to divorce,” “to leave standing,” and even “to forgive” or “release from moral obligation” (Matt 4:11, 22; 1 Cor 7:12; Matt 5:23–24; Matt 12:32).²⁰⁷⁴ As a result, neither the context nor the meaning of this pair of verbs produces a conclusive answer. The answers hinge upon whether the verbs “swept away” (*airō*) (v. 39) and “taken away” (*paralambanō*) in Matt 24:39–40 have the same meaning.²⁰⁷⁵

Consequently, New Testament scholars remain divided regarding who will be taken and who will be left. Some assert that angels shall gather God’s people while leaving others on earth to face judgment (Matt 24:31).²⁰⁷⁶ They make a comparison with Noah and his family being

²⁰⁶⁴Blomberg, “Matthew,” In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 88.

²⁰⁶⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

²⁰⁶⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

²⁰⁶⁷Karel Van der Toorn, “Mill, Millstone,” *ABD* 4:831–2, 831.

²⁰⁶⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591.

²⁰⁶⁹Van der Toorn, “Mill, Millstone,” *ABD* 4:831.

²⁰⁷⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

²⁰⁷¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

²⁰⁷²Gerhard Dellling, “παραλαμβάνω” (*paralambanō*), *TDNT* 4:11–14, 13.

²⁰⁷³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παραλαμβάνω” (*paralambanō*), *BDAG*, 767–8.

²⁰⁷⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀφίημι” (*aphiēmi*), 156–7.

²⁰⁷⁵Osborne, *Matthew*, 905.

²⁰⁷⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

gathered into the ark while those left outside perished.²⁰⁷⁷ Other experts note that the nineteenth century concept of believers being taken into heaven prior to judgment falling upon the earth rests upon shaky theological ground.²⁰⁷⁸ In fact, a recent survey of Protestant pastors has revealed that only one-third endorse a pre-tribulation rapture.²⁰⁷⁹

The crucial text for those who believe that Christians shall avoid the tribulation to come is 2 Thess 2:1–7. They view “the one who restrains” (*katechō*) in v. 7 as the Holy Spirit within believers, a notion which some prominent commentators deride.²⁰⁸⁰ Many scholars assert that Paul omitted the identity of the restrainer because the Christians in Thessalonica knew who it was.²⁰⁸¹ Thus, any attempt to name that person or force consists of speculation.²⁰⁸² John Chrysostom (ca. 349–407) asserted, “If [Paul] meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly.”²⁰⁸³

Other Scriptures teach that Christians who are still alive will rise to meet the Lord when he returns at the end of this age (Matt 24:27–31; 1 Cor 15:50–52; 2 Thess 1:3–10; 1 Pet 4:12–19).²⁰⁸⁴ All of creation eagerly anticipates that day (Rom 8:16–22).

Several usages of “*paralambanō*” in the Greek Old Testament also carry the nuance of being forcibly removed (Jer 49:2; Lam 3:2). Matthew chose this word to describe how the Roman soldiers took Jesus away to torture and mock him (Matt 27:27). Taking people away into judgment fits with the threat rendered by the Roman army when they destroyed the temple (Matt 24:15–22).²⁰⁸⁵ It also meshes with the flood taking the wicked away (Matt 24:39).²⁰⁸⁶

Finally, the parallel passage in Luke gives the impression that those left behind face judgment (Luke 17:34–37).²⁰⁸⁷ Earlier in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus delivered several parables about the judgment to come. The tale in Matt 13:24–30 and its interpretation in Matt 13:36–43 illustrate the destruction of the wicked, leaving the righteous behind. Once judgment day arrives, that separation shall be final (cf. Matt 13:47–50).²⁰⁸⁸

Read Matt 24:40–41. How do the two men in the field differ from each other? Why do you think Jesus chose activities like farming and grinding grain for this parable? Who do you think will be taken? Why?

²⁰⁷⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

²⁰⁷⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 1094–5.

²⁰⁷⁹Bob Smietana, “Sorry, ‘Left Behind’: Only One-Third of Pastors Share Your End Times Theology,” *Christianity Today*, 26 April 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/april/sorry-left-behind-pastors-end-times-rapture-antichrist.html>.

²⁰⁸⁰F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 171.

²⁰⁸¹Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 288.

²⁰⁸²Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 256.

²⁰⁸³John Chrysostom, “Homily 4 on 2 Thessalonians,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon (NPNF1–13)* (ed. Philip Schaff; revisor John A. Broadus; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 388, <https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc14john#page/490/mode/2up>.

²⁰⁸⁴Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, Rev. Ed.*, 610–1.

²⁰⁸⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

²⁰⁸⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801. However, the verb used in Matt 24:39 for “swept them away” differs from that in v. 40.

²⁰⁸⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591–2.

²⁰⁸⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

Continually Watch!

d) Matt 24:42–44: Evoking the image of a night watchman,²⁰⁸⁹ Christ concluded his previous illustration and introduced the next one.²⁰⁹⁰ He said, “Therefore, continually watch, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming” (Matt 26:40–41).²⁰⁹¹

Concerning such men, Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote this:

“Whatsoever it is which the king says or commands, it is done of necessity, and that without any delay, while he in the meantime is satiated with all sorts of food and pleasures, and sleeps in quiet. He is guarded by such as watch, and such as are...fixed down to the place through fear; for no one dares leave him, even when he is asleep, nor does anyone go away and take care of his own affairs; but he esteems this one thing the only work of necessity, to guard the king, and accordingly to this he wholly addicts himself.”²⁰⁹²

This concept of watching requires preparation for Christ’s return, not merely looking forward to it. As the parables in Matt 24:45–25:46 indicate, we equip ourselves by behaving righteously in the various circumstances of life (1 Cor 16:13–14; 1 Pet 5:6–10).²⁰⁹³

In his second illustration, Jesus said, “But know this: if the owner of the house had known which time of night the thief was coming, he would have watched and not permitted him to dig into his house.”

Since burglary occurred commonly in Israel, this caught the disciples’ attention.²⁰⁹⁴ People typically built their homes from dried mud, so thieves could excavate through the walls or simply dig a hole from outside into the house (Matt 6:19–20).²⁰⁹⁵ Israelites considered a thief who broke in at night a dangerous threat. Therefore, a homeowner could kill such trespassers without retribution (Exod 22:2–3).²⁰⁹⁶

Some scholars attach no meaning to Jesus comparing himself to a sinister person. They stress only that his return will be sudden and unexpected.²⁰⁹⁷ Others note that Old Testament prophets frequently cited nocturnal thieves when pronouncing divine judgment (Jer 49:9–10; Obad 4–6; Joel 2:9–11).²⁰⁹⁸

An Aramaic paraphrase of Exod 12:42 names four important events which took place or would occur on the first night of Passover. These include creation (Gen 1–2), the Lord’s promise of descendants to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; Gen 15:4–5), the inaugural ritual in Egypt (Exod 12:1–13), and the future arrival of the messiah.²⁰⁹⁹

This metaphor of Jesus coming like a thief made a strong impression upon the early church (2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:1–3; Rev 16:15).²¹⁰⁰ Its meaning is straightforward: if you knew

²⁰⁸⁹Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

²⁰⁹⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 802.

²⁰⁹¹A present imperative in Greek denotes continuous or repetitive action.

²⁰⁹²Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.3.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D11%3Awhiston+chapter%3D3%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

²⁰⁹³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

²⁰⁹⁴Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

²⁰⁹⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 384.

²⁰⁹⁶Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Matt 24:42–4.

²⁰⁹⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

²⁰⁹⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

²⁰⁹⁹Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 163.

²¹⁰⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942.

someone planned to break into your home tonight, you would take precautions, such as remaining awake and on guard.²¹⁰¹ Like the homeowner, we must remain alert to the possibility of Christ returning soon.²¹⁰² We have no idea when the time shall come.²¹⁰³ Therefore, we must always remain ready.²¹⁰⁴

Christ concluded this illustration by saying, “For this reason, you also must be continually ready, because in an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” No calculations or keeping track of signs can enable us to determine the date of Jesus’s return.²¹⁰⁵ Therefore, we must continuously engage in spiritual communion with the Lord.²¹⁰⁶ New Testament authors always linked their discussions of the end times with a call to ethical living. They never presented such theology merely to satisfy curiosity (Acts 1:6–11; 2 Thess 2:7–15; Rev 22:10–15).²¹⁰⁷

Noah and his family could not have predicted the time of the flood when they first received the command to build the ark (Gen 6:13–14). Yet, when the time came, they had prepared enough to be ready in only seven days (Gen 7:1–5). Meanwhile, everyone else went on living normally. Just like Noah, we must always remain prepared for what we know will come.²¹⁰⁸

An early Christian document called the Didache (50–120 AD) summarized the apostles’ teaching on this matter:

“Watch for your life’s sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect in the last time.

“For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning.

“Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead -- yet not of all, but as it is said: “The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him.” Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.”²¹⁰⁹

Due to Jesus’s impending return, we must continually practice holiness as we await his appearing.

²¹⁰¹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 802.

²¹⁰²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

²¹⁰³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942–3.

²¹⁰⁴Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

²¹⁰⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942–3.

²¹⁰⁶Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 385.

²¹⁰⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 721.

²¹⁰⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 943.

²¹⁰⁹Alexander Roberts, et al. (eds.), “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 7: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, 2 Clement, Early Liturgies* (New York: Christian Literature, 1886), 382, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather007robe#page/382/mode/2up>.

Read Matt 24:42–44. How will Jesus resemble a burglar breaking into a home at night? Why must we link our understanding of the end times with right living? Is there any value in predictions of when Christ shall return? Why or why not?

The Waters Prevail

3) Gen 7:17–20: This section begins the fifth scene of the flood narrative.²¹¹⁰ One commentator titles Gen 7:17–24 as The Triumphant Flood, for here the story reaches its peak.²¹¹¹ All the recorded action takes place outside of the ark,²¹¹² rendering a depiction of eerie, silent desolation.²¹¹³ To enhance the mood, Moses employed repetition and often used words containing the letters m, b, and p to convey the impression of the ark rolling on the water.²¹¹⁴

He began by writing, “And the flood came to pass, forty days upon the earth. And the waters increased, and it lifted the ark, and it was high over all the earth.” For emphasis, Moses repeated the duration of the flood and that the rainfall consisted of a deluge.²¹¹⁵ He employed the same Hebrew word for the increase (*ravah*) of the waters that he reported the Lord had used to bless humans and animals that they might “multiply” (Gen 1:28) This gives us another hint that the flood reversed creation.²¹¹⁶

Indeed, “The waters prevailed (*gabar*) and they increased exceedingly upon the earth.” “Prevailed” connotes having the upper hand due to greater strength than opposing forces (Exod 17:8–13; 1 Sam 2:9–10).²¹¹⁷ Thus, the waters did not merely rise, they triumphed.²¹¹⁸ Moses used a form of this military word four times to describe this flood.²¹¹⁹ Chaotic waters which covered the earth at the beginning of God’s creative activity once again surged like hostile warriors, undoing the order which the Lord had put into place (Gen 1:1–2, 9–10).²¹²⁰

Despite this savage tempest, “The ark proceeded on the surface of the waters.”²¹²¹

As the waves crashed, the boat traveled over them.²¹²² This sentence conveys a sense of peace and safety. God in his mercy had shut Noah and his fellow passengers inside and he would bring them safely through the storm without harm.²¹²³

²¹¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

²¹¹¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²¹¹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 295.

²¹¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

²¹¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²¹¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²¹¹⁷H. Kosmala, “גָּבַר” (*gabhar*), *TDOT* 2:367–382, 368.

²¹¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²¹¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²¹²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²¹²²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²¹²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

Moses wrote, “And the waters prevailed more and more exceedingly upon the earth, and all of the high mountains were covered which were under all of the heavens.” The sense of the Hebrew is hard to capture in English, as the beginning of the verse says, “prevailed exceedingly exceedingly upon the earth.” Hebrew authors often used repetition to express intensification,²¹²⁴ yet the term which occurs twice in a row already describes escalation.

This tremendous flow of water did not merely submerge the land masses: Moses continued, “Fifteen cubits higher prevailed the waters, and they covered the mountains.” This amounts to approximately twenty-two feet of flooding above the tallest mountains. Since the height of the ark reached 45 feet, this should have enabled the submerged portion to pass over the peaks without running aground.²¹²⁵

Years later, the powerful Akkadian ruler named Naram-Sin, who reigned from 2261–2224 BC, claimed, “I made the land of Akkad (look) like (after) the Deluge of water that happened at an early time of mankind.”²¹²⁶ In addition to his claim of overwhelming destruction in his quest to enlarge his territory, he placed the flood at a time long before his own. This contradicts Ussher’s estimate that the flood occurred in 2349–2348 BC.²¹²⁷

a) Read Gen 7:17–20. How did Moses communicate the vastness of this deluge? Based upon the text, what was the condition of the ark? What does this communicate about God’s ability to protect those he chooses to save from disaster?

The Breath of Life Extinguished

b) Gen 7:21–24: This passage describes the fulfillment of Gen 6:7, 17 and Gen 7:4. Moses wrote, “And all of flesh died: that which creeps on the earth, birds, and animals, and every living thing on all of the earth which swarm on the earth, and all of humanity.”

He listed each of these types of creatures in the order in which God created them, including people (Gen 1:20–26).²¹²⁸ However, he omitted marine creatures, writing, “All flesh which [had] the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils, all which [was] on dry ground, died. And he blotted out all that existed which was on the face of the earth, from humanity to animals to creeping things to birds of the heavens. And they were blotted out from the earth.”

Enuma Elish, a Babylon creation story, depicts the god Marduk using a storm to defeat the evil water goddess Tiamat. It says:

“In front of him he set the lightning, with a blazing flame he filled his body...The four winds he stationed that nothing of her might escape. The South Wind, the North Wind, the East Wind, the

²¹²⁴Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431–2,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430/mode/2up>.

²¹²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹²⁶Gelb, et al, “Abubu,” in *CAD*, 1:77.,

https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/cad_a1.pdf.

²¹²⁷James Ussher, *The Annals of the World* (London: Crook and Bedell, 1658), 6,

<https://archive.org/stream/AnnalsOfTheWorld/Annals#page/n15/mode/2up>.

²¹²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 183.

West Wind...He brought forth...‘the Evil Wind,’ the Whirl-wind, the Hurricane, the Fourfold Wind, the Sevenfold Wind, the Cyclone, the Matchless Wind. Then he sent forth the winds he had brought forth, the seven of them. To stir up the inside of Tiamat they rose up behind him. Then the lord raised up the flood-storm, his mighty weapon. He mounted the storm-chariot irresistible [and] terrifying.”²¹²⁹ Consistent with the biblical text, people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) recognized floods as a means for the gods to destroy the wicked.

“However, Noah was left and those with him in the ark.” In contrast to the condemned ones who were blotted out (*makhah*), Noah and his passengers were left behind (*shāar*).²¹³⁰ Both of these verbs occur in the passive tense,²¹³¹ amplifying that the Lord controlled their fate (Cf. Gen 2:7).²¹³² The same waters which rendered divine judgment preserved a righteous remnant.²¹³³ Noah was delivered, for God chose him. His family was saved due to their relationship with the Lord.²¹³⁴

Jewish scholars recognized Noah as the supreme example of a righteous remnant whom God preserved while everyone else faced judgment.²¹³⁵ For example, a second century BC text states, “Noah was found perfect and righteous; in the time of wrath he was taken in exchange; therefore a remnant was left to the earth when the flood came. Everlasting covenants were made with him that all flesh should not be blotted out by a flood” (Sirach 44:17–18, RSVCE).

This chapter in Genesis concludes by saying, “The waters prevailed upon the earth [for] 150 days.” The planet reverted to the form which existed when the waters of the great deep covered everything (Gen 1:1–2, 9).²¹³⁶ By the time the waters receded, Noah and his fellow passengers would spend one year on the ark.²¹³⁷ No other ANE flood account mentions the duration of the deluge.²¹³⁸

Read Gen 7:21–24. What is the significance of the order Moses chose to list who perished? Who survived? How does this text indicate that the Lord reversed what he had created? Does this passage encourage or discourage you? Why?

²¹²⁹Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 4:39–50, 66,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

²¹³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 297.

²¹³¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מָחָה” (*makhah*), *BDB*, 562,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/562/mode/2up>. This verb appears twice in this verse: first in an active form; then, passive.

²¹³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 297.

²¹³³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 298.

²¹³⁵R. E. Clements, “שָׂאָר” (*shaar*), *TDOT* 14:272–86, 276.

²¹³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 183.

²¹³⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 314.

²¹³⁸Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

Faithful and True

4) Rev 19:11: Noah’s generation came to an end due to an act of God’s judgment. Those living when Christ returns will undergo a similar experience (Rev 19:11–21). Esoteric symbolism and exhortation characterize apocalyptic (end-times) literature.²¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the metaphors in the Apostle John’s vision portray actual events.²¹⁴⁰ In Rev 19:12–16, John reported his vision in the form of a chiasm, with the central focus falling upon the armies of heaven clothed in white linen.²¹⁴¹ Verse 11 says, “And I saw heaven had been opened, and behold, a white horse. And the one sitting on it [is] faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and wages war.”

The first phrase indicates that John was reporting a new vision which he received.²¹⁴² That heaven had been opened not only announces new divine revelation (Mark 1:9–11; John 1:51; Acts 7:55–56),²¹⁴³ it can portend judgment (Ezek 1:1; Ezek 2:1–4; Rev 4:1, 5; Rev 11:19; Rev 15:5–8).²¹⁴⁴ This imagery mirrors Jewish interpretations that the messiah would come as a great warrior.²¹⁴⁵

For example, a second century BC apocryphal book written from the perspective of the patriarch Levi expands upon Gen 34:1–7, 25–27. This work links the opening of the gates of heaven and judgment upon the wicked. It states:

“Know therefore, know that the Lord shall execute judgement upon the sons of men...They that bless Him shall be blessed, and they that curse Him shall perish. And thereupon the angel *opened to me the gates of heaven*, and I saw the holy temple, and upon a throne of glory the Most High... Then the angel brought me down to the earth, and gave me a shield and a sword, and said to me, ‘Execute vengeance on Shechem because of Dinah, thy sister, and I will be with thee because the Lord hath sent me.’ And I destroyed at that time the sons of Hamor, as it is written in the heavenly tables.”²¹⁴⁶

Greco-Roman authors also associated the opening of heaven with divine revelation and doom.²¹⁴⁷ According to Virgil (70–19 BC):

“While thus in distant region moves the war...Saturn’s daughter sends celestial Iris...And thus [she]...called with lips of rose, ‘Behold, Aeneas...has left behind the city with his fleet and followers...Call for thy chariot and steeds! Away! Take yonder tents by terror and surprise!’ She spoke; and heavenward on poising wings soared, cleaving as she fled from cloud to cloud a vast, resplendent bow. The warrior saw, and, lifting both his hands, pursued with prayer the fading glory, ‘Beauteous Iris, hail!...Such solemn sign I shall obey.’”²¹⁴⁸ John’s original audience recognized the motif of judgment occurring when the heavens opened.

Through the opened heavens, John saw a white steed and its rider. White represents both purity and vindication in the book of Revelation (Rev 3:3–5; Rev 6:9–11).²¹⁴⁹ Greco-Romans

²¹³⁹Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, 2nd Ed.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 278.

²¹⁴⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351, note 1.

²¹⁴¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 956.

²¹⁴²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 949.

²¹⁴³David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1052.

²¹⁴⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 949.

²¹⁴⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351.

²¹⁴⁶Rutherford H. Jr. Platt, “Testament of Levi,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha Place, 1926), 2:1–12, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe273.htm>.

²¹⁴⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1052.

²¹⁴⁸Virgil, *Aeneid* (trans. Theodore C. Williams; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), 9:1–21.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0054%3Abook%3D9%3Acard%3D25>.

²¹⁴⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950.

considered white steeds the most prized, appropriate for high-ranking officials and conquering kings.²¹⁵⁰

The historian Suetonius (ca. 69–130 AD) noted the elevation of Domitian’s (51–96 AD) status after an initial debasement. He wrote:

“He likewise designed an expedition into Gaul and Germany, without the least necessity for it, and contrary to the advice of all his father's friends; and this he did only with the view of equalling his brother in military achievements and glory. But for this he was severely reprimanded, and that he might the more effectually be reminded of his age and position, was made to live with his father, and his litter had to follow his father's and brother's carriage, as often as they went abroad; but he attended them in their triumph for the conquest of Judaea, mounted on a white horse.”²¹⁵¹

Furthermore, Greco-Romans believed in the existence of supernatural, immortal steeds which traveled between heaven and the earth.²¹⁵² Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) wrote this in praise of the sun god’s horses, saying, “The dark-night pastures of Apollo's steeds are hid below the western skies; when there, and spent with toil, in lieu of nibbling herbs they take ambrosial food: it gives their limbs restoring strength and nourishes anew...his winged steeds.”²¹⁵³

In Revelation, this appearance of a rider on a white horse represents the return of Christ, the long-awaited second coming (*parousia*).²¹⁵⁴ If a Roman king on a white steed imparted fear, how much more should the conquering Lord of heaven.²¹⁵⁵

The first of four titles borne by Christ in this account of his return is “Faithful (*pistos*) and True (*alēthinos*)” (Cf. Rev 3:14).²¹⁵⁶ In extra-biblical Greek, this name appears only in 3 Macc 2:11, where the high priest petitioned the Lord to defend his honor by overthrowing a profane tyrant:²¹⁵⁷

“And because you love the house of Israel, you promised that if we should have reverses, and tribulation should overtake us, you would listen to our petition when we come to this place and pray. And indeed you are faithful and true..In our downfall this audacious and profane man undertakes to violate the holy place on earth dedicated to your glorious name...Speedily let your mercies overtake us, and put praises in the mouth of those who are downcast and broken in spirit, and give us peace” (3 Macc 2:10–20, RSV).

These attributes also describe the credibility of the words spoken in the book of Revelation (Rev 21:5–6; Rev 22:6).²¹⁵⁸ In the Old Testament, the name “faithful and true” appears only once, applying to God as a witness (Jer 42:5). However, the men who appealed to the Lord failed to do what they promised, bringing judgment upon themselves (Jer 42:20–22).²¹⁵⁹

²¹⁵⁰Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²¹⁵¹C. Tranquillus Suetonius, “Domitian,” Pages 500–25 in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (trans. Alexander Thompson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1883), 501.

<https://archive.org/stream/livesoftwelvecsa00suet#page/n557/mode/2up>.

²¹⁵²Keener, *Revelation*, 456.

²¹⁵³Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (trans. Brookes More; Boston: Cornhill, 1922), 4:214–6, 262,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0028%3Abook%3D4%3Acard%3D167>.

²¹⁵⁴Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²¹⁵⁵Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²¹⁵⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 352.

²¹⁵⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950.

²¹⁵⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²¹⁵⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

Removing any doubt about the intention of the rider upon the white steed, John wrote, “And in righteousness he judges and wages war.” The book of Revelation repeatedly reinforces the justness of divine judgment (e.g. Rev 16:5–7; Rev 19:2).²¹⁶⁰ At last the followers of the beast will receive the answer to their question (Rev 13:4).²¹⁶¹ Judging with righteousness involves not only destroying God’s enemies but also saving his people (Ps 9:7–10; Ps 96:7–13; Isa 11:1–5).²¹⁶²

By the first century BC, Jewish people expected the messiah to judge the nations in one final conflict.²¹⁶³

“Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David...that he may reign over Israel Thy servant. And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample (her) down to destruction...At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart. And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness...And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst, nor shall there dwell with them any man that knoweth wickedness, for he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God.”²¹⁶⁴ John identified this messiah as Jesus (Rev 1:12–18).

Righteous judgment characterizes the Lord’s actions (2 Tim 4:7–8; 1 Pet 2:21–25). Therefore, he expected Israel’s judges, for her kings, and even individuals to judge justly (Deut 1:16–17; Deut 16:18–20; Prov 31:1, 9; Zech 7:8–10). Jesus demanded that the people of God apply the same principles (John 7:24).²¹⁶⁵

a) Read Rev 19:11. Why is it significant that heaven had been opened? What did someone riding upon a white horse symbolize? How does knowing that Jesus will judge justly make you feel?

Ruler of All Nations

b) Rev 19:12–13: John began his description of the one riding the white horse in Rev 19:11 by writing, “And his eyes [are] a flame of fire.”²¹⁶⁶ This depiction confirms Jesus’s deity and reveals his fury (Dan 10:4–9; Rev 1:12–18; Rev 2:18–23).²¹⁶⁷ As the divine judge,²¹⁶⁸ nothing can hide from his sight.²¹⁶⁹ He will unmask even those who falsely claim him as Lord.²¹⁷⁰

²¹⁶⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 352.

²¹⁶¹Keener, *Revelation*, 452.

²¹⁶²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950–1.

²¹⁶³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351.

²¹⁶⁴G. Buchanan Gray, trans., “The Psalms of Solomon,” in *APOT* (ed. R. H. Charles; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 17:21–22, 25–27. <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/psalmsol.html>.

²¹⁶⁵Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²¹⁶⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁶⁷Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²¹⁶⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

²¹⁶⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁷⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

In addition, John wrote, “On his head [are] many crowns.” Within the ancient world, an emperor wore one diadem to represent each city or nation he ruled.²¹⁷¹ For example, the ring of Ptolemy VI Philometer (ca. 186–145 BC) shows him wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt.²¹⁷² While conquering Syria, “Ptolemy entered Antioch and put on the crown of Asia. Thus, he put two crowns on his head, the crown of Egypt and that of Asia” (1 Macc 11:13, NRSVCE). For Greco-Romans, this symbolized a major victory.²¹⁷³

Consequently, John’s original readers understood that this vision of Christ wearing many crowns signified that he rules over all dominions (Rev 1:5; Rev 19:6),²¹⁷⁴ and that all authority belongs to him.²¹⁷⁵ This portends a cosmic battle with the dragon and the beast (Rev 12:3; Rev 13:1). In contrast, the crowns which Jesus’s followers shall wear symbolize our identification with Christ (Rev 2:10; Rev 3:10–11; Rev 4:4).²¹⁷⁶

John also described the rider as, “having a name which has been written which no one has known except himself.” Earlier in Revelation, Jesus made a similar vow to victorious believers (Rev 2:17; Rev 3:12).²¹⁷⁷ This concept of receiving a new name reflects promises made in the Old Testament (Isa 62:2–4, Isa 65:15). That Jesus’s name remained unknown in John’s vision indicates that Isaiah’s prophecies of a marriage relationship with Christ had not yet come to fruition.²¹⁷⁸ Someday, it shall be known to all of God’s people.²¹⁷⁹

This title may be inscribed directly on Jesus.²¹⁸⁰ However, given the context, Christ’s secret name likely appears on the diadems which he wore (Rev 13:1).²¹⁸¹ The high priest bore the name of Yahweh on a gold plate placed upon his turban (Exod 28:36–38). Furthermore, in the age to come, the people of God shall have the names of the Father and the Son inscribed on our foreheads (Rev 14:1; Rev 22:3–4).²¹⁸²

In the ancient world, people believed that knowing the name of a god or demon enabled a person to exert power over it.²¹⁸³ This spell appears in a Greek magic text: “You master Typhon, you who I call, who are the dreaded sovereign o’er the firmament. You who are fearful, awesome, threatening. You who’re obscure and irresistible and hater of the wicked, you I call, Typhon...I invoke you in prayer, I call, almighty one, that you perform for me whate’er I ask of you, and that you nod assent at once to me and grant that what I ask be mine...*for I speak your true names.*”²¹⁸⁴

²¹⁷¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1054.

²¹⁷²Wikimedia Commons, “File: Ring with Engraved Portrait of Ptolemy VI Philometor (3rd–2nd Century BCE).” [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor_\(3rd-2nd_century_BCE\)_-_20080315.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor_(3rd-2nd_century_BCE)_-_20080315.jpg).

²¹⁷³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1054.

²¹⁷⁴Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²¹⁷⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁷⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 952–3.

²¹⁷⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1055.

²¹⁷⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 953.

²¹⁷⁹G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1143.

²¹⁸⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1055.

²¹⁸¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 955.

²¹⁸²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 955.

²¹⁸³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁸⁴Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells, 2nd Ed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4:264–80, 43, https://fewarethemystaidotcom.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/hans_dieter_betz__greek_magical_papyri_in_translabo-okos-org.pdf. Italics mine.

Plato (427–347 BC) reported that Socrates (469–399 BC) said, “We, if we are sensible, must recognize that...of the gods we know nothing, neither of them nor of their names, whatever they may be, by which they call themselves, for it is clear that they use the true names.”²¹⁸⁵

This concept may explain why divine visitors in the Old Testament (OT) refused to identify themselves (Gen 32:24–29; Judg 13:17–18).²¹⁸⁶

A Jewish apocryphal text, which was augmented in the Christian era (2nd century BC–4th century AD), depicts Isaiah’s purported experience.²¹⁸⁷

“And [the angel] took me into the air of the seventh heaven, and moreover I heard a voice saying, ‘How far will he ascend that dwelleth in the flesh?’ And I feared and trembled...And when I trembled, behold, I heard from hence another voice being sent forth, and saying, ‘It is permitted to the holy Isaiah to ascend hither; for here is his garment.’

“And I asked the angel who was with me and said, “Who is he who...permitted me to ascend?” And he said unto me...“He who permitted thee, this is thy Lord God, the Lord Christ, who will be called “Jesus” in the world, but *His name thou canst not hear till thou hast ascended out of thy body.*”²¹⁸⁸

Since no one currently knows Jesus’s secret name, he remains sovereign over everyone. Medieval Jewish scholars believed that after the events of Ps 9:3–8 occur, then Ps 9:9–10 shall be fulfilled. One document states that the Lord will “renew in the time-to-come...the name of the Messiah” ((Pesikta Rabbati 12.9). Another text notes that after he destroys evil people, “the name of God will be complete” (Pesikta de Rab Kahana 3.16).²¹⁸⁹

As John’s vision concerns the future, Christ’s unknown name will not remain a secret forever. Many people will learn the meaning of that name in terms of justice and vengeance. Yet for all who enter a close relationship with him, Jesus’s secret name will speak of grace and salvation (Eph 1:3–11).²¹⁹⁰

John further described the rider, writing, “And he has put on a garment having been dipped in blood.” This depicted a heavenly warrior covered with the blood of those he has slain, not a metaphor for Christ’s atoning blood.²¹⁹¹ Although the battle had not yet begun, the messiah’s bloodstained clothing represented certain victory.²¹⁹² Justice rendered to God’s enemies shall usher in the fullness of his kingdom.²¹⁹³

Early Hebrew poetry depicts the Lord as a divine warrior (Exod 15:1–10; Deut 33:26–29; Judg 5:4–5, 19–23). This image intensifies in the prophetic books (Isa 42:13; Isa 59:14–20; Hab 3:11–15).²¹⁹⁴ Many New Testament (NT) scholars recognize that the language of Rev 19 closely

²¹⁸⁵Plato, “Cratylus,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (trans. Harold N. Fowler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 400d, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D400d>.

²¹⁸⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁸⁷Peter Kirby, “Ascension of Isaiah.”

²¹⁸⁸R. H. Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 9:1–5, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html>. Italics mine.

²¹⁸⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 954.

²¹⁹⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 954–7.

²¹⁹¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1057.

²¹⁹²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

²¹⁹³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 958.

²¹⁹⁴Theodore Hiebert, “Warrior, Divine.,” *ABD* 6:876–80, 876.

adheres to Isa 63:1–6.²¹⁹⁵ In the end, everyone will know that the holy warrior is Jesus (Cf. Isa 41:21–25; Phil 2:9–11).²¹⁹⁶

This OT passage confirms that the blood spattered upon his clothing will come from the enemies of God.²¹⁹⁷ Thus, Christ shall exact justice for his people through both vengeance and redemption.²¹⁹⁸ As the rest of this chapter in Revelation clarifies, the blood flowing from the wine press in Isaiah represents all who live in rebellion against God (cf. Rev 14:18–20).²¹⁹⁹

A very interesting parallel to Rev 19:13 appears in an Aramaic paraphrase of Gen 49:11, a text which precedes the Christian era.²²⁰⁰ The Jerusalem Targum states:

“How beautiful is the King [Messiah], who is to arise from the house of [Judah]! Binding his loins and going forth to war against them that hate him, he will slay kings with princes, and make the rivers red with the blood of their slain, and his hills white with the fat of their mighty ones; *his garments will be dipped in blood*, and he himself be like the juice of the wine press.”²²⁰¹

This image of a heavenly warrior with bloody clothing would also have frightened Greco-Roman readers.²²⁰² By the time of Christ, Roman field commanders wore red garments into battle.²²⁰³

Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) portrayed an angry goddess this way:
 “[She], revengeful, takes a torch;—*besmeared with blood, and vested in a robe, dripping with crimson gore*, and twisting-snakes engirdled, she departs her dire abode—with twitching Madness, Terror, Fear and Woe: and when she had arrived at the destined house, the door-posts shrank from her, the maple doors turned ashen grey: the Sun amazed fled...but suddenly that baneful Fury stood across the way, blocking the passage.”²²⁰⁴

Similarly, Christ shall render justice upon the earth,²²⁰⁵ covered by the blood of his enemies.

John then revealed another pseudonym for this warrior, writing, “And his name [is] the Word of God.” Since the only other place in the NT where this title appears is in John’s gospel (John 1:1),²²⁰⁶ this title provides another hint that the mysterious rider is Jesus.

While the Word of God came to inaugurate the kingdom of God at his first coming, at his return he shall usher in the age to come in all its fullness. By his authoritative declaration, he shall destroy everyone who rebels against him.²²⁰⁷

According to a Jewish apocryphal book:
 “For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, *your all-powerful word* leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the *sharp sword of your authentic command*, and stood and

²¹⁹⁵Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²¹⁹⁶Keener, *Revelation*, 453–4.

²¹⁹⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²¹⁹⁸Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²¹⁹⁹Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

²²⁰⁰Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 2nd Ed., 82.

²²⁰¹C. W. H. Pauli, “Comparison of Pentateuch: Jewish Publication Society 1917 Targums Onkelos, Jonathan Ben Uzziel/Palestinian, Jerusalem Fragments,” Gen 49:11, <http://juchre.org/targums/comp/gen49.htm>. Italics mine.

²²⁰²Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²²⁰³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1057.

²²⁰⁴Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (trans. Brookes More; Boston: Cornhill, 1922), 4:481–2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0028%3Abook%3D4%3Acard%3D481>.

²²⁰⁵Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²²⁰⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1058.

²²⁰⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth (Wisdom 18:14–16, NRSV).²²⁰⁸

Read Rev 19:12–13. Why are Jesus’s eyes described as “a flame of fire”? How does wearing many crowns signify his sovereignty? What importance would the original audience have attached to Christ having a secret name? Why shall he return? Whose blood will stain Christ’s clothing? Does this passage elicit encouragement or dread in you? Why?

The Armies in Heaven

c) **Rev 19:14:** In Rev 19:11–21, John frequently shifted verb tenses between the present, the future, and the past. This is in keeping with his report of a vision he had already seen concerning realities yet to come.²²⁰⁹

Since Rev 19:11–16 forms a chiasm,²²¹⁰ the central focus of the entire passage falls upon v. 14. It says, “And the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, having been clothed in pure white linen.” These military forces mounted steeds like that of their commander (Rev 19:11).²²¹¹

Much debate revolves around who comprises these armies. In the Old Testament, the armies of heaven appear to be angels, typically borne by chariots (Josh 5:13–15; Ps 68:17; 2 Ki 6:15–17).²²¹² Earlier, John described a battle between the angel Michael and his troops against Satan and his forces (Rev 12:7–9).²²¹³ Elsewhere in the New Testament, angels assist Christ in rendering final judgment (Mark 8:38; Matt 13:40–42; Matt 16:27).²²¹⁴

However, Ps 149 indicates that God’s people shall participate in executing judgment.²²¹⁵ A parallel passage in Revelation calls those fighting on Christ’s side “called and chosen and faithful” (Rev 17:14).²²¹⁶ Since John described the people numbered among the 144,000 as ones “who follow the Lamb wherever he goes,” some scholars suggest that they belong within the armies of God (Rev 14:1–4).²²¹⁷

Early Christians held that deceased believers joined the angels in these armies.²²¹⁸ For example, the Didache (ca. 100 AD) teaches that, “The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.”²²¹⁹

²²⁰⁸Italics mine.

²²⁰⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

²²¹⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 956.

²²¹¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

²²¹²Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:14.

²²¹³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1059.

²²¹⁴Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²²¹⁵Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:14.

²²¹⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

²²¹⁷Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

²²¹⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1059–60.

²²¹⁹Roberts, et al. (eds.), “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” 16:7, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>.

The Jewish/Christian hybrid Ascension of Isaiah (ca. 150–200 AD) reports: “The Lord will come with His angels and with the armies of the holy ones from the seventh heaven with the glory of the seventh heaven, and He will drag Beliar (the devil) into Gehenna and also his armies...*The saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are (now) stored up on high in the seventh heaven: with the Lord they will come, whose spirits are clothed, they will descend and be present in the world.*”²²²⁰

However, these armies will not engage the enemy in battle.²²²¹ Instead, they provide testimony against oppressors for their unbelief (Matt 12:38–42).²²²² As a result of our union with Christ, we triumph through identification with our Lord (Rev 2:25–29).²²²³ Christ alone shall conquer the beast and his followers on behalf of those who accompany him (Rev 19:19–21).²²²⁴

The color of the horses and their pure white raiment reflects the holiness of Christ’s armies (Rev 15:5–6; Rev 19:7–9).²²²⁵ In the case of believers, this serves as proof of our vindication resulting from Jesus’s sacrificial death (1 Cor 1:30–31; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 2:13–15), as well as for standing firm to the end (Rev 6:9–11; Rev 7:9–10, 13–17).²²²⁶

Read Rev 19:14. Who do you think will be included in the armies of God? What is their purpose? Why will they be clothed in white and riding on white horses? How does God see you?

Striking the Nations

d) Rev 19:15: In this verse, John returned to his vision of the victorious Christ (Rev 19:11–13). He wrote, “And from his mouth comes a sharp sword, in order that with it he might strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God Almighty.”

The apostle incorporated allegorical elements,²²²⁷ with four clear allusions to the Old Testament (OT).²²²⁸ First, the returning messiah shall have a sharp sword protruding from his mouth (Rev 1:16–17). This refers to the lethal power of his pronouncements, rather than to a physical weapon (Isa 11:4; Hos 6:4–6; Rev 2:14–16; Heb 4:12).²²²⁹ That Christ shall strike the nations alludes to Ps 2.²²³⁰ Ungodly rulers and nations who seek to overthrow the authority of the Lord will fail (2 Thess 2:8–10).²²³¹

²²²⁰Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” 4:14–16, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html>. Italics mine.

²²²¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354–5.

²²²²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 960.

²²²³Bradley G. Green, *Covenant and Commandment: Works, Obedience, and Faithfulness in the Christian Life* (ed. D. A. Carson; New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 158.

²²²⁴Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²²²⁵Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1060.

²²²⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 960.

²²²⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1058.

²²²⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

²²²⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355.

²²³⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1060.

²²³¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

A Jewish apocryphal book (ca. 90–100 AD) fits the scenario of Rev 19 quite well: “I dreamed a dream in the night...and I looked and [saw] the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire. “After this I looked, and behold, an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea...and behold, when he saw the onrush of the approaching multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor held a spear or any weapon of war; but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks. All these were mingled together, the stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm and fell on the onrushing multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke....

“After this I saw the same man...call to him another multitude which was peaceable. Then many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings. Then in great fear I awoke” (4 Ezra 13:1–13, RSV). The sword in John’s vision serves as a metaphor for the final judgment awaiting the wicked.²²³²

“He shall rule them with a rod of iron” alludes to the Greek translation of Ps 2:9.²²³³ The word translated as “shall rule” (*poimainō*) typically means “shall shepherd.”²²³⁴ Adding to the confusion, the Hebrew verb used in that psalm means “break” (*rāa*)²²³⁵ However, that makes sense due to the parallelism of the second half of the verse regarding a wine press. Thus, it appears that John chose to use the rod of iron as a symbol of destruction for Christ’s enemies but of protection for his people (Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:1–4, 15–6; Ps 23:1–4).²²³⁶

A first century BC Jewish apocryphal book pulls these nuances together, saying of the messiah, “Righteously he shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance. He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter’s vessel. With a rod of iron, he shall break in pieces all their substance. He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth.”²²³⁷

The third metaphor John used to describe the actions of the messiah asserts, “He treads the wine press of the fierce anger of God Almighty.” Here the apostle combined the images of the cup of God’s anger and of treading upon a wine press (Cf. Rev 14:9–10, 14–20).²²³⁸ Treading grapes by throwing them into a vat with a spout at the bottom consisted of a familiar symbol of divine wrath to the original audience (Joel 3:12–13; Lam 1:15).²²³⁹

However, the closest OT parallel occurs in Isa 63:1–6.²²⁴⁰ In that passage, God announced the destruction of Edom, the nation which descended from Jacob’s brother Esau (Gen 25:30).

²²³²Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1061.

²²³³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 962.

²²³⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ποιμαίνω” (*poimainō*), *BDAG*, 842.

²²³⁵Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רָא” (*rā’a*), *BDB*, 949,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/948/mode/2up>.

²²³⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 962.

²²³⁷Gray, trans., “The Psalms of Solomon,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 17:24, <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/psalmsol.html>.

²²³⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062.

²²³⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 280–1.

²²⁴⁰Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

In the Aramaic paraphrase called Targum Jonathan, the field of destruction widens:²²⁴¹ “Wherefore are the mountains red from the blood of the slain? Yea, the valleys shall flow as the wine from the wine press. Behold, as the grapes are trodden in the vat, thus He shall increase the slaughter in the camps of the nations; they shall have no strength before me: yea, I will slay them in my anger, and tread them down in my fury; and I will break the strength of their mighty ones before me, and all their wise men will I consume.”²²⁴²

On the day of his return, Christ shall slay everyone not allied with him in the wine press of his wrath.²²⁴³ Within Rev 6–19, the Greek words for “anger” (*orgē*) or “wrath” (*thymos*) appear thirteen times (e.g. Rev 11:16–18 and Rev 16:1).²²⁴⁴ These terms occur more often in the Greek translation of the OT (623x) compared to the New Testament (NT) (54x).²²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the view that, in the NT, God always loves and never punishes sin does not conform to the testimony of the NT.²²⁴⁶

Read Rev 19:15. What does the sword in Christ’s mouth symbolize? How will the nations be affected by the Messiah’s rod of iron? Why is treading grapes an image of God’s wrath? What warning or encouragement do you derive from this verse?

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

e) Rev 19:16: John’s description of the rider on the white steed in Rev 19:11–16 concludes by saying, “And he has on his robe and on his thigh a name which had been inscribed, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’ Where exactly this title appears causes some controversy among commentators.²²⁴⁷ Is it written in two places or on only one?²²⁴⁸

Fortunately, Greek grammar assists us here. The word which we usually translate as “and” (*kai*) can also mean “that is” or “namely.”²²⁴⁹ As a result, we can translate this clause as, “And he has on his robe, namely, on his thigh, a name....”

When astride a horse, a person’s thighs present prominently, making them appropriate places for an exalted title. Warriors also hung their swords from their thighs (Exod 32:27; Judg 3:16).²²⁵⁰ In addition, someone taking an oath would place a hand under the thigh of the one receiving the promise (Gen 24:2–4; Gen 47:29–31). Therefore, this detail in Revelation symbolizes that Jesus’s victory over evil will fulfill the Lord’s promise to judge the wicked.²²⁵¹

²²⁴¹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1061.

²²⁴²Pauli, “Comparison of Pentateuch: Jewish Publication Society 1917 Targums Onkelos, Jonathan Ben Uzziel/Palestinian, Jerusalem Fragments,” Isa 63:2–3, <http://juchre.org/targums/isaiah/comp/isa63.htm>.

²²⁴³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963.

²²⁴⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355–6.

²²⁴⁵Results of Logos 6 word studies on the nouns “ὀργή” (*orgē*) and “θυμός” (*thymos*).

²²⁴⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

²²⁴⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062.

²²⁴⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963.

²²⁴⁹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “καί” (*kai*), *BDAG*, 494–6, 495.

²²⁵⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

²²⁵¹Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

John’s original audience would have recognized this imagery.²²⁵² The second century AD geographer Pausanias wrote this about a statue he saw:

“The offering of the Mendeans in Thrace came very near to beguiling me into the belief that it was a representation of a competitor in the pentathlon ...It holds ancient jumping-weights. A... couplet is written on its thigh, ‘To Zeus, king of the gods, as first-fruits was I placed here.’”²²⁵³

Written on the messiah’s thigh, an inscription says: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” In the Old Testament, that title applied to Yahweh as the supreme ruler (Deut 10:16–18; Ps 136:1–3; Dan 2:47).²²⁵⁴

Jewish apocryphal books also applied this term only to God. For example, 1 Enoch (2nd century BC–1st century AD) says:

“Then they said to their Lord, the King, Thou art *Lord of lords*, God of gods, *King of kings*. The throne of thy glory is for ever and ever, and for ever and ever is thy name sanctified and glorified. Thou art blessed and glorified. Thou hast made all things; thou possessest power over all things; and all things are open and manifest before thee...Nothing can be concealed from thee.”²²⁵⁵

Plutarch (ca. 45–125 AD) noted that the Roman ruler Pompey “would not deign, in answering a letter from the king of Parthia, to address him as King of Kings, which was his usual title.”²²⁵⁶

People within the Ancient Near East also applied that title to human kings (Dan 2:36–38; Ezek 26:7; Ezra 7:12).²²⁵⁷ The Lord overturned the claim of King Nebuchadnezzar (534–562 BC) to the title King of kings (Dan 4:30–37). Even so shall Christ overthrow the beast of Revelation (Rev 13:1–2; Rev 19:20).²²⁵⁸

Here “King of kings and Lord of lords” applies to Christ, rather than referring strictly to Yahweh (Cf. Rev 17:14).²²⁵⁹ Ultimately, Jesus rules over all the kings on the earth (Phil 2:9–11; Rev 1:5).²²⁶⁰ Everyone will see this when he triumphs over all his enemies.²²⁶¹

Read Rev 19:16. What is the significance of the inscription on the rider’s thigh? How does the photograph of a Hungarian crown (<https://redemptivehistorytheology.com/blog/chapter-7-god-opens-the-heavens-and-earth-genesis-71-24/king-of-kings-and-lord-of-lords/>) illustrate this truth?

²²⁵²Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

²²⁵³Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (trans. W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 5.27.12,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D5%3Achapter%3D27%3Asection%3D12>. I had the privilege of seeing a similar statue of an athlete in the exhibition The Greeks (<http://press.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/23/greeks-exhibition-to-open-june-1-at-national-geographic-museum-in-washington-d-c/>)

²²⁵⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

²²⁵⁵Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 9:4–6, 21. <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n135/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

²²⁵⁶Plutarch, “Pompey,” in *Plutarch’s Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 38.2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0058%3Achapter%3D38%3Asection%3D2>.

²²⁵⁷Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

²²⁵⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963–4.

²²⁵⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062–3.

²²⁶⁰Keener, *Revelation*, 454–5.

²²⁶¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

The Great Supper of God

f) Rev 19:17–19: These verses form the preface to the destruction of the ungodly world system which will begin with the devastation of a city identified as Babylon in Rev 18:1–3.²²⁶² John wrote, “And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and it cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, ‘Come. Gather for the great supper of God.’”

By standing in the sun, this angel stood in a position of appropriate splendor.²²⁶³ The herald made the announcement before the battle occurred, portending certain victory.²²⁶⁴ In stark contrast to the wedding celebration of the lamb and his bride (Rev 19:7–8; Isa 25:6–9; Matt 8:11),²²⁶⁵ this feast by predatory birds will create a grim spectacle.²²⁶⁶

Ironically, the Babylonian creation epic Enuma Elish describes a scene after the great battle against rebel gods and the completion of Babylon.²²⁶⁷ It says: “The three hundred Igigi (gods)...all of them gathered, the lord being on the lofty dais which they had built as his abode, the gods, his fathers, at his banquet he seated, [saying], “This is Babylon, the place that is your home! Make merry in its precincts, occupy its broad [places].” The great gods took their seats, they set up festive drink, sat down to a banquet.²²⁶⁸

The birds in John’s vision will feast upon flesh with no concern for human rank or social status.²²⁶⁹ The angel called them together, “that you might eat flesh of kings, and flesh of generals, and flesh of [the] mighty, and flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and flesh of all free [people], and also of slaves, even the small and the great.”

John’s readers recognized the image of birds scavenging the corpses of people killed in battle (1 Sam 17:44–47; Jer 16:4; Ezek 29:3–6).²²⁷⁰ People in the ancient world considered that a horrendous, dishonorable fate.²²⁷¹ In Jewish and Greco-Roman views of death, a person’s image continued to endure in the underworld (1 Sam 28:11–14).²²⁷² Therefore, they regarded such mutilation as a fate worse than dying.

Homer (ca. 750 BC) wrote this speech to a warrior:

“Hector, my dear child, abide not...alone with none to aid thee, lest forthwith thou meet thy doom, slain by the son of Peleus, since verily he is far the mightier—cruel that he is. I would that he were loved by the gods even as by me! Then would the dogs and vultures speedily devour him as he lay unburied; so would dread sorrow depart from my soul, seeing he hath made me bereft of sons many and valiant.”²²⁷³

The apostle’s original audience likely perceived this despicable end as the fulfillment of

²²⁶²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 965.

²²⁶³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357.

²²⁶⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 965.

²²⁶⁵Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1063.

²²⁶⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357.

²²⁶⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1063.

²²⁶⁸Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 6:69–75, 69,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

²²⁶⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357–8.

²²⁷⁰Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

²²⁷¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

²²⁷²L. Wächter, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*) *TDOT* 14:239–48, 241–2.

²²⁷³Homer, *The Iliad*, 22:38–44,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0134%3Abook%3D22%3Acard%3D38>.

Ezek 39:1–6, 17–20.²²⁷⁴ Thus, they recognized Gog and Magog as the beast, the false prophet, and their armies whom Christ would vanquish.²²⁷⁵ As in Rev 19:11–16, Ezek 39:7–8, 21 stresses the importance of God making known his holy name.²²⁷⁶ Jesus shall accomplish this by delivering his people and rendering judgment to their oppressors.²²⁷⁷ John’s list of those who would die parallels the one in Rev 6:14–17.²²⁷⁸ His depiction of devastation coming upon the oppressors of God’s people encouraged persecuted believers.²²⁷⁹

The apostle described what he saw next, writing, “And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies having been gathered together to make the war with the one sitting on the horse and with his armies.” This fulfills the prophecy of Rev 16:13–14. That a definite article (“the”) appears with the word “war” in the Greek texts of Rev 16:14, Rev 19:19, and Rev 20:8 indicates that all three verses speak of one battle.²²⁸⁰ Battle in Armageddon shall commence.²²⁸¹

The beast will join Satan and his demonic forces to assemble kings and their armies. Although they will believe that they act of their own accord, God will muster these armies (Ezek 39:1–2; Zech 14:2–5).²²⁸² This great battle will swiftly put an end to all evil and usher in the long-awaited new era of righteousness.²²⁸³

Read Rev 19:17–19. What will the angel call the birds to do? Why did John’s original readers consider such mutilation a fate worse than death? How do Old Testament texts specify that the Lord will assemble these armies?

Cast into the Inferno

g) Rev 19:20–21: The foretold judgment of Rev 19:11–19 shall finally take place. As throughout the book of Revelation, John gave no portrayal of the battle but described only the result.²²⁸⁴ He wrote, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs before him, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”

Nero inflicted horrific persecution upon the Christian community during his reign over the Roman Empire (54–68 AD). The Greco-Roman historian Tacitus (56–120 AD) noted: “To get rid of the report [that he set Rome on fire in 64 AD] Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the

²²⁷⁴Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

²²⁷⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 966.

²²⁷⁶Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

²²⁷⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 966.

²²⁷⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1064.

²²⁷⁹Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:17–18.

²²⁸⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 967–8.

²²⁸¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

²²⁸²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 967.

²²⁸³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

²²⁸⁴Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1065.

reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty, then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”²²⁸⁵

Therefore, many believers in the early church viewed Nero as the beast, with “Babylon” serving as a code word for Rome (Rev 13:1–9; Rev 17:1–9). Even after Nero committed suicide, many people concluded he was not truly dead but would return in the future.²²⁸⁶

Suetonius (ca. 69–140 AD), a Roman historian, reported:

“[Nero] died in the thirty-second year of his age, upon the same day on which he had formerly put [his wife] Octavia to death; and the public joy was so great upon the occasion, that the common people ran about the city...Some, however...for a long time decked his tomb with spring and summer flowers. Sometimes they placed his image upon the [dais], dressed in robes of state...They published proclamations in his name, as if he were still alive, and would shortly return to Rome, and take vengeance on all his enemies.”²²⁸⁷

The Christian apocryphal book the Ascension of Isaiah (ca. 150–200 AD) also cites Nero as the beast,²²⁸⁸ calling him “the slayer of his mother:”

“These are the days of the completion of the world...Beliar [the devil], the great ruler, the king of this world, will descend...in the likeness of a man, a lawless king, the slayer of his mother who... will persecute the [church]...This ruler in the form of that king will come and there will come with him all the powers of this world, and they will hearken unto him in all that he desires.

“And at his word the sun will rise at night and he will make the moon to appear at the sixth hour. And all that he hath desired he will do in the world...and speak like the Beloved and he will say, ‘I am God and before me there has been none.’

“And all the people in the world will believe in him. And they will sacrifice to him and they will serve him...And after (one thousand) three hundred and thirty-two days the Lord will come with his angels and with the armies of the holy ones...and he will drag Beliar into Gehenna and also his armies.”²²⁸⁹

Similarly, John did not depict the armies of God engaging the enemy. Instead, the divine warrior on the white steed will seize the Antichrist.²²⁹⁰ John previously described the false prophet in terms of his functions. He will perform miracles and force people to receive the mark

²²⁸⁵Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=3DDDF615647A0DBAE5788C50EBD09314B?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D44>.

²²⁸⁶Miriam T. Griffin, “Nero (Emperor),” *ABD* 4: 1076–80, 1080.

²²⁸⁷C. Suetonius Tranquillus, “Nero,” in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; an English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1889), 57, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dnero%3Achapter%3D57>.

²²⁸⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 968.

²²⁸⁹Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” in *APOT*, 4.2–14, 24–33, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924014590529#page/n103/mode/2up>.

²²⁹⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1065.

of the beast (Rev 13:11–17).²²⁹¹ The beast shall make claims of deity and the false prophet will enforce obligatory worship.²²⁹²

However, this shall be their fate: “While living, these two were cast into the lake of fire which is burning with sulfur.” That statement evoked images of Gehenna in the minds of John’s original audience. Jesus referred to the burning trash dump outside of Jerusalem as a metaphor for the place of eternal punishment (Matt 5:22, 29–30; Matt 10:28; Matt 23:29–33).²²⁹³

Fire and sulfur also allude to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25),²²⁹⁴ as well as the judgment foretold for Gog and Magog (Ezek 38:18–22).²²⁹⁵ Within Israel, sulfur occurs in volcanic areas near the Dead Sea. A highly flammable substance, it produces an intensely hot and malodorous fire.²²⁹⁶ Divine judgment by fire occurred several times in the Old Testament (e.g. Lev 10:1–2; Num 16:35–38).²²⁹⁷ However, in the Bible, the notion of a lake of fire appears only in Revelation.²²⁹⁸

The Jewish apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD) describes “a deep valley with burning fire. And they brought the kings and the mighty and began to cast them into this deep valley.”²²⁹⁹ Within the Greco-Roman milieu, the underworld of Hades contained a fiery river.²³⁰⁰

According to Plato (427–347 BC), “There are everlasting rivers of huge size under the earth, flowing with hot and cold water; and there is much fire, and great rivers of fire.”²³⁰¹

Jesus will first cast the Antichrist and the false prophet into the inferno.²³⁰² John then reported, “the rest were killed by the sword of the one sitting on the horse, which came from his mouth, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.” In this case, “the rest” refers to the individuals prepared for battle against the Lord.²³⁰³

Jesus will kill them by his spoken word of divine retribution (Heb 4:12–13),²³⁰⁴ not by a literal sword (Zech 14:1–5, 12–15; 2 Thess 2:1–12). In effect, his sword represents a decree of death. Their final doom shall come when Christ pronounces their fate, saying, “Depart from me, those who have been cursed, into the eternal fire which had been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10–15).²³⁰⁵

The Essenes (2nd century BC–68 AD) of Qumran separated themselves from other Jewish people to pursue their ascetic practices.²³⁰⁶ They held this view of the end of the age:

²²⁹¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358–9.

²²⁹²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 969.

²²⁹³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²²⁹⁴Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

²²⁹⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 969.

²²⁹⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²²⁹⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1066.

²²⁹⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²²⁹⁹Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 54:1–2, 105,

<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n219/mode/2up>.

²³⁰⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1066–7.

²³⁰¹Plato, “Phaedo,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1* (trans. Harold North Fowler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 111d,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D111d>.

²³⁰²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²³⁰³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1067.

²³⁰⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²³⁰⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 970–1.

²³⁰⁶John J. Collins, “Essenes,” *ABD* 2:619–26, 621.

“The Master shall bless the Prince of the Congregation...that he may establish the kingdom of his people forever, dispense justice...and that he may establish his holy covenant at the time of the affliction of those who seek God...[May you smite the peoples] with the might of your hand and ravage the earth with your scepter; may you bring death to the ungodly with the breath of your lips!...May [God] make your horns of iron and your hooves of bronze; may you toss like a young bull [and trample the peoples] like the mire of the streets!”²³⁰⁷

At last, the promised supper of God’s wrath will be ready (Ezek 39:4; Rev 19:17–18).²³⁰⁸ The enemies of Christ shall not receive a proper burial. Instead, birds of prey and scavengers will feast upon their flesh.²³⁰⁹ Jesus and his followers will finally experience complete victory over evil (Isa 66:22–24; Ps 110).²³¹⁰

Read Rev 19:20–21. Why did believers in John’s era believe that Nero was the Antichrist? How did the judgment upon the beast and the false prophet fit with Jewish and Greco-Roman expectations? What will be the fate of those allied against Christ and his armies? How do the events of this passage resemble what the people in Noah’s generation experienced? In what ways do they differ? How does knowing this affect you?

²³⁰⁷Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th ed., 1Q28b Col. 5:20, 270, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n445/mode/2up.

²³⁰⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

²³⁰⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1068.

²³¹⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359–60.

Chapter 8: Safely Through (Genesis 8:1–19)

One hundred years have passed since we were first introduced to Noah (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:6). In contrast to wickedness, sexual violence, and corruption wherever the Lord looked, in Noah God saw the one upright person on earth (Gen 6:1–12).²³¹¹ Therefore, the Lord made a covenant with him. In turn, Noah expressed his faith by building and equipping the ark as the Lord had commanded (Gen 6:13–22).²³¹²

God had already informed Noah that a pair of each kind of animal would come to the ark (Gen 6:19–20).²³¹³ Then, the Lord clarified his earlier directive,²³¹⁴ saying that seven pairs of every clean animal and of every type of bird would join him (Gen 7:1–3). Not until after the flood receded would the rationale for extra clean animals become clear (Gen 8:20).²³¹⁵

After decades of preparation, at last the time came. In only one week, forty days of rainfall would begin which would wipe out every land animal (Gen 7:4). Moses condensed all of Noah’s effort in carrying out an incredible amount of difficult work into this brief statement, “And Noah did according to all which the Lord had commanded him” (Gen 7:5).

By including an exact date for this event, Moses imbued the flood account with historical credibility.²³¹⁶ He named two sources of flooding: a great eruption of water from a subterranean ocean (“the great deep”), and a massive downpour from above (Gen 7:11).²³¹⁷

By releasing these waters, the Lord returned the earth to its original chaos. God was undoing his great act of separating the waters above from the waters below the earth in a reversal of the creation order (Gen 1:1–2, 6–10).²³¹⁸

Moses emphasized the salvation of those inside the ark, rather than the fate of those who did not seek refuge there.²³¹⁹ The sense of the text is that Noah and his family served as grand marshals of this parade, followed by the animals, who entered two by two. God led them to Noah to preserve a remnant (Gen 7:13–15).²³²⁰

The Lord’s act of sealing Noah and those with him inside the ark emphasizes that they received divine protection (Gen 7:16).²³²¹ While the storm raged all around them, the one who had shut them in guaranteed their safety (Gen 7:17).²³²² God’s grace saved Noah and his entourage, in contrast to the experiences of the heroes in other Ancient Near Eastern flood texts, whom most of the gods sought to kill.²³²³

Outside of the boat, eerie desolation reigned.²³²⁴ The waters triumphed over the earth,²³²⁵ lifting the ark above the tallest mountains (Gen 7:18–20). Chaotic waters which covered the earth at the beginning of God’s creative activity once again surged like hostile warriors to undo

²³¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 286.

²³¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

²³¹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

²³¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

²³¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

²³¹⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²³¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

²³¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

²³¹⁹Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 126.

²³²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138–9.

²³²¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 226.

²³²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²³²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²³²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³²⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

the order which the Lord had put into place.²³²⁶ This condition lasted for 150 days before the flood began to recede (Gen 7:24).

Despite this savage tempest, “The ark proceeded on the surface of the waters” (Gen 7:17). God in his mercy had shut Noah and his fellow passengers inside and he would bring them through the storm without harm (Gen 8:1).²³²⁷ Yet, every person, land animal, and bird left outside perished (Gen 7:21–23). In contrast to the ones whom the flood washed away, Noah and his passengers were left behind.²³²⁸ The same waters which rendered divine judgment preserved a righteous remnant.²³²⁹

God Remembered Noah

1) Gen 8:1: The flood had wiped out virtually everyone descended from Adam (Gen 7:21–22). It destroyed even most of the animals which God commissioned humanity to steward (Gen 1:26–28). Humanity stood on the brink of a new era, with Noah as the father of all.²³³⁰

Moses structured the entire flood narrative as a chiasm (Gen 6:9–9:19).²³³¹ While the first five sections of the account increasingly darkened in tone,²³³² we have at last reached the center.²³³³ After this, he described the renewal of the earth.²³³⁴ By placing this verse as the pivotal focus of the story,²³³⁵ Moses emphasized that Noah’s deliverance was no accident: the Lord himself saved Noah and his passengers.²³³⁶

He wrote, “And God remembered (*zakhar*) Noah and all of the animals and all of the cattle which [were] with him in the ark. And God caused a wind to pass over the land. And the waters subsided.” For the first time, the Bible describes the Lord as remembering someone.²³³⁷ Significantly, Moses mentioned neither Noah’s righteousness nor his obedience as a reason for his favor (Cf. Gen 6:8–9).²³³⁸

The English word “remembered” implies that something had been forgotten. However, the Hebrew term carries a different nuance.²³³⁹ It expresses commitment to a covenant (Lev 26:45; Ps 74:2; Jer 14:20–21).²³⁴⁰ Whenever the Lord “remembered” people in the Old Testament, he intervened to save them from death, infertility, or slavery (Gen 18:23; Gen 19:29; Gen 30:22–23; Exod 2:23–25).²³⁴¹ Consequently, the Lord would fulfill his promise of salvation to Noah (Gen 6:18).²³⁴² God’s concern also extended to animals (Jonah 4:10–11; Matt 6:26; Matt 10:29).²³⁴³

²³²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²³²⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 297.

²³²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 127.

²³³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

²³³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

²³³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²³³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 157.

²³³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²³³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²³³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³⁴⁰H. Eising, “זָכַר” (*zakhar*), *TDOT* 4:70–82, 70.

²³⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²³⁴²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 232.

²³⁴³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

Even today, we can trust God to keep his covenants with us (Matt 26:26–28; Heb 10:11–25).²³⁴⁴ When the Lord remembers, he acts.²³⁴⁵ He remains merciful and true to his word.²³⁴⁶

In Noah’s case, God’s remembrance caused him to send a wind to blow over the surface of the earth, increasing the evaporation of the water.²³⁴⁷ The same Hebrew word (*ruakh*) means “wind” and “spirit.”²³⁴⁸ Moses deliberately echoed the original creation account.²³⁴⁹ At the beginning of God’s creation of the heavens and the earth, the divine spirit hovered magnificently over the waters (Gen 1:1–2). Here that same wind dispersed the waters of judgment.²³⁵⁰

The Akkadian gods in the Epic of Gilgamesh “cowered like dogs” when faced with the storm they unleashed in their attempt to destroy everyone on earth.²³⁵¹ In contrast, the Lord remained in complete control of Noah’s situation.²³⁵²

a) Read Gen 8:1. How does the Hebrew word “remember” differ from its English equivalent? Whom did God include in his covenant with Noah? What similarities would Moses’s original audience have recognized between this verse and the creation account in Gen 1? How does this verse provide you with comfort in hard times?

Jesus, Remember Me

2) Luke 23:39–43: This scene, which occurred during Jesus’s crucifixion, took place just after the Jewish leaders and soldiers mocked him (Luke 23:35–38).²³⁵³ Luke reported additional humiliation of Christ. He wrote, “One of those who was being hanged as a criminal was reviling (*blasphēmō*) him, saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’”

Questioning Jesus’s legitimacy as the Messiah amounted to blasphemy.²³⁵⁴ Not only had this lawbreaker crossed the boundaries of societal justice, even on the edge of death he exhibited no fear of God (Luke 12:4–5).²³⁵⁵ Although this criminal aligned himself with others who mocked Christ,²³⁵⁶ he also demanded that Jesus employ his spiritual power to rescue him from

²³⁴⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²³⁴⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 123.

²³⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²³⁴⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רוּחַ” (*ruakh*), *BDB*, 924,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/924/mode/2up>.

²³⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 331.

²³⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²³⁵¹Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:113–5, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²³⁵²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²³⁵³Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

²³⁵⁴Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, “βλασφημέω” (*blasphēmō*), *TDNT* 1:621–5, 623.

²³⁵⁵John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1151.

²³⁵⁶Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

the cross.²³⁵⁷ He did not recognize that Christ could deliver him not just from death but through it (John 11:21–27; Rom 14:7–9; 2 Tim 2:11–13).²³⁵⁸

Luke recorded a shift in the attitude of one of the condemned men, differing from Mark’s account (Mark 15:32).²³⁵⁹ The second criminal rebuked the first, “Do you not even fear (*phobeō*) God, for you are under the same condemnation? And we have been justly condemned, for we are receiving [things] appropriate to what we have done. But this man nothing wrong has done.”

Jewish piety rested upon the foundation of fearing God, for it represented utter dependence upon the Lord (Ps 31:19–24; Luke 1:46–50; Luke 18:9–14).²³⁶⁰ The first man chose to malign God’s means of salvation, rather than expressing reverence for him.²³⁶¹ Since the second convict recognized that he and the other criminal received a just sentence, he expressed astonishment that someone about to answer to God could boldly accost Christ.²³⁶² The time had come to repent, not to mock another sufferer (Acts 25:11).²³⁶³

By admitting his guilt and perceiving Jesus’s innocence, one man became a candidate to receive divine grace (Luke 5:8–11).²³⁶⁴ Pilate and Herod recognized Christ’s innocence (Luke 23:13–15); so now did a man who committed a capital offense.²³⁶⁵ Jesus’s demeanor and words upon the cross, particularly when praying for forgiveness for those who crucified him,²³⁶⁶ likely enabled the criminal to identify Christ’s royal status (Luke 23:33–34).²³⁶⁷ Therefore, the second man appealed in repentance and trust for mercy, as to God (Ps 106:4–8; Luke 1:54–55).²³⁶⁸

He pleaded, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!” This cry contains one of the few occurrences in Luke where someone addressed Christ by his first name.²³⁶⁹ Fittingly, the name Jesus (*Iēsous*) means “Yahweh is salvation,” because Christ would save people from their sins (Luke 1:30–35; Matt 1:21).²³⁷⁰ Others who called Jesus by name also sought restoration (Luke 17:13; Luke 18:35–39).²³⁷¹

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (OT), God’s remembrance of Noah (Gen 8:1) uses the same verbal root as the criminal’s desperate appeal, “Remember (*mimnēskomai*) me.” The Lord keeps in mind those in a covenant relationship with him (Judg 16:28–30; 1 Sam 1:9–11, 19–20; Ps 115:11–13).²³⁷²

While pondering his future, the dying man anticipated the coming glory of Christ and placed his fate in Jesus’s hands.²³⁷³ However, unlike the first criminal, he did not demand earthly

²³⁵⁷Garland, *Luke*, 924.

²³⁵⁸Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

²³⁵⁹Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁶⁰Horst Balz, “φοβέω” (*phobeō*), *TDNT* 9:189–219, 209.

²³⁶¹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

²³⁶²Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152–3.

²³⁶³Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁶⁴Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

²³⁶⁵Bock, *Luke*, 596.

²³⁶⁶Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁶⁷Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1151–2.

²³⁶⁸Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁶⁹Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁷⁰Werner Foerster, “Ἰησοῦς” (*Iesous*), *TDNT* 3:284–93, 285.

²³⁷¹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822.

²³⁷²David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 398–414, 397–8.

²³⁷³O. Michel, “μimnēskomai” (*mimnēskomai*), *TDNT* 4:675–83, 677.

deliverance but requested salvation in the age to come.²³⁷⁴ He recognized the truth of the charges brought against Christ as King of the Jews (Luke 23:38).²³⁷⁵ Jesus’s approaching death failed to negate his claims to be the Messiah (1 Cor 1:22–25).²³⁷⁶ Instead, his sacrifice preceded his kingly rule (Luke 9:51; Luke 20:9–18; Luke 24:25–27).²³⁷⁷

While facing his own agony and imminent death, Jesus extended salvation to this man despite receiving mockery for his apparent inability to save himself and others (Matt 26:51–54).²³⁷⁸ Jesus replied, “Truly, to you I say, today with me you shall be in paradise.” In the gospels, whenever Christ spoke the formula “Truly I say,” this indicated he was about to make an authoritative and trustworthy proclamation.²³⁷⁹

Greek authors placed their emphasis at the beginning of a sentence or clause. As a result, the words “today with me” consisted of a forceful assertion.²³⁸⁰ The criminal did not have to wait for his bodily resurrection in the age to come (1 Thess 4:13–18). On that very day, Christ would fulfill his desire (Cf. 2 Cor 5:1–8).²³⁸¹ Even while bearing the weight of our sins, Jesus retained the authority to deliver a royal pardon (2 Cor 5:17–21).²³⁸²

In the Greek translation of the OT, “paradise” (*paradeisos*) typically referred to the garden or park belonging to a king (Eccl 2:5; Song 4:12–14; Neh 2:8).²³⁸³ The term originally applied to Eden, the garden of God (Gen 2:8).²³⁸⁴ God promised Isaiah that he would eventually reverse the exile from Eden (Gen 3:22–24), bringing about full restoration “as a park (*paradeisos*) of the Lord” in the age to come (Isa 51:3; Rev 22:1–5).²³⁸⁵

According to the Jewish apocryphal book *The Testament of Levi* (second century BC): “Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest...And he shall execute a righteous judgment upon the earth...He shall shine forth as the sun on the earth and shall remove all darkness from under heaven, and there shall be peace in all the earth...And he shall open the gates of paradise and shall remove the threatening sword against Adam. And he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life...And all the saints shall clothe themselves with joy.”²³⁸⁶

By means of his death, Jesus opened the way to paradise (Rev 2:7).²³⁸⁷ The Lord fulfilled his plan through—not despite—the crucifixion.²³⁸⁸ Christ and the criminal went to paradise immediately after death.²³⁸⁹ In the aftermath of Jesus’s resurrection and ascension, Christ sits in

²³⁷⁴Garland, *Luke*, 925.

²³⁷⁵Bock, *Luke*, 596.

²³⁷⁶Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 822–3.

²³⁷⁷Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152.

²³⁷⁸Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152.

²³⁷⁹Heinrich Schlier, “ἀμήν” (*amēn*), *TDNT* 1:335–8, 338.

²³⁸⁰Garland, *Luke*, 926.

²³⁸¹Bock, *Luke*, 596.

²³⁸²Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1151.

²³⁸³Garland, *Luke*, 926.

²³⁸⁴Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 398.

²³⁸⁵Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152.

²³⁸⁶R. H. Charles, trans., “Testament of Levi,” in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Black, 1908), 18:2–4, 10–14, 62–3, 66–7, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/62/mode/2up>, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/66/mode/2up>.

²³⁸⁷Garland, *Luke*, 926.

²³⁸⁸Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 823.

²³⁸⁹Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152.

paradise at the Father’s right hand (Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55–56).²³⁹⁰ Believers in the intermediate state between death and bodily resurrection abide there with him (2 Cor 12:2–4).²³⁹¹

Jesus shocked those watching the crucifixion by extending abundant mercy to a criminal convicted of a crime worthy of execution.²³⁹² By faith, that man experienced vindication, and now dwells among the righteous dead (Rom 10:8–13).²³⁹³ As long as life lasts, God considers no one too unworthy or too late to request and receive the gift of salvation (Luke 15:1–7; Matt 20:1–16).

Read Luke 23:39–43. What made the words of the first criminal blasphemous? Why did the second convict rebuke him? What did he ask Christ to do? How did Jesus respond? What similarities exist between the Lord remembering Noah and Christ promising to remember the man crucified with him?

God Reverses the Flood

3) Gen 8:2–5: Due to the Lord remembering Noah (Gen 8:1), “The springs of the deep and the windows of the heavens were sealed, and the heavy rain from the heavens was restrained.” God began reversing his actions (Cf. Gen 7:11–12).²³⁹⁴ Just as the Lord divided the waters on the second day of creation, he reestablished the separation between the watery deep and the sky (Gen 1:6–7).²³⁹⁵ The flood remained entirely under God’s control, rather than merely subject to the forces of nature.²³⁹⁶

The Sumerian flood account, the Eridu Genesis closely parallels the biblical record.²³⁹⁷ Nevertheless, several important differences appear. It says: “After, for seven days (and) seven nights, the flood had swept over the land, (and) the huge boat had been tossed about by the windstorms on the great waters, [*the sun god*] *Utu came forth*, who sheds light on heaven (and) earth. *Ziusudra* opened a window of the huge boat, the hero *Utu brought his rays into* the giant boat.”²³⁹⁸

In Genesis, the wind sent by the Lord evaporated the water, not warm rays of light sent by the sun god (Gen 8:1).

²³⁹⁰Garland, *Luke*, 926.

²³⁹¹Joachim Jeremias, “παράδεισος” (*paradeisos*), *TDNT* 5:765–73, 769.

²³⁹²Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1152.

²³⁹³Garland, *Luke*, 926.

²³⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²³⁹⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 128.

²³⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²³⁹⁷Pritchard, *ANET*, 42,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n67/mode/2up.

²³⁹⁸Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., “The Deluge,” in *ANET*, lines 203–8, 44,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n69/mode/2up.

Moses recorded the results of the Lord’s activity, “The waters gradually receded from upon the earth, and at the end of 150 days, the waters decreased.” This reversed the events of Gen 7:17, 24.²³⁹⁹ However, the waters had not completely disappeared by that point. Instead, they returned to their original locations.²⁴⁰⁰ Moses used the same description regarding the Sea of Reeds, an occurrence very familiar to his original audience (Exod 14:26–28). Later in Israel’s history, Joshua depicted the Jordan River in a similar way (Josh 4:18).²⁴⁰¹

Finally, “The ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.” Ironically, the date is extremely specific but the location—the piece of information which interests most readers—remains quite vague.²⁴⁰² Exactly five months after the flood began, the ark could no longer clear the mountain peaks and came to rest (*nuakh*).²⁴⁰³ Here Moses used wordplay, employing the verb related to Noah’s name (*noakh*) (Gen 5:29).²⁴⁰⁴

The mountains of Ararat are located in what was once Armenia (2 Ki 19:37; Jer 51:27).²⁴⁰⁵ This range is now in eastern Turkey, southern Russia, and northwest Iran.²⁴⁰⁶ The highest peak rises to approximately 17,000 feet.²⁴⁰⁷ People have sought to identify which specific mountain the ark rested upon since before the time of Christ.²⁴⁰⁸ However, concerning this matter, the Bible omits precise information.²⁴⁰⁹ According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, “On Mount Nisir the ship came to a halt. Mount Nisir held the ship fast, allowing no motion.”²⁴¹⁰ In contrast, neither the Eridu Genesis nor the Atrahasis Epic names a landing site.²⁴¹¹

Moses wrote, “And the waters had been decreasing steadily until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.” By including an exact date—which typically occurs in the Ancient Near East (ANE) only in the annals of kings—Moses imbued the account with historical credibility.²⁴¹² This occurred two and a half months after the ark came to a sudden halt. The decline of the waters mirrors Gen 7:19–20.²⁴¹³ It also parallels the separation of the waters from the ground on the third day of creation (Gen 1:9).²⁴¹⁴

a) Read Gen 8:2–5. How did the Lord reverse what he had done to produce the flood? Why did Moses give precise dates? What makes it very difficult to guess where the ark came to rest? Imagine the moment when the boat came to a halt. What do you think that was like?

²³⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²⁴⁰⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²⁴⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²⁴⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²⁴⁰³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184.

²⁴⁰⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 301.

²⁴⁰⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:4.

²⁴⁰⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184–5.

²⁴⁰⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:4.

²⁴⁰⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 301.

²⁴⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 185.

²⁴¹⁰Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:140–1, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁴¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 301.

²⁴¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²⁴¹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 185.

²⁴¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 129.

Renewal of the Earth

b) Gen 8:6–14: Noah wanted to ensure the safety of the ark’s inhabitants before disembarking.²⁴¹⁵ This section of the flood narrative concentrates upon the long wait for the waters to subside.²⁴¹⁶ Hence, Moses employed a great deal of repetition to impart the sense of monotony which the passengers experienced while they waited for the earth to dry.²⁴¹⁷

Moses wrote, “Then it was at the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. And he sent forth the raven. And it went out, going back and forth while the waters were drying upon the earth.” Noah thought waiting forty days after the mountain peaks emerged might suffice for them to leave the ark.²⁴¹⁸ Since the window did not allow him to view the ground, he must have placed it in or near the roof (Gen 6:16).²⁴¹⁹

Until this point in the flood narrative, Noah received all his instructions from God. On this topic, the Lord apparently remained silent. However, since God did eventually tell him to leave (Gen 8:15–16),²⁴²⁰ perhaps Noah grew impatient.

In the ancient world, some sailors utilized birds to locate the nearest land.²⁴²¹ Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD) observed, “In traversing their seas, the people of Taprobane take no observations of the stars...but they carry birds out to sea, which they let go from time to time, and so follow their course as they make for the land.”²⁴²²

Since ravens typically failed to return to their ship, sailors took special care to note the direction of the birds’ flight.²⁴²³ God classified them among unclean birds due to their habit of eating decaying flesh (Lev 11:13–15).²⁴²⁴ Thus, Noah likely expected the raven not to return.

Moses continued, “Then [Noah] sent forth a dove from him in order to see [if] the waters had diminished from upon the surface of the ground.” As doves can fly only a short distance, navigators used them to locate places to land.²⁴²⁵ The Lord considered them clean birds, suitable for sacrifice (Lev 1:14).²⁴²⁶ These fowl tend to live in low-lying areas like valleys,²⁴²⁷ where they find seeds to eat.²⁴²⁸

Moses reported, “But the dove did not find a resting place for the sole of her foot, so she turned back to him on the ark, because the waters [were] on all the surface of the ground. And [Noah] stretched out his hand, and he took her, and he brought her to himself into the ark.” The return of the dove to Noah indicated that the land at lower elevations remained submerged.²⁴²⁹ Moses employed wordplay here with Noah’s name. Finding no resting place (*mānoah*), the dove

²⁴¹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 302.

²⁴¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 185.

²⁴¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 185.

²⁴¹⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 303.

²⁴¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

²⁴²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 303.

²⁴²¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴²²Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley; London: Taylor & Francis, 1855), 6.24.7–8, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0137:book=6:chapter=24&highlight=birds>.

²⁴²³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

²⁴²⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

²⁴²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 304–5.

²⁴²⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 304–5.

returned to Noah.²⁴³⁰ He imitated God,²⁴³¹ extending compassion to the creatures which the Lord created (Exod 23:4–5; Deut 25:4; Prov 12:10).²⁴³²

Then, “[Noah] waited yet another seven days, and he again sent out the dove from the ark. The dove came to him toward evening and behold, a fresh-plucked olive leaf [was] in her mouth. And Noah knew that the waters were diminished from upon the land. So, he waited yet another seven days, and he sent forth the dove, but she did not return to him again.”

After what had to be a difficult week of waiting, Noah tried again.²⁴³³ This time, the bird brought a sign of hope. Leaves once again sprouted from olive trees!²⁴³⁴ People have cultivated olives for over 6,000 years. A single tree can live for up to 1,000 years, producing fruit even when the trunk becomes hollow. When someone cuts an olive tree down, new sprouts emerge from the stump. This makes them difficult to kill.²⁴³⁵ As a result, those living in the Ancient Near East (ANE) saw olive trees as a sign of fertility and new life. Recovery from the flood began.²⁴³⁶

The Epic of Gilgamesh recounts Utnapishtim using birds in a similar way: “When the seventh day arrived, I sent forth and set free a dove. The dove went forth but came back. Since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I sent forth and set free a swallow. The swallow went forth but came back. Since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I sent forth and set free a raven. The raven went forth and, seeing that the waters had diminished, he eats, circles, caws, and turns not round.”²⁴³⁷ Releasing a raven before a dove represents a more logical strategy for tracking the evaporation of water.²⁴³⁸ This imbues the biblical account with greater credibility.²⁴³⁹

Moses reported, “And it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water began to be dried up (*khārēv*) from upon the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and he looked, and behold, the surface of the ground had begun to dry. And in the second month on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the land was dry (*yābēsh*).” Once again, Moses cited specific dates to emphasize the importance of these events (Cf. Gen 7:11).²⁴⁴⁰

Furthermore, he used two different Hebrew verbs to convey what happened to the land.²⁴⁴¹ The first (*khārēv*) describes the process of drying, while the second (*yābēsh*) depicts the result.²⁴⁴² Initially, Noah saw that the waters began to disappear from the earth. By the end, a new world emerged from its watery grave, heralding the onset of a new era in human history.²⁴⁴³

Moses provided a hint to his original audience that the ark was a sacred space by his choice of words to identify what Noah removed from it.²⁴⁴⁴ The term “covering” (*mikseh*)

²⁴³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186.

²⁴³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 186–7.

²⁴³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 141.

²⁴³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴³⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴³⁵Irene Jacob and Walter Jacob, “Flora,” *ABD* 2:803–17, 807–8.

²⁴³⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁴³⁷Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:145–54, 94–5,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁴³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 304–5.

²⁴³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 141.

²⁴⁴⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 305.

²⁴⁴²O. Kaiser, “קָרַב” (*kharav*), *TDOT* 5:150–1, 151.

²⁴⁴³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴⁴⁴Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “קָרַב” (*kharab*), *BDB*, 492.

elsewhere refers to the roof of the tabernacle and to the leather which the priests placed over the sacred furnishings of the tabernacle for transporting them (Exod 26:14; Num 4:5–15).²⁴⁴⁵

According to the Eridu Genesis, a Sumerian flood account, “After the flood had swept over the country, after the evil wind had tossed the big boat about on the great waters, the sun came out spreading light over heaven and earth. Ziusudra then drilled an opening in the big boat. And the gallant [sun god] Utu sent his light into the interior of the big boat.”²⁴⁴⁶

Noah waited for almost two more months before the ground completely dried.²⁴⁴⁷ Based upon the Hebrew lunar calendar, Noah and his passengers spent one year and eleven days on the ark. Intriguingly, that is the amount of time the earth requires to orbit the sun. By our reckoning, they remained on the boat for exactly one year.²⁴⁴⁸ No other ANE account provides a length of time for the flood.²⁴⁴⁹ This fact counters arguments that newer texts, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, depend upon Genesis.

Read Gen 8:6–14. Why would Noah release a raven to test the water level before repeating the experiment with a dove? How did he know that the waters abated? What indications did Moses give that the ark represented a sacred sanctuary?

Bring Them Out

c) Gen 8:15–19: This section of the flood narrative comprises the eighth scene, in which Noah hears and obeys God’s command to leave the ark. It parallels Gen 7:1–4.²⁴⁵⁰ In this passage, Moses gave additional hints that Noah served as a second Adam.²⁴⁵¹ The key word, which occurs four times in these verses, means “to go out” (*yatsa*).²⁴⁵²

Based upon the failure of the dove to return and his own observations, Noah knew that the earth was prepared for habitation (Gen 8:6–12). Apparently, God had not spoken to Noah during the year since he entered the ark (Gen 7:1–4, 11; Gen 8:13–14). Nevertheless, he waited to receive an “all clear” signal from the Lord.²⁴⁵³

Concerning Noah’s patience, John Calvin (1509–1564) reached this conclusion: “Noah was restrained, by a hallowed modesty, from allowing himself to enjoy the bounty of nature, till he should hear the voice of God directing him to do so...All ought indeed, spontaneously, to consider how great must have been the fortitude of the man, who, after the

²⁴⁴⁵Helmer Ringgren, “כַּסָּה” (*kasah*), *TDOT* 7:259–64, 264.

²⁴⁴⁶Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “Eridu Genesis,” in *RANE*, 13–15, <http://www.piney.com/EriduGen.html>.

²⁴⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 141.

²⁴⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 305.

²⁴⁴⁹Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

²⁴⁵⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 127.

²⁴⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

²⁴⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 306–7.

incredible weariness of a whole year, when the deluge has ceased, and new life has shone forth, does not yet move a foot...without the command of God.”²⁴⁵⁴

Moses wrote, “Then the Lord spoke to Noah, saying, ‘Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons, and [the] wives of your sons with you. Every living thing which [is] with you from all flesh: birds and animals and all the creeping things which move on the land, you shall bring out with you. And they shall swarm upon the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.’”

In his previous instructions, the Lord commanded Noah to bring various creatures on board to preserve their lives (Gen 6:18–20; Gen 7:2–3). Now God ordered him to release the animals so they could reproduce and fill the earth.²⁴⁵⁵ Note the similarity to Moses’s account of the fifth and sixth days of creation (Gen 1:22–23, 27–28).²⁴⁵⁶ That the land animals finally received this same mandate points to the beginning of a new creation (Gen 1:24–25).²⁴⁵⁷

The very close correlation between Gen 8:16–17 and Gen 8:18–19 emphasizes Noah’s obedience to the Lord’s commands.²⁴⁵⁸ The second pair of verses says, “And Noah went out, and his wife, and his sons, and [the] wives of his sons with him. Every living thing: every creeping thing and every bird and everything which moves upon the land. By their clans, they went out from the ark.”

Within Israel, a clan referred to a group of related people larger than an extended family but smaller than a tribe (Num 1:2; Josh 7:14).²⁴⁵⁹ Noah and all his passengers disembarked to a renewed world, full of promise.²⁴⁶⁰

Read Gen 8:15–19. How does this passage imply that Noah is a second Adam? What do these verses reveal about his character? How do you respond to what the Lord instructs you to do?

Overview of 1 Peter 3:18–22

4) 1 Pet 3:18–22: The Apostle Peter wrote this letter to encourage believers experiencing persecution to live godly lives which honored Christ.²⁴⁶¹ Since the recipients experienced hostility from their neighbors, in the previous passage Peter urged them to endure suffering for doing good (1 Pet 3:14–17). By holding firm under trial, they would receive honor in the age to come, just as God vindicated Jesus after his crucifixion. Persisting in faith leads to victory.²⁴⁶²

²⁴⁵⁴Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 280.

²⁴⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 129.

²⁴⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁴⁵⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 141.

²⁴⁵⁹H. -J. Zobel, “מִשְׁפָּחָה” (*mishpakhah*), *TDOT* 9:79–86, 80–1.

²⁴⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

²⁴⁶¹John H. Elliott, “Peter, First Epistle of,” *ABD* 5:269–78, 269.

²⁴⁶²Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 237–8.

Most scholars agree that the apostle utilized traditional material when preparing 1 Peter 3:18–22.²⁴⁶³ In particular, they cite three past tense participles in the passive voice in 1 Pet 3:18, 22: “he was put to death” (*thanatōtheis*); “he was made alive” (*zōopoiētheis*); and “having been subjected” (*hypotagentōn*). The nouns meaning “in [the] flesh” (*sarki*) and “in [the] Spirit” (*pneumati*) also occur in parallel form.²⁴⁶⁴ However, whether that material took the form of a hymn or creed remains under discussion.²⁴⁶⁵

Although this passage is very complex, recognizing its major points provides us with guidance. First, Jesus suffered for unrighteous people to bring Christians to God. Second, the power of the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. Then, Christ proclaimed his victory to evil spirits. Finally, Jesus ascended to the Father and has placed all demonic forces under his power.²⁴⁶⁶

Due to the controversial nature of this passage, we will examine and critique various views in a similar format to the treatment of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–4). Thankfully, there is a way through the morass of difficulties.

a) Read 1 Pet 3:18–22. What was the purpose of this letter? Why do most scholars believe that this passage was originally a hymn or creed? How does focusing upon what happened to Jesus encourage you to persist through trials or persecution?

Death in the Flesh but Life in the Spirit

b) 1 Pet 3:18: Peter began this passage in 1 Pet 3:18–22 by writing, “For Christ, too, once on behalf of sins suffered, the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, in order that you might be brought to God. He was put to death in [the] flesh but brought to life in [the] Spirit.”

Prior to Christ’s crucifixion, Peter adamantly rejected the idea that the messiah should die (Matt 16:21–23).²⁴⁶⁷ Since Christ suffered, we cannot definitively interpret persecution as a sign of the Lord’s displeasure.²⁴⁶⁸ Due to our identification with Christ,²⁴⁶⁹ suffering precedes glory.²⁴⁷⁰ God calls us to endure affliction even as he did (Rom 8:16–23).²⁴⁷¹

Ultimately, Jesus’s persecutors failed to achieve victory over him. We who suffer unjustly shall likewise experience vindication in the age to come (1 Pet 2:11–12; Rev 6:9–11).²⁴⁷² As a result of this truth, Christ’s experience encourages us to stand firm.²⁴⁷³

²⁴⁶³J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 197.

²⁴⁶⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 197.

²⁴⁶⁵Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 134–5.

²⁴⁶⁶Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 180.

²⁴⁶⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 238.

²⁴⁶⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 179–80.

²⁴⁶⁹Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 134.

²⁴⁷⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 180.

²⁴⁷¹Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 128.

²⁴⁷²D. A. Carson, “1 Peter,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids; Nottingham: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1039.

²⁴⁷³Michaels, *1 Peter*, 201.

However, we cannot limit Christ's affliction to a pattern for us to emulate.²⁴⁷⁴ Not only did he suffer innocently, he died on behalf of other people's sins (Eph 1:7–8; Rom 8:1–5; Heb 10:8–10, 17–18).²⁴⁷⁵ The phrase “for sins” (*peri hamartia*) occurs repeatedly in reference to the sacrificial system throughout the Greek translation of the Pentateuch (five books attributed to Moses).²⁴⁷⁶ In fact, it occurs fifty-six times in Leviticus alone.²⁴⁷⁷

Jesus's suffering completely fulfilled its purpose (John 19:30).²⁴⁷⁸ Therefore, his sacrifice took place once for all time (Rom 6:10; Heb 7:26–28; Heb 9:24–27).²⁴⁷⁹ In fact, Christ became the perfect sin offering who died in our place to make us right with God (Lev 16:15–19; Isa 53:10–12; Heb 13:10–13).²⁴⁸⁰

By calling Jesus “righteous” (*dikaios*) Peter alluded to his sinless state (John 8:46; Heb 4:15).²⁴⁸¹ Had Christ not lived in perfectly obedience, he could not have atoned for our sins by his death.²⁴⁸² God's plan to save us would have failed.²⁴⁸³

Peter placed the recipients of his letter among the unjust people for whom Christ died.²⁴⁸⁴ The usage of the term “just” or “righteous” here agrees with a definition reputedly given by Socrates (469–399 BC), “He who acts lawfully is just, and he who acts unlawfully is unjust.”²⁴⁸⁵

Prior to their conversion, Peter's readers had been as alienated from God as their unbelieving neighbors (1 Pet 1:14; 1 Pet 2:10, 25; 1 Pet 4:3). However, Jesus calls sinners to himself, not those who cling to their own righteousness (Matt 9:9–13; 1 Tim 1:12–16).²⁴⁸⁶ Once unrighteous people accept Christ's sacrificial death to cover their sins, he commands us to live uprightly, even if that results in suffering (Matt 5:10–16; Matt 10:26–39).²⁴⁸⁷

Jesus died that, “you might be brought to God.” Even the Lord's former enemies can now enjoy spiritual access to him and an eternity of dwelling in his presence (Rom 5:1–2, 6–11; Eph 2:1–7, 17–22; Heb 10:19–22).²⁴⁸⁸ Conversion moves us from darkness into light (John 1:4–13; 1 Pet 2:9, 24).²⁴⁸⁹ In effect, Christ reached across the chasm between God and humanity and led us across it to dwell in harmony with the Trinity.²⁴⁹⁰

Peter continued, “Although he was put to death in [the] flesh, he was made alive in [the] Spirit.” That Jesus was “put to death in the flesh” refers to the crucifixion.²⁴⁹¹ Due to its

²⁴⁷⁴I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter* (ed. Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson; IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 1 Pet 3:18.

²⁴⁷⁵ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 135.

²⁴⁷⁶ Jobs, *1 Peter*, 238.

²⁴⁷⁷ Result of Logos 7 word study on “ἁμαρτία” (*hamartia*).

²⁴⁷⁸ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 202.

²⁴⁷⁹ Gustav Stählin, “ἁπαξ” (*hapax*), *TDNT* 1:381–4, 381–2.

²⁴⁸⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 181–2.

²⁴⁸¹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 202.

²⁴⁸² Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 182.

²⁴⁸³ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:18.

²⁴⁸⁴ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 202.

²⁴⁸⁵ Xenophon, “Memorabilia,” in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes, Vol. 4* (trans. E. C. Marchant; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 4.4.13,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0208%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D4%3Asection%3D13>.

²⁴⁸⁶ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 202–3.

²⁴⁸⁷ Jobs, *1 Peter*, 238.

²⁴⁸⁸ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:18.

²⁴⁸⁹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 203.

²⁴⁹⁰ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 136.

²⁴⁹¹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 203.

grammatical structure, that phrase contrasts with “made alive in [the] Spirit,”²⁴⁹² which alludes to his resurrection (John 5:21; Rom 8:9–11). These phrases explicitly depict Christ’s vindication.²⁴⁹³

The flesh/spirit (*sarx/pneuma*) word pair occurs several times in the New Testament.²⁴⁹⁴ Luke 24:39; Rom 8:4–9; 2 Cor 7:1; and Col 2:5 use the terms with slightly different nuances. In this passage, the passive verbs indicate that Jesus was put to death by people and raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit (Mark 14:55; 1 Pet 4:6).²⁴⁹⁵ Christ’s death and resurrection comprise one redemptive historical act for the salvation of God’s people (1 Pet 1:3–5, 17–21).²⁴⁹⁶ Most modern scholars concur that this word pair forms a contrast between Jesus’s earthly existence and his risen state (Rom 1:3–5; 1 Tim 3:16).²⁴⁹⁷ It does not reflect a Greco-Roman dualism between his body and soul.²⁴⁹⁸ All of Jesus died, not only his body.²⁴⁹⁹

“Flesh” describes the earthly arena of human limits, suffering, and mortality in distinction to the heavenly sphere.²⁵⁰⁰ The Spirit represents God’s power, vindication, and eternal life. Each of these domains affects whole people: body and soul.²⁵⁰¹ Peter’s emphasis lies upon Christ’s bodily resurrection and the future redemption of the bodies of God’s people (Cf. 1 Cor 15:50–55).²⁵⁰² God has overthrown and reversed death (Rom 5:12–21).²⁵⁰³

Just as the Spirit raised Jesus,²⁵⁰⁴ death cannot ultimately destroy believers (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20–22).²⁵⁰⁵ We can face suffering knowing that we shall share in Christ’s resurrection.²⁵⁰⁶

Read 1 Pet 3:18. Why did Jesus die for sins? What qualified him to do so? How does this encourage you? Why is it important to note that Jesus was made alive in the Spirit before he preached to the spirits (1 Pet 3:19)?

Interpretive Issues in 1 Pet 3:19–20

c) 1 Pet 3:19–20: In v. 19, the disputes over 1 Pet 3:18–22 begin.²⁵⁰⁷ They will continue through 1 Pet 3:21.²⁵⁰⁸ With so many intertwining themes, one scholar noted, “It is no wonder that

²⁴⁹²Jobes, *1 Peter*, 240.

²⁴⁹³Michaels, *1 Peter*, 203.

²⁴⁹⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 183. Since ancient Greek manuscripts were written entirely in capital letters, we must use the context of each passage to determine whether a New Testament author meant “spirit” or “the Holy Spirit.”

²⁴⁹⁵Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204.

²⁴⁹⁶Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:18.

²⁴⁹⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 239.

²⁴⁹⁸Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204.

²⁴⁹⁹Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 137.

²⁵⁰⁰Eduard Schweizer, “σάρξ” (*sarx*), *TDNT* 7:98–151, 143.

²⁵⁰¹Michaels, *1 Peter*, 205.

²⁵⁰²Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 137.

²⁵⁰³Michaels, *1 Peter*, 205.

²⁵⁰⁴Keener, *JVPBCCNT*, 1 Pet 3:18–9.

²⁵⁰⁵Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 136.

²⁵⁰⁶Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 184.

²⁵⁰⁷Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁰⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 183.

commentators have shaken their heads in despair!”²⁵⁰⁹ Even Martin Luther conceded that he could not comprehend the meaning of this text.²⁵¹⁰ Given the amount of contentious debate, we must hold our interpretations lightly.²⁵¹¹ On a positive note, the eminent scholars cited here remain largely in agreement, with only one contending for a minor variation.

The overall thrust of this section teaches that Jesus made a proclamation to the imprisoned spirits who had disobeyed the Lord in the days of Noah.²⁵¹² Peter wrote, “He was made alive in the Spirit, by which he also to the spirits in prison went [and] made a proclamation.”

We must consider multiple points of contention: 1) Who proclaimed?; 2) Who heard the announcement?; 3) What was asserted?; and 4) When did this occur? Accounting for each of the potential answers to these questions yields 180 possibilities.²⁵¹³

In this instance, the two small words “by which” (*en ho*) bear critical importance. The preposition “*en*” can mean “in, among, in the presence of, with, under the influence of, by, on account of, while,” or “when.”²⁵¹⁴ Some scholars understood this sentence to mean that Jesus traveled in a spiritual form of existence. However, Peter avoided Greek dualism and did not separate Christ’s spirit from his body (1 Pet 3:18).²⁵¹⁵ Both Jesus’s body and his soul remained in the tomb until his resurrection.²⁵¹⁶

As in 1 Pet 1:6 and 1 Pet 4:4, we can best regard “*en ho*” as “in that way.”²⁵¹⁷ Thus, Christ’s proclamation resulted from the resurrection, whether it occurred via the Spirit, in his risen state, or in the process of being raised from the dead. Contrary to older views, scholars now concur that this announcement occurred after—not before—the resurrection, on Christ’s journey to the right hand of the Father. By going to the most unlikely audience imaginable, Jesus proclaimed his lordship over everyone.²⁵¹⁸

Early Church Fathers’ View of 1 Pet 3:19–20

d) 1 Pet 3:19–20: Peter wrote that Christ made a proclamation, “to the ones who once were disobedient while God was waiting patiently in the days of Noah [while] an ark was being built.”

In the history of the church, theologians have developed vastly different interpretations concerning the identity of those disobedient entities. Prior to 190 AD, Christians asserted that Christ devastated hell. Yet, no extant record exists of the early church employing 1 Pet 3:18–20 as evidence for that concept.²⁵¹⁹

Some of the early church fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–220 AD), linked this passage with conversion after death.²⁵²⁰ In this view, Jesus visited Hades, the realm of

²⁵⁰⁹Scott McKnight, *1 Peter* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 215.

²⁵¹⁰Martin Luther, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude Preached and Explained* (trans. E. H. Gillett; New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1859), 188, <https://archive.org/stream/epistlesofstpete00luth#page/188/mode/2up>.

²⁵¹¹McKnight, *1 Peter*, 218.

²⁵¹²Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵¹³Millard J. Erickson, “Is There Opportunity for Salvation After Death?” *BSac* 152, no. 606 (1 April 1995): 136–7.

²⁵¹⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ἐν*” (*en*), *BDAG*, 326–30.

²⁵¹⁵Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 138.

²⁵¹⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204.

²⁵¹⁷Eduard Schweizer, “*πνεῦμα*” (*pneuma*), *TDNT* 6:332–455, 447.

²⁵¹⁸Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204–9.

²⁵¹⁹Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter, 2nd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 340.

²⁵²⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 247.

the dead,²⁵²¹ between Good Friday and Easter.²⁵²² He preached to the sinful humans who died in the flood, giving them a chance to repent and receive salvation (Gen 6:1–7; Gen 7:17–24).²⁵²³ In this scenario, people can benefit from evangelism even after death (Cf. 1 Pet 4:6).²⁵²⁴ Those who hold this view contend that God will offer everyone who resides in hell such an opportunity, especially if they have never heard the gospel.²⁵²⁵

However, the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD) comprises the basis for the proclamation to demons in this passage. That book appears to have been lost during the second century until the late eighteenth century. Lacking that traditional material, theologians began to interpret 1 Pet 3:19–20 in terms of Jesus descending into hell.²⁵²⁶

In one of his later works, Clement wrote:

“David...says, “My heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced, and my flesh shall still rest in hope. For Thou shalt not leave my soul in *hell*, nor wilt Thou give Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the paths of life, Thou wilt make me full of joy in Thy presence [Ps 16:10–11]...If, then, He preached the Gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly, how is it conceivable that He did not for the same cause preach the Gospel to those who had departed this life before His advent?...If, then, in the deluge all sinful flesh perished, punishment having been inflicted on them for correction, we must first believe that the will of God, which is disciplinary and beneficent, saves those who turn to Him...But whatever is gross, made so in consequence of sin, this is cast away along with the carnal spirit which lusts against the soul.”²⁵²⁷

However, the Hebrew text of Ps 16:10 says *Sheol*, which means the underworld, rather than hell.²⁵²⁸ The Greek translation of the Old Testament always translates the word as “Hades” (e.g. Gen 37:35).²⁵²⁹ One of Clement’s supporting texts instead refers to Christians who died before Peter wrote his letter. The context of 1 Pet 4:5–6 suggests it does not apply to people who heard the gospel after their deaths (1 Pet 4:1–8).²⁵³⁰

Only once in the New Testament does the plural word “spirits” (*pneuma*) apply to humans (Heb 12:22–24), creating a major issue with this theological theory.²⁵³¹ Also, the adjective “righteous” (*dikaios*) clarifies that the author of Hebrews referred to people.²⁵³² In normal Greek usage, authors typically employed the word pair “body (*sarx*) and soul (*psychē*)” —not “body and spirit” (*pneuma*)—to denote the material and immaterial aspects of a person.²⁵³³

²⁵²¹Keener, *JVPBBCNT*, 1 Pet 3:18–9.

²⁵²²Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵²³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 185.

²⁵²⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204.

²⁵²⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 185.

²⁵²⁶Jobes, *1 Peter*, 247.

²⁵²⁷Clement, “Stromata,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire) (ANF02)* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; trans. W.L. Alexander; New York: Christian Literature, 1885), 6.6, 491–2, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather02robe#page/490/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

²⁵²⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*), *BDB*, 982–3, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/982/mode/2up>.

²⁵²⁹L. Wächter, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*) *TDOT* 14:239–48, 241.

²⁵³⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 270–1

²⁵³¹Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 139–40.

²⁵³²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

²⁵³³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 241.

While a spirit forms part of every individual, biblical authors never called humans spirits, with the exception just noted in Hebrews (Matt 27:50; Acts 7:59). Indeed, the apostle designated people as “souls” in 1 Pet 3:20.²⁵³⁴

“Spirits” (*pneuma*) can also denote angels,²⁵³⁵ both good and evil (Matt 8:16; Luke 10:17–20).²⁵³⁶ “Prison” (*phylakē*) refers to a place of punishment for people on earth. It never means torment after death (Acts 5:17–21; Acts 8:3; 2 Cor 11:23).²⁵³⁷ However, God will confine Satan for 1,000 years in “prison.” It also serves as a place of detention for unclean spirits (Rev 20:1–3, 7; Rev 18:1–2; Luke 8:30–31).²⁵³⁸

Intertestamental Jewish literature often discusses the confinement of evil angels. For example, 1 Enoch—a text which Clement likely did not have—depicts a vision of stars, a common metaphor for angels (Judg 5:20–23; Job 38:4–7):

“And I saw a deep abyss, with columns of heavenly fire...And beyond that abyss I saw a place which had no firmament of the heaven above, and no firmly founded earth beneath it: there was no water upon it, and no birds, but it was a waste and horrible place. I saw there seven stars like great burning mountains...The angel said, “This place is the end of heaven and earth: this has become a prison for the stars and the host of heaven. And the stars which roll over the fire are they which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord in the beginning of their rising, because they did not come forth at their appointed times. And He was [angry] with them and bound them till the time when their guilt should be consummated (even) for 10,000 years.”²⁵³⁹

Peter limited the opportunity for salvation after death to the spirits of those disobedient during the time of Noah. The proponents of the theological construct of the early church fathers cannot answer why that generation alone received the privilege (Heb 9:27). Furthermore, Jesus’s ascension to the right hand of the Father after his resurrection—not his death—represents the final stage of his accomplishment of redemption (Acts 2:22–36; Acts 5:30–31; 1 Pet 3:21–22). Proclaiming victory while dead would be premature.²⁵⁴⁰

Finally, the major theme of this letter calls believers to persevere in righteousness while enduring suffering. In fact, the apostle contended that our eternal life depends upon remaining faithful to the end (1 Pet 1:3–9, 13–19; 1 Pet 3:8–12; 1 Pet 4:3–8, 17–19; 1 Pet 5:5–10). If God offered people a second opportunity to repent after death, much of the motivation for Christians to bear such hardship disappears.²⁵⁴¹

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. Why did some early church fathers contend that Christ preached to the spirits of people who died in the flood? What evidence discounts that view? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 216.

²⁵³⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207.

²⁵³⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 187.

²⁵³⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207.

²⁵³⁷Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵³⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 187.

²⁵³⁹Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apochrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 18:11–16, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe021.htm>.

²⁵⁴⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 248–50.

²⁵⁴¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 187–8.

Augustine's View of 1 Pet 3:19–20

e) **1 Pet 3:19–20:** The great theologian Augustine (354–430) proposed another view concerning the identity of the disobedient ones to whom Jesus preached. He asserted that the Spirit of Christ spoke through Noah during the construction of the ark (Gen 6:9–16).²⁵⁴² Augustine sought to avoid Clement's doctrine of postmortem conversion and utilize 1 Pet 1:10–12.²⁵⁴³

He confessed, "The question which you have proposed to me from the epistle of the Apostle Peter is one which...is wont to perplex me most seriously..."²⁵⁴⁴ He continued: "[Peter] wrote 'The gospel was preached to the dead;' and if by the 'dead' we understand persons who have departed from the body, I suppose he must mean those described above as 'unbelieving in the days of Noah,' or certainly all those whom Christ found in hell. What, then, is meant by the words, 'That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit'? For how can they be judged in the flesh, which if they be in hell they no longer have?...Scripture does not affirm that they were made to live in the flesh, nor can it be believed that the end for which they were loosed from the pains of hell was that they who were delivered from these might resume their flesh in order to suffer punishment..."²⁵⁴⁵

Augustine contended:

"But to the men of Noah's time the gospel was preached in vain because they believed not when God's long suffering waited during the many years in which the ark was being built (for the building of the ark was itself in a certain sense a preaching of mercy); even as now men similar to them are unbelieving, who...are shut up in the darkness of ignorance as in a prison, beholding in vain the church which is being built up...while judgment is impending."²⁵⁴⁶

Rightly rejecting the dichotomy between body and soul,²⁵⁴⁷ Augustine taught that the spirits of the dead did not suffer in a literal jail. Instead, people ensnared in sin during the time of Noah lived in a prison of ignorance (Gen 6:1–5).²⁵⁴⁸ If Christ spoke through Noah via the Spirit, he did not travel anywhere.²⁵⁴⁹

Augustine did not have access to the tradition found in the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD).²⁵⁵⁰ That book disappeared during the second century AD and was rediscovered in the late eighteenth century. The lack of that traditional material impacted his interpretations of these verses.²⁵⁵¹

²⁵⁴²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 184.

²⁵⁴³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 248.

²⁵⁴⁴Augustine, "Letter 164," in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, with a Sketch of His Life and Work (NPNF1-01)* (ed. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1886), 1:1, 1041, https://archive.org/stream/TheConfessionsAndLettersOfAugustinWithASketchOfHisLifeAndWork/confessions_and_letters_of_augustin#page/n1039/mode/2up.

²⁵⁴⁵Augustine, "Letter 164," in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, 4:11, 1048, https://archive.org/stream/TheConfessionsAndLettersOfAugustinWithASketchOfHisLifeAndWork/confessions_and_letters_of_augustin#page/n1045/mode/2up.

²⁵⁴⁶Augustine, "Letter 164," in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, 5:16, 1051, https://archive.org/stream/TheConfessionsAndLettersOfAugustinWithASketchOfHisLifeAndWork/confessions_and_letters_of_augustin#page/n1049/mode/2up.

²⁵⁴⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 249.

²⁵⁴⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 185.

²⁵⁴⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

²⁵⁵⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 249.

²⁵⁵¹Jobes, *1 Peter*, 247.

With his limited knowledge of Greek, Augustine focused upon the theology of this passage rather than good exegesis of the text.²⁵⁵² Peter never cited Noah as the one through whom Jesus made a proclamation.²⁵⁵³ Consequently, this concept remains implausible.²⁵⁵⁴

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. How would you characterize Augustine’s view of this passage? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that argument? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 214.

The Apostles’ Creed and 1 Pet 3:19–20

f) 1 Pet 3:19–20: In its current form, the Apostle’s Creed dates from the 7th–8th century. It asserts that Jesus, “Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried. *He descended into hell.* The third day he rose again from the dead.”²⁵⁵⁵

We have twelve creeds written in the 2nd through 4th centuries. None of them include the concept of Christ in hell, including the earliest form of the Apostles’ Creed (340 AD). The notion first appeared in an Arian creed dated to approximately 360 AD.²⁵⁵⁶ Then, Rufinus of Aquileia (340–410 AD) inserted the Latin phrase “*Descendit ad inferno*” into the creed which he wrote. However, he understood that to mean “he was buried.”²⁵⁵⁷ Not until 650 AD did the phrase “He descended into hell” appear in the Apostles’ Creed. Therefore, it stands as a later addition.²⁵⁵⁸

Many modern commentators also contend that the vocabulary of 1 Pet 3:18–22 makes the notion that Christ descended into hell extremely difficult.²⁵⁵⁹ Peter wrote about Christ’s resurrection in 1 Pet 3:18, and of his ascension in 1 Pet 3:22. Typically, biblical authors employed the verb translated as “went” (*poreuō*) when referring to his return to God the Father (Acts 1:10–11; John 14:2–3, 28; John 16:7, 28).²⁵⁶⁰

“Prison” (*phylakē*) refers to a place of punishment for people on earth. It never means torment after death (Acts 5:17–21; Acts 8:3; 2 Cor 11:23).²⁵⁶¹ The Old Testament (OT) refers to the place of the dead as *Sheol*, which means the underworld, rather than hell (Cf. Ps 16:10).²⁵⁶² The Greek translation of the OT always translates the word as “Hades” (e.g. Gen 37:35).²⁵⁶³

²⁵⁵² Jobes, *1 Peter*, 249.

²⁵⁵³ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁵⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

²⁵⁵⁵ Philip Schaff, *The History of Creeds* (vol. 1 of *The Creeds of Christendom, 3 Vols.*; rev Schaff David S.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931), 21, <https://archive.org/stream/creedsofchriste01scha#page/20/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

²⁵⁵⁶ Philip Schaff, *The Greek and Latin Creeds* (vol. 2 of *The Creeds of Christendom, 3 Vols.*; rev David S Schaff; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931), 40–41, 46, <https://archive.org/stream/creedschristendo02scha#page/40/mode/2up>, <https://archive.org/stream/creedschristendo02scha#page/46/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁵⁷ Schaff, *The History of Creeds*, 1:21 note 6,

<https://archive.org/stream/creedsofchristen01scha#page/20/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁵⁸ Wayne Grudem, “He Did not Descend into Hell: A Plea for Following Scripture Instead of the Apostles’ Creed,” *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1 March 1991): 103–13, 103, http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/he-did-not-descend-into-hell_JETS.pdf.

²⁵⁵⁹ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁶⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

²⁵⁶¹ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁶² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*), *BDB*, 982–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/982/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁶³ L. Wächter, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*) *TDOT* 14:239–48, 241.

In addition, all the activity in 1 Pet 3:19–22 took place after Jesus was made alive.²⁵⁶⁴ Thus, Peter discussed three redemptive events in this passage: the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ.²⁵⁶⁵

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. How did the phrase “he descended into hell” become part of the Apostles’ Creed? Why doesn’t it fit well into 1 Pet 3:18–22? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 214.

John Calvin’s View of 1 Pet 3:19–20

g) 1 Pet 3:19–20: Some of the Reformers agreed with Augustine that Christ spoke through Noah.²⁵⁶⁶ However, John Calvin disagreed with them and with the seventh century AD revision of the Apostles’ Creed.

After developing his own theory, he wrote, “Common has been the opinion that Christ’s descent into hell is here referred to; but the words mean no such thing; for there is no mention made of the soul of Christ, but only that he went by the Spirit.”²⁵⁶⁷

Calvin envisioned the descent into hell as a graphic depiction of the torture endured by condemned souls which Christ bore on the cross (Matt 27:26–49; John 19:28–30), stating:²⁵⁶⁸ “Here we must not omit the descent to hell, which was of no little importance to the accomplishment of redemption. For although it is apparent from the writings of the ancient Fathers, that the clause which now stands in the [Apostles’] Creed was not formerly so much used in the churches, still...[it] ought not by any means to be disregarded...

“To conclude from it that the souls of the dead are in prison is childish. And what occasion was there that the soul of Christ should go down thither to set them at liberty? I readily admit that Christ illumined them by the power of his Spirit, enabling them to perceive that the grace of which they had only had a foretaste was then manifested to the world. And to this not improbably the passage of Peter may be applied...

“Believers who had died before that time were partakers of the same grace with ourselves: for he celebrates the power of Christ’s death, in that he penetrated even to the dead, pious souls obtaining an immediate view of that visitation for which they had anxiously waited; while, on the other hand, the reprobate were more clearly convinced that they were completely excluded from salvation.”²⁵⁶⁹

Calvin admitted that his exegesis contained problems:

“What follows is attended with some difficulty; for [Peter] does not mention the faithful here, but only the unbelieving; and this seems to overturn the preceding exposition. Some have for this reason been led to think...the unbelieving, who had formerly persecuted the godly, found the

²⁵⁶⁴Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁶⁵Jobes, *1 Peter*, 242.

²⁵⁶⁶Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Pet 3:18–9.

²⁵⁶⁷Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 113,

<https://archive.org/stream/commentariesonca00calv#page/112/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁶⁸Jobes, *1 Peter*, 249.

²⁵⁶⁹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2.16.8–9. https://archive.org/stream/institutesofchri01calv_0#page/462/mode/2up.

Spirit of Christ an accuser, as though Peter consoled the faithful with this argument, that Christ, even when dead, punished them. But their mistake is discovered by what we shall see in the next chapter [1 Pet 4:6], that the Gospel was preached to the dead, that they might live according to God in the spirit, which...applies to the faithful.²⁵⁷⁰

In addition, Calvin believed that the “prison” consisted of a watchtower for the protection of the Old Testament saints. They waited for Christ to release them by proclaiming their redemption.²⁵⁷¹ In this scenario, Jesus liberated them sometime between his death and resurrection.²⁵⁷²

He asserted:

“Peter speaks generally, that the manifestation of Christ’s grace was made to godly spirits, and that they were thus endued with the vital power of the Spirit...It seems to me...that godly souls were watching in hope of the salvation promised them, as though they saw it afar off...But if the word *prison* be preferred, it would not be unsuitable; for, as while they lived, the law, according to Paul (Gal 3:23), was a sort of prison in which they were kept; so after death they must have felt the same desire for Christ; for the spirit of liberty had not as yet been fully given. Hence this anxiety of expectation was to them a kind of prison.”²⁵⁷³

Calvin showed great insight in placing this event after the resurrection. However, several difficulties remain with his view.²⁵⁷⁴ First, whenever the term translated as “prison” (*phylakē*) means “night watch” in the New Testament, it refers to being prepared for the return of Christ (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:37). Everywhere else, including in 1 Pet 3:19, it refers to a jail.²⁵⁷⁵

Prior to Jesus’s birth, David expressed comfort that God’s Spirit remains present even in *Sheol*, the place of the dead (Ps 139:7–12). Shortly before Christ’s crucifixion, Moses and Elijah appeared to some disciples in a radiance of glory, indicating they had already been made perfect (Luke 9:28–31). Yet, that Peter called the spirits “disobedient” (*apeitheō*) creates the most insurmountable issue for Calvin’s theory.²⁵⁷⁶

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. Whom did Calvin identify as the spirits in prison? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 214.

Ancient Jewish View Applied to 1 Pet 3:19–20

h) 1 Pet 3:19–20: The standard ancient Jewish interpretation of this verse equates the spirits with fallen angels who engaged in sexual relations with women during the time of Noah (Gen 6:1–4).²⁵⁷⁷ After the third century AD,²⁵⁷⁸ the earliest record of this view attributed to a Christian

²⁵⁷⁰Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 114, <https://archive.org/stream/commentariesonca00calv#page/114/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁷¹Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 138.

²⁵⁷²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 185.

²⁵⁷³Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 114, <https://archive.org/stream/commentariesonca00calv#page/114/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁷⁴Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 138, note 30.

²⁵⁷⁵Georg Bertram, “φυλακή” (*phylakē*), *TDNT* 9:236–44, 243–4.

²⁵⁷⁶Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 138, note 30.

²⁵⁷⁷Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Pet 3:18–9.

²⁵⁷⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

commentator appeared in 1890.²⁵⁷⁹ Among the scholars cited in this chapter, only Schreiner holds this view.²⁵⁸⁰

During the era of the New Testament authors, popular concepts included demons seducing women, producing evil offspring, and being held captive (Cf. 2 Pet 2:4–5, 9–10; Jude 6–7).²⁵⁸¹ Scholars recognize that the basis for this Jewish tradition stems from apocryphal literature concerning the patriarch Enoch (Gen 5:21–24).²⁵⁸² Notably, Peter failed to quote from or refer to 1 Enoch (2nd century BC–first century AD). This indicates that he did not cite it as authoritative but simply used a tradition familiar to his original audience.²⁵⁸³

Note that in 1 Enoch, the terms “angels, spirits, stars, and Watchers” refer to the same entities.²⁵⁸⁴ Consider these passages:

“And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another, ‘Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children’...And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared [Gen 5:18–20].²⁵⁸⁵

“Before these things Enoch was hidden, and no one of the children of men knew where he was hidden, and where he abode, and what had become of him. And his activities had to do with the Watchers, and his days were with the holy ones. And I, Enoch, was blessing the Lord...and lo! the Watchers called me...’Enoch, thou scribe of righteousness, go, declare to the Watchers of the heaven who have left the high heaven, the holy eternal place, and *have defiled themselves with women*, and have done as the children of earth do, and have taken unto themselves wives, “Ye have wrought great destruction on the earth. And ye shall have no peace, nor forgiveness of sin.”²⁵⁸⁶

“And I saw there something horrible: I saw neither a heaven above nor a firmly founded earth, but a place chaotic and horrible. And there I saw seven stars of the heaven bound together in it, like great mountains and burning with fire. Then I said, ‘For what sin are they bound, and on what account have they been cast in hither?’ Then said Uriel, one of the holy angels...’These are of the number of the stars of heaven, which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and are bound here till ten thousand years, the time entailed by their sins, are consummated.’ And from thence I went to another place, which was still more horrible...a great fire there which burnt and blazed, and the place was cleft as far as the abyss, being full of great descending columns of fire: neither its extent or magnitude could I see, nor could I conjecture...Then Uriel answered me, ‘This place is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned forever.’²⁵⁸⁷

²⁵⁷⁹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 139, n 32.

²⁵⁸⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 188–9.

²⁵⁸¹ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁵⁸² Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207.

²⁵⁸³ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 245.

²⁵⁸⁴ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 140.

²⁵⁸⁵ Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 6:1–2, 13–5,
<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n127/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁸⁶ Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 12:1–5, 27–9,
<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n141/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

²⁵⁸⁷ Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 21:2–10, 44–5,
<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n159/mode/2up>.

According to 1 Enoch, the demons who roam the earth initially inhabited the giant offspring, the Nephilim, who resulted from those unholy unions (Gen 6:4):²⁵⁸⁸ “Though ye were holy, spiritual, living the eternal life, you have defiled yourselves with the blood of women, and have begotten (children) with the blood of flesh...And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling.”²⁵⁸⁹

Several difficulties occur with this view. First, angels do not marry (Luke 20:34–36).²⁵⁹⁰ In fact, this conviction led Jewish scholars to abandon this interpretation a century after Peter wrote this letter.²⁵⁹¹ Christian commentators soon joined them.²⁵⁹²

We can translate “the sons of God” as “the sons of the gods” (Ps 29:1; Ps 89:7).²⁵⁹³ This occurs because the generic name of God (*El*) usually appears in the Old Testament as a plural (*Elohim*) even though it denotes only one God.²⁵⁹⁴ Due to archaeological evidence,²⁵⁹⁵ we now know that “the sons of the gods” consisted of kings and other rulers (Gen 6:1–2).²⁵⁹⁶ In their arrogance, many of them practiced the “right of the first night.” This heinous practice allowed a king or other government official to demand that he spend a woman’s bridal night with her before he released her to her husband.²⁵⁹⁷

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. Why did this interpretation gain popularity? What difficulties does it encounter? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 214.

Modern Scholars’ View of 1 Pet 3:19–20

i) 1 Pet 3:19–20: We can best untangle the conundrum of these verses by recognizing that satanic perversion infused ancient human kingship.²⁵⁹⁸ In this interpretation, fallen angels controlled the men of Gen 6:1–4.²⁵⁹⁹ Most modern scholars assert that Jesus proclaimed his victory over those spirits, most likely after his resurrection.²⁶⁰⁰ In fact, the ascension itself pronounced their defeat (Col 2:13–15; Eph 1:18–23).²⁶⁰¹

Jewish scholars believed that various levels of heaven exist. Indeed, the Apostle Paul once discussed his trip to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2–4).²⁶⁰²

²⁵⁸⁸Michaels, *1 Peter*, 208.

²⁵⁸⁹Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 15:4, 8, 35–6, <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n149/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

²⁵⁹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

²⁵⁹²Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

²⁵⁹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

²⁵⁹⁴Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 399,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/398/mode/2up>.

²⁵⁹⁵Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*, 205.

²⁵⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

²⁵⁹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

²⁵⁹⁸Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 187.

²⁵⁹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

²⁶⁰⁰Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Pet 3:18–9.

²⁶⁰¹Andrew J. Bandstra, “‘Making Proclamation to the Spirits in Prison’: Another Look at 1 Peter 3:19,” *CTJ* 38, no. 2 (1 April 2003): 120–4, 124.

²⁶⁰²Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

A vision credited to Enoch in the late first century AD says:

“And the men took me and brought me to the second heaven, and showed me the darkness, and there I saw the prisoners suspended, reserved for (and) awaiting the eternal judgment. And these angels were gloomy in appearance, more than the darkness of the earth. And they unceasingly wept every hour, and I said to the men who were with me, ‘Why are these men continually tortured?’ And the men answered me, ‘These are they who apostatized from the Lord, who obeyed not the commandments of God, and took counsel of their own will and transgressed together with their prince and have already been confined to the second heaven.’”²⁶⁰³

Similarly, the second century BC Testament of Levi reports:

“Hear, therefore, regarding the heavens which have been shown to thee. The lowest is for this cause gloomy unto thee, in that it beholds all the unrighteous deeds of men...And in the second are the hosts of the armies which are ordained for the day of judgement, to work vengeance on the spirits of deceit and of Beliar (Satan). And above them are the holy ones. And in the highest of all dwelleth the Great Glory, far above all holiness. In [the heaven next to] it are the archangels, who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous; offering to the Lord a sweet-smelling savor, a reasonable and a bloodless offering. “And [in the heaven below this] are the angels who bear answers to the angels of the presence of the Lord. And in the heaven next to this are thrones and dominions, in which always they offer praise to God. When, therefore, the Lord looketh upon us, all of us are shaken; yea, the heavens, and the earth, and the abysses are shaken at the presence of his majesty.”²⁶⁰⁴

In the current scholarly interpretation of 1 Pet 3:19–20, Jesus journeyed to that division of heaven in which God imprisoned evil angels.²⁶⁰⁵

Significantly, none of the names for the place of the dead, such as Sheol, Hades, or Tartarus, occur in this verse. In addition, the New Testament (NT) never employs the term “prison” (*phylakē*) to refer to the place where the dead reside.²⁶⁰⁶ On the other hand, a parallel passage says, “God did not spare angels who sinned, but in fetters of gloom cast them into Tartarus” (2 Pet 2:4). Ancient Greeks viewed Tartarus as a place farther underground than Hades where evildoers received divine punishment.²⁶⁰⁷

Homer (ca. 750 BC) wrote:

“Zeus that hurler the thunderbolt made a gathering of the gods upon the topmost peak of many-ridged Olympus, and himself addressed their gathering; and all the gods gave ear, ‘Hearken unto me, all ye gods and goddesses...Let not any goddess nor yet any god...thwart my word...whomsoever I shall mark minded apart from the gods to go and bear aid either to Trojans or Danaans...I shall take and hurl him into murky Tartarus, far, far away, where is the deepest gulf beneath the earth, the gates whereof are of iron and the threshold of bronze, as far beneath Hades as heaven is above earth: then shall ye know how far the mightiest am I of all gods.’”²⁶⁰⁸

According to 1 Enoch, (2nd century BC–first century AD), the same archangel who

²⁶⁰³Morfill, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch)*, 7:1–3, 5–6,

<https://archive.org/stream/bookofsecretsofe00morf#page/n57/mode/2up>.

²⁶⁰⁴R. H. Charles, trans., “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *APOT*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 3:1–9, 30–6, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/30/mode/2up>.

²⁶⁰⁵Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁶⁰⁶Jobes, *1 Peter*, 243.

²⁶⁰⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ταρταρόω” (*tartaroō*), *BDAG*, 991.

²⁶⁰⁸Homer, *The Iliad*, 8.1–16,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0134%3Abook%3D8%3Acard%3D1>.

warned Noah of the coming flood was “Uriel...who is over the world and over Tartarus.”²⁶⁰⁹ These Jewish authors employed a traditional Greco-Roman term (*Tartaros*) associated with the binding of the Titans found in Greek mythology.²⁶¹⁰

Another point favoring this interpretation involves the verb “made a proclamation” (*kēruṣṣō*). In the NT, it often describes proclaiming the gospel, although it can mean simply “exhorted” or “announced” (Rom 2:21; Gal 5:11; Rev 5:2).²⁶¹¹ In 1 Peter, the apostle consistently used a different word (*euangelizō*) to depict preaching the gospel (1 Pet 1:12, 25; 1 Pet 4:6). The only place in this epistle where *kēruṣṣō* appears is here in v. 19.²⁶¹²

While the NT never mentions evangelizing spirits, it does say that Christ triumphed over them (Col 2:13–15; Eph 6:10–17).²⁶¹³ Jesus announced his great victory over demonic powers.²⁶¹⁴ That Christ was made alive and made a proclamation to the spirits points to a post-resurrection announcement of vindication. In 1 Pet 3:22, the apostle expanded this theme to include their subjection to him.²⁶¹⁵ Jesus has visited the habitations of demonic forces and proclaimed their subservience to him.²⁶¹⁶

Read 1 Pet 3:19–20. Who controlled the rulers mentioned during Noah’s era? How did Jewish authors view heaven? Where was Tartarus? How do we know that Jesus did not evangelize evil spirits? What did he do instead? List the pros and cons for this view in the Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20 on p. 214.

Summary of 1 Pet 3:19–20

j) 1 Pet 3:19–20: Evaluate the interpretations concerning Christ making a proclamation to the spirits in prison:

1. Clement of Alexandria’s salvation after death (pp. 203–205, 215):

pros-

cons-

²⁶⁰⁹Charles, “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 10.1–3, 20:2, 22, 43,
<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n137/mode/2up>,
<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n157/mode/2up>.

²⁶¹⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 249.

²⁶¹¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

²⁶¹²Michaels, *1 Peter*, 209.

²⁶¹³Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 140–1.

²⁶¹⁴Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁶¹⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

²⁶¹⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 211.

2. Augustine’s view that Christ preached through Noah (pp. 206–207, 215):

pros-

cons-

3. The Apostle’s Creed (pp. 207–208, 215):

pros-

cons-

4. John Calvin (pp. 208–209, 215):

pros-

cons-

5. Ancient Jewish/1890 Christian (209–211, 215):

pros-

cons-

7. Modern scholars (211–213, 215–216):

pros-

cons-

Based upon this evidence, what is your conclusion?

Issues to consider:

1. Clement of Alexandria -

- an opportunity to repent while in hell
- translates the underworld (*Sheol*) as “hell”
- meaning of the plural word “spirits” in the New Testament (NT)
- the word “souls” in 1 Pet 3:20
- his interpretation of 1 Pet 4:5–6
- meaning of “prison”
- Noah’s generation the only one given a second chance
- Accessibility of 1 Enoch

2. Augustine -

- no body/soul dichotomy
- lack of Greek led to focus on the big theological picture, not on the text itself
- Accessibility of 1 Enoch
- Christ did not actually go anywhere
- Peter does not specifically mention Noah as the preacher

3. Apostle’s Creed -

- a descent into hell in versions prior to 650 AD
- Rufinus’s understanding of *ad inferno*
- Arian Creed (ca. 360 AD)
- sequence of “put to death,” “made alive,” “after having gone,” and “preached.”
- Accessibility of 1 Enoch

4. Calvin -

- importance of Jesus descending into hell due to church fathers
- descent into hell was Christ’s torment on the cross
- late date of the Apostles’ Creed
- post-resurrection preaching
- translation of “watch tower” for “prison”
- liberation of Old Testament saints between Good Friday and Easter
- appearance of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration
- spirits called disobedient by Peter
- Accessibility of 1 Enoch

5. Ancient Jewish/ 1890 Christian -

- spirits were fallen angels who engaged in sex with women at the time of Noah
- 1 Enoch as the tradition behind Peter’s text
- location of the fallen angels in 1 Enoch
- abandonment of this view by both Jewish and early Christian theologians
- identification of the “sons of the gods”

6. Modern scholars -

- identification of the “sons of the gods”

- Jesus proclaiming victory over evil spirits after his resurrection
- ascension itself as the proclamation
- levels of heaven
- no mention of the place of the dead in the passage
- meaning of “prison” in the NT
- Tartarus lower than Hades in Greek thought
- definition of “preached” vs. “proclaimed the gospel”
- evangelization of spirits in the NT
- subjection of evil spirits in v. 22
- Accessibility of 1 Enoch

Salvation through Water

k) 1 Pet 3:20: In approximately 205 BC, a large Jewish population arrived in Asia Minor. These colonists noted that the name of one town included the word “ark.” This led them to believe that Noah’s ark had landed there. Although they were likely incorrect, Noah became the most widely known biblical figure in that region.²⁶¹⁷ Several Roman emperors (193–253 AD) even minted coins with their busts on the front and with Noah and his wife on the reverse side.²⁶¹⁸

In this verse, Peter shifted to slightly less-obscure matters (Cf. 1 Pet 3:19). He wrote that the spirits were disobedient, “when God was waiting patiently in the days of Noah [while] the ark was being built, in which a few, that is eight souls, were brought safely through water.” The apostle focused upon three analogies from Noah’s era relevant to his original audience: God’s patience, judgment upon the wicked, and salvation through water.²⁶¹⁹

Despite human sin, the Lord exhibited patience and did not immediately destroy Noah’s contemporaries.²⁶²⁰ An interval of approximately one hundred years gave people time to repent (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:6; Acts 14:13–18; Acts 17:30–31; 2 Pet 3:9).²⁶²¹ Accordingly, the Babylonian Talmud states, “There were ten generations from Adam to Noah; to show how patient the Lord is. So many generations had vexed him till he brought upon them the deluge.”²⁶²²

Peter then shifted to the theme of salvation.²⁶²³ In his own era, God was patiently building a spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5).²⁶²⁴ He noted, “only a few, that is, eight souls were saved” (Matt 7:13–14; Matt 22:14; 1 Pet 2:4, 7–8).²⁶²⁵ Noah, his sons, and their wives comprised a righteous remnant (Gen 6:8–10; Gen 7:13).²⁶²⁶

The word “souls” (*psychē*) connotes multiple meanings in the New Testament. It can refer to “that which animates a person and departs after death,” “a person’s life in its entirety,”

²⁶¹⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 245.

²⁶¹⁸ Ancient Numismatic Mythology, “Coins Depicting Noah and the Biblical Flood Narrative,” <http://www.ancientcoinage.org/noah-and-the-flood.html>.

²⁶¹⁹Michaels, *1 Peter*, 200, 212.

²⁶²⁰Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 141.

²⁶²¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 191.

²⁶²²Leo Auerbach, trans., *The Babylonian Talmud in Selection* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), *b. Aboth* 5.2, 41, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/bata/bata03.htm>

²⁶²³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Vol. 37, 191).

²⁶²⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 200–1.

²⁶²⁵Michaels, *1 Peter*, 213.

²⁶²⁶Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 142.

“that which possesses life,” and “inner human life.”²⁶²⁷ When it appears in plural form in 1 Peter, “*psychē*” applies to people whom God set apart for salvation (1 Pet 1:8–9, 22–23; 1 Pet 2:11–12, 25; 1 Pet 4:19).²⁶²⁸

Consequently, in this passage, a *psyche* consists of a whole person whom the Lord has chosen, who lives in obedience to God, and shall experience vindication at the last judgment.²⁶²⁹ It does not comprise the inner part of a person distinct from the body.²⁶³⁰ After all, Noah and his passengers survived the flood in their entirety.²⁶³¹

Those eight souls “were brought safely through (*dia*) water.” One can deduce two meanings in this phrase. Was the water the threat from which they were saved? Or was it the means of their salvation?²⁶³² Scholars remain divided on this issue. Some note that God used water to destroy the world.²⁶³³ Without the security of the ark, Noah and his family would have drowned.²⁶³⁴ Instead, the boat passed through the flood.²⁶³⁵

Jewish interpreters typically understood that Noah and his family escaped by walking through the water (Gen 7:6–7).²⁶³⁶ One first century rabbi made this observation, “[Noah] lacked faith: had not the water reached his ankles he would not have entered the ark.”²⁶³⁷

In the Old Testament, water often represented God’s wrath toward sin (Ps 69:1–2, 14–15; Ps 88:7; Ps 144:7; Jonah 2:1–7). Noah and his family members were saved by the same overwhelming judgment which destroyed the ungodly. The flood separated the righteous remnant from the corruption of their peers.²⁶³⁸ Thus, God saved them via water.²⁶³⁹

The Shepherd of Hermas (ca. 100–160 AD) reported a vision of a strong tower—representing the church universal—built upon the water. When he asked the reason for the location, a lady told him, “Your life is saved and shall be saved by water.”²⁶⁴⁰

Bolstering this view, Peter compared Noah’s experience to the rite of baptism (1 Pet 3:21). The apostle taught that the return of Christ will bring salvation to the faithful few while destroying sinners who fail to repent.²⁶⁴¹ Peter’s original audience consisted of tiny groups of people living as exiles among those who oppressed and persecuted them (1 Pet 1:1–2; 1 Pet 2:12, 16; 1 Pet 3:1; 13–17; 1 Pet 4:3–4, 12–14; 1 Pet 5:8–10). Despite their small numbers, they could count upon God to deliver them (2 Pet 2:9).²⁶⁴²

God brought Noah and his passengers safely through by means of the flood. Peter

²⁶²⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ψυχή*” (*psyche*), *BDAG*, 1098–100.

²⁶²⁸Eduard Schweizer, “*ψυχή*” (*psychē*), *TDNT* 9:608–67, 652.

²⁶²⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 191.

²⁶³⁰Michaels, *1 Peter*, 213.

²⁶³¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 191.

²⁶³²Michaels, *1 Peter*, 213.

²⁶³³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 192.

²⁶³⁴Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

²⁶³⁵Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 142.

²⁶³⁶Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 142, note 44.

²⁶³⁷H. Freedman, trans., Maurice Simon, ed., *Genesis* (vol. 1 of *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English, 10 Vols.*; London: Soncino, 1939), 32:6, 253,

<https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp#page/n299/mode/2up>.

²⁶³⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 192–3.

²⁶³⁹Michaels, *1 Peter*, 212.

²⁶⁴⁰J. B. Lightfoot, trans., “The Shepherd of Hermas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers* (ed. J. R. Harmer; London; New York: MacMillan, 1891), 3.11.5, 412, <https://archive.org/stream/apostolicfathers00lighuoft#page/412/mode/2up>.

²⁶⁴¹Carson, “1 Peter,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1039.

²⁶⁴²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 192.

similarly employed the metaphor of fire (1 Pet 1:7).²⁶⁴³ When judgment comes, God’s people can rest in security (1 Pet 1:1; 1 Pet 2:12).²⁶⁴⁴ Therefore, we can bear up under trial,²⁶⁴⁵ knowing that we suffer temporarily. We await certain victory, for Jesus has triumphed over death, the grave, and every evil force (Rom 16:20; Col 2:8–15; 1 Cor 15:50–58).²⁶⁴⁶

Read 1 Pet 3:20. Why would Noah’s situation have encouraged Peter’s original audience? Was Noah saved by the ark or by the water? Why do you think that? Summarize the meaning of 1 Pet 3:18–20 in a sentence or two.

An Appeal to God

k) 1 Pet 3:21: This verse clarifies why Peter wrote about the flood (1 Pet 3:18–21).²⁶⁴⁷ He associated people receiving the gospel and baptism with Noah coming safely through the waters (Gen 8:1, 15–19).²⁶⁴⁸ The Apostle Paul also expressed continuity between the Old and New Testaments, citing an experience quite familiar to the original audience of Genesis. However, he linked baptism with Israel passing through the Sea of Reeds rather than with Noah’s experience (Ps 136:12–15; 1 Cor 10:1–2).²⁶⁴⁹

Peter wrote to people who received salvation the same way that Noah did: by passing through the water to safety.²⁶⁵⁰ God employed the flood which threatened to destroy Noah and his family as the instrument of their salvation. Likewise, Christians shall escape the terrors of final judgment due to Jesus’s vindicating resurrection and their union with him in baptism.²⁶⁵¹

When seeking to understand 1 Pet 3:21, one of the most difficult verses in the New Testament (NT),²⁶⁵² we must remember the context of the larger passage. Christ “was made alive in the Spirit” and “he went into heaven” (1 Pet 3:18, 22). Peter envisioned these two events as one divine act. Here he discussed the purpose of Jesus’s post-resurrection journey and its effect upon believers.²⁶⁵³

Referring to the end of 1 Pet 3:20,²⁶⁵⁴ Peter wrote, “That [water] also corresponds to (*antitypos*) baptism, [which] now saves you.” A “type” consists of an Old Testament (OT)

²⁶⁴³Michaels, *1 Peter*, 213.

²⁶⁴⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 180.

²⁶⁴⁵Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:19.

²⁶⁴⁶Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 180.

²⁶⁴⁷Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

²⁶⁴⁸Jobes, *1 Peter*, 251.

²⁶⁴⁹Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

²⁶⁵⁰Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 143.

²⁶⁵¹Jobes, *1 Peter*, 252.

²⁶⁵²Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 143.

²⁶⁵³Michaels, *1 Peter*, 199–200.

²⁶⁵⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 213–4.

person or event which presaged something in the NT era.²⁶⁵⁵ Meanwhile, an “anti-type” refers to a NT individual or situation foreseen in the OT (Cf. Heb 9:24, translated as “a copy”). Thus, the water which supported the ark corresponds to baptism by resulting in salvation.²⁶⁵⁶

Peter discussed conversion at length in this letter (1 Pet 1:17–2:5, 9–10, 24–25). Yet, he clearly mentioned baptism only in 1 Pet 3:21. Adding to the confusion, only here in the entire NT does anyone claim that this sacrament saves us.²⁶⁵⁷ Considering how the flood parallels baptism proves helpful in unraveling Peter’s statement. Jesus described his impending death as a baptism (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:36–40; Acts 12:1–2). Paul made this connection explicit in Rom 6:1–14. He declared that in baptism, “All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Cf. Col 2:12).²⁶⁵⁸

Peter approached how baptism saves from another angle.²⁶⁵⁹ He added this explanatory information to prevent any misunderstanding: “not of flesh (*sarx*) the filth removing, but of a good conscience an appeal to God.” By placing “of flesh” at the beginning of the phrase, he emphasized that word.²⁶⁶⁰ “Flesh” has multiple meanings in the NT. These include “the material which covers our bones,” “a body,” “the part of us with physical limitations,” “the aspect of us which is prone to sin,” and “a living being.”²⁶⁶¹

Fortunately, the noun meaning “filth” (*rupos*) assists us. Although it does not appear elsewhere in the NT, it occurs four times in the Greek translation of the OT (Job 9:31; Job 11:14–15; Job 14:4; and Isa 4:4).²⁶⁶² In three of these, the text concerns moral, not physical, filth.²⁶⁶³ James used a related word (*ruparia*) which refers to moral defilement (Jas 1:21).²⁶⁶⁴

Earlier in his letter, Peter warned his readers to “abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). We need spiritual cleansing, but baptism does not achieve it.²⁶⁶⁵ Being washed in the waters of baptism does not transmit spiritual purity (1 Pet 2:1–3).²⁶⁶⁶ Neither the washing in water nor the religious rite results in salvation.²⁶⁶⁷ By itself, baptism does not save a person.²⁶⁶⁸ Instead, Peter appears to use baptism as a symbol of the entire process of hearing and accepting the gospel in faith.²⁶⁶⁹

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) adopted a similar view of baptism: “Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not...[for] the

²⁶⁵⁵Leonhard Goppelt, “*τυπος, ἀντίτυπος*” (*typos, antitypos*), *TDNT* 8:246–59, 252–3.

²⁶⁵⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*τυπος, ἀντίτυπος*” (*typos, antitypos*), *BDAG*, 90–1.

²⁶⁵⁷Michaels, *1 Peter*, 214.

²⁶⁵⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 193–4.

²⁶⁵⁹Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

²⁶⁶⁰Michaels, *1 Peter*, 214–5. Koine Greek and Hebrew authors placed what they wished to emphasize at the beginning of a sentence or phrase. “Of flesh” is a noun in the genitive case.

²⁶⁶¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*σάρξ*” (*sarx*), *BDAG*, 914–6.

²⁶⁶²JResult of Logos 7 word study on *ῥύπος* (*rupos*).

²⁶⁶³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 254.

²⁶⁶⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ῥυπαρία*” (*ruparia*), *BDAG*, 908.

²⁶⁶⁵Michaels, *1 Peter*, 216.

²⁶⁶⁶Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

²⁶⁶⁷Dauids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

²⁶⁶⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 195.

²⁶⁶⁹Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that *the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.*²⁶⁷⁰

External acts of piety cannot make those with evil hearts right with God.²⁶⁷¹ Inner cleansing by a new birth brings us into fellowship with the Lord and with his people (John 4:14; Acts 23:1; 1 Pet 1:1–5).²⁶⁷²

The next part of the verse presents difficulties.²⁶⁷³ We can translate the first word in the Greek text (*syneidēsis*) as either “consciousness,” as in awareness, or as “conscience” (1 Pet 2:19; Heb 10:2).²⁶⁷⁴ By the first century BC, the second definition became the predominant meaning (Rom 2:14–15; 1 Cor 10:28–29; Heb 9:13–14).²⁶⁷⁵ Accordingly, Peter placed “of a good conscience” at the beginning of his definition of the sacrament.²⁶⁷⁶ The word translated as “pledge” (*eperōtēma*) also raises questions. It occurs only here in the NT.²⁶⁷⁷ However, it is related to a common verb (*eperōtaō*) which means “to ask, interrogate, or appeal.”²⁶⁷⁸

Hence, two possibilities exist for this phrase. One can translate it as “the request of a good conscience from God.” That would make baptism an appeal to God for purification.²⁶⁷⁹ However, Peter asserted that the one receiving baptism already had a good conscience.²⁶⁸⁰ Therefore, interpreting the word as “a pledge” best fits the context of the passage (Cf. Heb 10:19–25).²⁶⁸¹ Furthermore, the activity was directed from people to God, not from God to people.²⁶⁸² Thus, the apostle wrote of individuals who pledged to live uprightly after being baptized.²⁶⁸³

We can compare Peter’s assertion that baptism saves to Christ’s declaration, “Your faith has saved you” (Matt 9:20–22; Mark 10:50–52; Luke 7:44–50). Technically, the sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ saves people. Likewise, Peter cited baptism as the human response to God’s activity. A good conscience results from the work of the Holy Spirit within an individual’s heart, who also enables that person to obey the Lord (1 Pet 3:13–16; 1 Tim 1:5, 18–19).²⁶⁸⁴ During Peter’s ministry, baptism served as the first and necessary response of faith (Acts 2:38).²⁶⁸⁵ As a result, the practice became identified as a rite of initiation into the Christian community.²⁶⁸⁶ Faith and baptism remain distinct so that faith does not negate the need for baptism and baptism fails to make faith unnecessary (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26–27).²⁶⁸⁷

²⁶⁷⁰Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D18%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D5%3Awhiston%20section%3D2>. Italics mine.

²⁶⁷¹Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

²⁶⁷²Leonhard Goppelt, “ὑδωρ” (*hudor*), *TDNT* 8:314–33.

²⁶⁷³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 255.

²⁶⁷⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “συνείδησις” (*syneidēsis*), *BDAG*, 967–8.

²⁶⁷⁵Christian Maurer, “συνείδησις” (*syneidēsis*), *TDNT* 7:899–919, 902.

²⁶⁷⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 216.

²⁶⁷⁷Result of Logos 7 word study of “ἐπερώτημα” (*eperōtēma*).

²⁶⁷⁸Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐπερωτάω” (*eperōtaō*), *BDAG*, 362.

²⁶⁷⁹Daivids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144–5.

²⁶⁸⁰Michaels, *1 Peter*, 217.

²⁶⁸¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐπερώτημα” (*eperōtēma*) *BDAG*, 362.

²⁶⁸²Michaels, *1 Peter*, 217.

²⁶⁸³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 255.

²⁶⁸⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 216–7.

²⁶⁸⁵Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 198.

²⁶⁸⁶Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 172.

²⁶⁸⁷Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 155–6.

A document dated to approximately 200 AD describes the process for new believers and the rite of baptism in detail:

“New converts to the faith, who are to be admitted as hearers of the word, shall first...be examined as to their reason for embracing the faith, and they who bring them shall testify that they are competent to hear the word. Inquiry shall then be made as to the nature of their life...Let catechumens (new believers) spend three years as hearers of the word...They who are to be set apart for baptism shall be chosen after their lives have been examined...

“They who are to be baptized shall fast on Friday, and on Saturday the bishop shall assemble them and command them to kneel in prayer. And, laying his hand upon them, he shall exorcise all evil spirits...They shall spend all that night in vigil, listening to reading and instruction...

“At cockcrow prayer shall be made over the water. The stream shall flow through the baptismal tank or pour into it from above when there is no scarcity of water; but if there is a scarcity, whether constant or sudden, then use whatever water you can find. They shall remove their clothing.²⁶⁸⁸ And first baptize the little ones; if they can speak for themselves, they shall do so; if not, their parents or other relatives shall speak for them. Then baptize the men, and last of all the women...

“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 hand of the Father, and will come to judge the quick (living) and the dead?’²⁶⁸⁹ 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. Then the bishop...shall pray, saying, ‘O Lord God, who hast made them worthy to *obtain remission of sins through the laver of regeneration of [the] Holy Spirit*, send into them thy grace, that they may serve thee according to thy will.’”²⁶⁹⁰

²⁶⁸⁸Another text called the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (ca. 200–250 AD) indicates this is why female deacons participated in the baptism of women (16, 78–9,

<https://archive.org/stream/didascaliaaposto00gibsuoft#page/78/mode/2up>.)

²⁶⁸⁹This, along with the declaration in the next paragraph, is virtually identical to the Old Roman Form of the Apostles’ Creed (<https://archive.org/stream/creedssofchristen01scha#page/20/mode/2up>).

²⁶⁹⁰Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (trans. Burton Scott Easton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 16–17, 20–1, 41–7, [http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibilothèque_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/bibilothèque_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.

Consequently, Peter reminded the recipients of his letter that they affirmed their commitment to Christ at the time of baptism.²⁶⁹¹ In the face of terrible suffering for their faith and the temptation to turn away from the Lord,²⁶⁹² feeble commitment would not suffice.²⁶⁹³ Indeed, the term “sacrament” derives from the Latin word meaning “a military oath.”²⁶⁹⁴

People who entered the community of Essenes also made pledges. According to a Dead Sea Scroll, “All those who embrace the Community Rule shall enter into the Covenant before God to obey all His commandments so that they may not abandon Him during the dominion of Satan because of fear or terror or affliction...They shall practice truth and humility in common, and justice and uprightness and charity and modesty in all their ways...They shall atone for all those in Aaron who have freely *pledged themselves to holiness*.”²⁶⁹⁵

In summary, baptism does not atone for moral impurity. It consists of a pledge to live in relationship with the Lord after receiving a clean conscience. Therefore, we must conduct ourselves in a way which brings honor to Christ, even in the face of a hostile world.²⁶⁹⁶

Peter then wrote concerning what makes baptism effective in our salvation,²⁶⁹⁷ brilliantly circling us back to the beginning of this passage (1 Pet 3:18–22).²⁶⁹⁸ It is “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right [hand] of God, after having gone into heaven after angels, and authorities, and powers had been subjected to him.”

Peter employed parallelism to correspond our situation with Noah’s in 1 Pet 3:20–21.²⁶⁹⁹ He wrote that it was “through water” and “through the resurrection,” not that it was “through water” and “through baptism.”²⁷⁰⁰

Ultimately, Jesus’s resurrection and ascension saves us through our union with him. The rite of baptism does not (1 Pet 1:3–5; 1Tim 3:16; Col 3:1–4).²⁷⁰¹ As a result, salvation is available through a new birth for everyone who comes to God with a desire for forgiveness and union with Christ (Luke 23:39–43; John 3:16–21; Rom 8:31–34).²⁷⁰²

Read 1 Pet 3:21. How does baptism save us? What happens to God’s people who die before being baptized? How does the resurrection and ascension of Jesus impact believers?

²⁶⁹¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 145.

²⁶⁹² Jobes, *1 Peter*, 255.

²⁶⁹³ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 145.

²⁶⁹⁴ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 255.

²⁶⁹⁵ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 1 QS 1, 5, 70, 75, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n127/mode/2up, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n133/mode/2up. Italics mine.

²⁶⁹⁶ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 255–6.

²⁶⁹⁷ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 194.

²⁶⁹⁸ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 218.

²⁶⁹⁹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 218.

²⁷⁰⁰ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 252.

²⁷⁰¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

²⁷⁰² Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

²⁷⁰¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

²⁷⁰² Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

Seated at God’s Right Hand

1) 1 Pet 3:22: Referring to Jesus, Peter wrote, “who is at the right hand of God after having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been made subject to him.” By his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, Jesus declared victory over his enemies. Peter asserted this by repeating the verb he employed in 1 Pet 3:19 to depict that Christ went (*poreuō*) and made a proclamation to the disobedient spirits from Noah’s era who remained in prison (Gen 6:1–4).²⁷⁰³

Placement at the right hand (*dexios*) of God symbolizes wielding divine power (Ps 110:1; Isa 45:1).²⁷⁰⁴ This claim about Christ by Jesus, the apostles, and Stephen enraged the Jewish leaders, who considered it blasphemy (Matt 26:59–66; Acts 5:27–33; Acts 7:48–60).²⁷⁰⁵ Due to the resurrection, Christ rules with royal status and might (Heb 1:1–4; Heb 8:1).²⁷⁰⁶

Acts 1:1–2, 9–11 describes the beginning of Jesus’s journey to heaven. The parallelism which Peter used indicates that the ascension and proclamation to disobedient spirits form one authoritative act.²⁷⁰⁷ According to the author of Hebrews, Christ passed through the heavens, entered the heavenly Most Holy Place (Heb 9:1–5, 8), and is now exalted above the heavens (Heb 4:14; Heb 6:19–20; Heb 7:26).²⁷⁰⁸

The three terms “angels” (*angelos*), “authorities” (*exousia*), and “powers” (*dynamis*) all refer to angelic beings.²⁷⁰⁹ Throughout the New Testament (NT), supernatural “authorities” and “powers” tend to be grouped together,²⁷¹⁰ often with the word “rulers” (1 Cor 15:24; Col 2:10; Rom 8:38–39). Peter avoided any of these terms when discussing human government in 1 Pet 2:13–14,²⁷¹¹ although “authorities” can refer to earthly leaders.²⁷¹²

The apostles named Satan and his forces as the ones who incited evil and the persecution of God’s people (John 16:7–11; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 6:12). Spiritual forces controlling world affairs frequently appeared in Jewish literature (Dan 8:23–25).

Several apocryphal books make this explicit.²⁷¹³ For example, the oldest part of the Ascension of Isaiah (2nd century BC–4th century AD) mentions, “the eternal judgments and torments of *Gehenna*, and of the prince of this world, and of his angels, and his authorities and his powers.”²⁷¹⁴

Peter ended this passage by emphasizing the sweeping scope of Jesus’s triumph. Due to his resurrection and ascension, Christ subjected even fallen angels to himself.²⁷¹⁵ His rule is universal, but it has not yet come in all its fullness (Phil 2:5–11; Heb 2:5–9, 14–16).²⁷¹⁶ This

²⁷⁰³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 197.

²⁷⁰⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “δεξιός” (*dexios*), *BDAG*, 217–8, 218.

²⁷⁰⁵Walter Grundmann, “δεξιός” (*dexios*) *TDNT* 2:37–40, 39.

²⁷⁰⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 218–9.

²⁷⁰⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 257.

²⁷⁰⁸Michaels, *1 Peter*, 219.

²⁷⁰⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 197.

²⁷¹⁰Werner Foerster, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *TDNT* 2:560–75, 571.

²⁷¹¹Michaels, *1 Peter*, 220.

²⁷¹²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *BDAG*, 352–3.

²⁷¹³ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 146–7.

²⁷¹⁴Charles, “The Ascension of Isaiah,” 1.3, 2–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924014590529#page/n81/mode/2up>.

²⁷¹⁵Jobes, *1 Peter*, 258.

²⁷¹⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 220.

concept of the “now and not yet” occurs throughout the NT (Mark 9:1; Mark 14:25; Rom 8:1–2; Col 3:1–4). Until the return of Christ, the kingdom of God exists among us but remains incomplete.²⁷¹⁷

Although Christians suffer in this world, we share in Jesus’s vindication (Rev 6:9–11).²⁷¹⁸ While we await his return, we should neither fear nor experience surprise when we encounter trials and persecution (1 Pet 2:15; 1 Pet 3:14; 1 Pet 4:12–19; 1 Pet 5:8–10).²⁷¹⁹ Even death cannot triumph over people united with Christ (1 Cor 15:50–58; 2 Tim 2:11–13).²⁷²⁰ Just as Noah and his family members escaped, we too shall be saved through water (Gen 8:1–3, 13–18; 1 Pet 3:18–21).²⁷²¹

Read 1 Pet 3:22. Why is Christ’s placement at the right hand of the Father significant? What are the results of Jesus’s resurrection and ascension? How would you describe the era in which we live? What comfort can we take as we endure suffering? How did Peter compare us to Noah?

²⁷¹⁷ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 147.

²⁷¹⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 198.

²⁷¹⁹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 221.

²⁷²⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 198.

²⁷²¹ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pet 3:21.

Chapter 9: A Covenant with Noah (Gen 8:20–9:17)

The flood wiped out almost everyone. Even most of the animals, which God mandated people to steward, died (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 7:13–15, 21–22). A new era of humanity was about to begin, with Noah as the forefather of all (Gen 7:23).²⁷²² By mentioning that “God remembered Noah” as the pivotal focus of the chiasm (Gen 8:1 within Gen 6:10–8:19),²⁷²³ Moses emphasized that Noah’s deliverance was no accident. The Lord himself saved Noah and his passengers,²⁷²⁴ fulfilling his promise of salvation (Gen 7:1–3).²⁷²⁵ In this instance, God’s remembrance caused him to send a wind to blow over the surface of the earth to increase the evaporation of the water. He also sealed the springs of the deep and the windows of the heavens (Gen 8:1–3).²⁷²⁶

Just as the Lord divided the waters on the second day of creation (Gen 1:6–7), he reestablished the separation between the watery deep and the sky.²⁷²⁷ The flood remained entirely under God’s control, rather than merely acting as a force of nature.²⁷²⁸

At the end of 150 days, the waters receded to their original locations and the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat (Gen 7:11–12; Gen 8:4).²⁷²⁹ This range now lies in eastern Turkey, southern Russia, and northwest Iran.²⁷³⁰ Two and a half months later, the tops of the mountains appeared, echoing the separation of the waters from the ground on the third day of creation (Gen 1:9–10; Gen 8:5).²⁷³¹

Noah wanted to ensure everyone’s safety before disembarking.²⁷³² After forty days, he released a raven to identify the direction of the nearest land mass. As expected, it never returned to him (Gen 8:6–7).²⁷³³ Then, Noah sent forth a dove to determine whether low-lying areas had dried. She flew back to him, since the land at lower elevations remained inhabitable.²⁷³⁴ Noah waited a week and tried again. This time, the dove brought a sign of fertility and new life: a freshly plucked olive leaf.²⁷³⁵ When he repeated the experiment seven days later, the dove failed to return (Gen 8:8–12).

He removed the covering of the ark and saw that the land had begun to dry. After almost two more months, the process was complete (Gen 8:13–14). A new world emerged from its watery grave, heralding the onset of another era in human history.²⁷³⁶ Using our reckoning, Noah and his passengers remained on the boat for exactly one year.²⁷³⁷

²⁷²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 127.

²⁷²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²⁷²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 157.

²⁷²⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 232.

²⁷²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 299.

²⁷²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 128.

²⁷²⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²⁷²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 300.

²⁷³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 184–5.

²⁷³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 129.

²⁷³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 302.

²⁷³³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁷³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 304–5.

²⁷³⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:12.

²⁷³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁷³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 305.

Based upon the failure of the dove to return and his own observations, Noah knew that they could inhabit the earth. Yet, he waited to receive a signal from God (Gen 8:14–19).²⁷³⁸

Before the flood, the Lord commanded Noah to bring various creatures on board to preserve their lives (Gen 7:2–3). Now God ordered him to release them so the animals could reproduce and fill the earth (Gen 8:17–19),²⁷³⁹ once again fulfilling the mandate of the fifth and sixth days of creation (Gen 1:20–28).²⁷⁴⁰ This time, the Lord included even the land animals in his blessing.²⁷⁴¹

Noah did exactly as the Lord instructed. He and all his passengers disembarked to a renewed world, full of promise.²⁷⁴² Even today, we can trust God to keep his covenants with us. When the Lord remembers, he acts. He remains merciful and true to his word.

Noah's Grateful Response

1) Gen 8:20: Within the over-arching chiasm of the flood account (Gen 6:9–9:19, this section concerning the Lord's resolve to preserve the creation order matches his earlier determination to destroy it (Gen 6:13–22; Gen 8:20–22).²⁷⁴³ Prior to the flood, the Lord promised to establish a covenant with Noah (Gen 6:18).²⁷⁴⁴

Although God would not formally pronounce his covenant oath until Gen 9:8–17, here Noah offered the customary sacrifice to ratify an oath (cf. Gen 15). This may reflect the smaller chiasm embedded in Gen 8:20–9:17.²⁷⁴⁵

A God's resolve to never destroy the earth or humanity again (Gen 8:20–22)

B Mandate to be fruitful (Gen 9:1)

C Legislation concerning blood (Gen 9:2–6)

Ā Command to be fruitful (Gen 9:7)

Á God's covenant and sign to never destroy all flesh again (Gen 9:8–17)²⁷⁴⁶

Moses began this passage by writing, "Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh. And he took from all the clean cattle and from all the clean birds, and he offered whole burnt offerings on the altar." Noah's very first recorded act upon disembarking involved worship.²⁷⁴⁷ For the first time in Genesis, the text explicitly states that someone built an altar and offered burnt sacrifices (Cf. Gen 4:3–5).²⁷⁴⁸

In the time of Moses, God designed altars for making burnt offerings (Exod 27:1–8; Exod 29:38–42). In fact, the Hebrew phrase "altar of burnt offerings" (*oloth bamizbeakh*) occurs 19

²⁷³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 306–7.

²⁷³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁷⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 129.

²⁷⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 187.

²⁷⁴²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

²⁷⁴³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

²⁷⁴⁴Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (ed. D. A. Carson; NSBT; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 59.

²⁷⁴⁵Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 61–2.

²⁷⁴⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 127.

²⁷⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

²⁷⁴⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189.

times in the Old Testament.²⁷⁴⁹ Noah's activity reflects his conviction that Lord delivered him safely through the flood (Gen 8:1–3).²⁷⁵⁰

Since Noah brought seven pairs of every clean animal on board, God appears to have intended and, perhaps, commanded this type of sacrifice (Gen 7:2–3).²⁷⁵¹ Noah's act does not seem spontaneous,²⁷⁵² especially since the ritual meets the requirements for sacrifice which God revealed to Moses's original audience (Lev 11:1–8, 13–19).²⁷⁵³

Among the various types of sacrifices stipulated in the Mosaic law, priests offered a whole burnt offering more frequently than the other types.²⁷⁵⁴ Fire consumed the entire animal, except for the excrement and often the hide (Exod 29:10–18; Lev 8:21; Lev 9:7–11).²⁷⁵⁵ Although the text does not explicitly state the purpose of Noah's offering, people associated such sacrifices with making requests of the Lord (1 Sam 7:7–11).²⁷⁵⁶ These offerings could atone for sin and represent complete dedication to God (Lev 1:3–9).²⁷⁵⁷

Also called a “freewill offering,” this worship occurred with expectant joy or heartfelt petition. Thus, people made these sacrifices with a wide range of emotion (Lev 22:17–19; Num 15:1–3; 1 Sam 13:11–12).²⁷⁵⁸ After surviving the flood and living on the ark for a year (Gen 7:11; Gen 8:13–14), Noah made the offering to ratify a covenant his covenant with God. Those who traveled out of Egypt with Moses did the same at Mount Sinai (Exod 24:3–8).²⁷⁵⁹

a) Read Gen 8:20. How did the numbers of clean birds and animals brought onto the ark presuppose that they would be used for sacrifices? What were the purposes of a whole burnt offering? How would you describe Noah's emotions after surviving the flood and living on the ark for a year?

A Rest-Inducing Aroma

b) Gen 8:21: Noah's first recorded act upon disembarking was to gratefully sacrifice a whole burnt offering (Gen 8:20). Then, “the Lord smelled the soothing aroma and he said to himself, ‘I will not again add to the curse on the ground on account of humanity, even though the purpose of the heart of a person [is] evil from his youth. And I will not again exterminate all the living as I have done.’”

²⁷⁴⁹D. Kellermann, “הִלָּח/הִלָּח” (*olah*), *TDOT* 11:96–113, 107.

²⁷⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

²⁷⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189.

²⁷⁵²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

²⁷⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189.

²⁷⁵⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

²⁷⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

²⁷⁵⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:22.

²⁷⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189.

²⁷⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307–8.

²⁷⁵⁹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

In Gen 8:20, Moses employed imagery of the smoke from the sacrifice rising to the nostrils of God.²⁷⁶⁰ Appropriately, one of the verbs meaning “to ascend” (*alah*) contains the same root as the noun for a whole burnt offering (*olah*).²⁷⁶¹ The technical term “soothing aroma” (*reah nihoah*) conveys that God accepted both the offering and the one who made it (Lev 26:27–31; 1 Sam 26:19; Amos 5:21–24).²⁷⁶²

Here Moses engaged in word play with Noah’s name and his depiction of the type of aroma which the Lord smelled rising from the fire (Cf. Gen 5:29).²⁷⁶³ Therefore, one commentator calls it “a rest-inducing odor.”²⁷⁶⁴ Due to the soothing smell of this sacrifice,²⁷⁶⁵ the Lord engaged in divine self-deliberation.²⁷⁶⁶ He made a covenant to never again disrupt his creation as he had via the deluge.²⁷⁶⁷

However, the Lord’s gracious attitude toward Noah does not represent a new development. After all, he already regarded Noah with favor and remembered him during the flood (Gen 6:8; Gen 8:1).²⁷⁶⁸ Nor did God promise to remove the curse of Gen 3:17–19.²⁷⁶⁹ Instead, he vowed not to add to the scourge he placed upon the earth after Adam sinned. This indicates that the flood went beyond the desecration which the Lord put in place after the fall.²⁷⁷⁰

Never again will God interrupt the natural order of creation by a catastrophic flood (Gen 9:9–11).²⁷⁷¹ Just as the Lord accepted Job’s sacrifice on behalf of his children and his friends (Job 1:1–5; Job 42:7–9), here God viewed Noah’s offering as acceptable for all humanity.²⁷⁷² The pleasing aroma soothed his justifiable indignation (Gen 6:1–9).²⁷⁷³

God’s rationale seems paradoxical.²⁷⁷⁴ Gross sin caused him to send the flood to decimate virtually all people.²⁷⁷⁵ Yet, the Lord noted, “even though (*ki*) the purpose of the heart of a person [is] evil from his youth,” he would act with mercy.²⁷⁷⁶ Despite the continuation of human sin, the Lord would respond with grace toward those he created.²⁷⁷⁷ Indeed, the condition of human hearts made the divine promise of a covenant necessary. Otherwise, the threat of extinction would continually hover over creation (Cf. Rom 8:16–22).²⁷⁷⁸

²⁷⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 308.

²⁷⁶¹Kellermann, “עֹלָה/עֹלָה” (*olah*), *TDOT* 11:108.

²⁷⁶²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

²⁷⁶³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

²⁷⁶⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 308.

²⁷⁶⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189.

²⁷⁶⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 309.

²⁷⁶⁷Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

²⁷⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 189–90.

²⁷⁶⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

²⁷⁷⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 190.

²⁷⁷¹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

²⁷⁷²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 190.

²⁷⁷³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 143.

²⁷⁷⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 309.

²⁷⁷⁵Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 61.

²⁷⁷⁶Per Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar*, this nuance of the conjunction *ki* also occurs in Isa 1:15; Jer 4:30; and Neh 6:1, in addition to in other verses (p.498), <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/498/mode/2up>.

²⁷⁷⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

²⁷⁷⁸Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 61.

Moses's original audience also experienced the Lord's willingness to overlook their sin due to the intercession of their leader (Exod 32:11–14; Exod 33:3, 12–17; Exod 34:4–10).²⁷⁷⁹ This scene from Noah's life contradicts other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) accounts concerning how the gods fared during the flood.²⁷⁸⁰

According to Enuma Elish, the gods tired of working to obtain food. So, they created humanity to feed them, mixing clay with a rebel god's blood. Thus, they fashioned people to work as their slaves.²⁷⁸¹ Without people making sacrifices, the gods had gone without sustenance during the deluge.²⁷⁸²

The Atrahasis Epic recounted, "It was trying...of the gods. [Enki] was beside himself, [seeing that] his sons (people) were thrown down before him. Nintu (Ninhursag), the great lady, her lips were covered with feverishness. The Annunaki, the great gods, were sitting in thirst and hunger. The goddess saw it as she wept."²⁷⁸³

Similarly, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Noah figure Utnapishtim told Gilgamesh what he did upon disembarking from his boat:

"I let out (all) to the four winds and offered a sacrifice. I poured out a libation on the top of the mountain. Seven and seven cult-vessels I set up, upon their pot-stands I heaped cane, cedar wood, and myrtle. The gods smelled the savor, the gods smelled the sweet savor, the gods crowded like flies about the sacrifice."²⁷⁸⁴ Utnapishtim's offering provided a feast for the starving gods.²⁷⁸⁵

The Old Testament does speak anthropomorphically about God eating sacrifices (Num 28:1–3; Judg 6:19–21; Ezek 44:7). Yet, the texts do not say that the Lord really consumes them (Ps 50:7–15; Judg 13:15–23; Isa 40:15–17).²⁷⁸⁶ God craves grateful hearts, not fat and blood (Exod 25:1–2; Deut 6:4–5; Deut 10:12–20).²⁷⁸⁷

Unlike the biblical flood account, in other ANE flood stories the chief god did not expect anyone to survive the flood.²⁷⁸⁸ For example, the Epic of Gilgamesh says, "'Let not Enlil come to the offering, for he, unreasoning, brought on the deluge and my people consigned to destruction.' When at length Enlil arrived and saw the ship, Enlil... was filled with wrath over the Igigi gods, 'Has some living soul escaped? No man was to survive the destruction!'"²⁷⁸⁹ In contrast to our Lord, those gods were neither omniscient nor omnipotent.²⁷⁹⁰

²⁷⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 191.

²⁷⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

²⁷⁸¹"The Creation Epic" (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 5.156–6.36, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

²⁷⁸²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

²⁷⁸³Lambert and Millard, "Epic of Atra-Khasis," in *RANE*, 30.

²⁷⁸⁴Speiser, "The Epic of Gilgamesh," in *ANET*, 11:155–61, 95,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁷⁸⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 8:22.

²⁷⁸⁶D. Kellermann, "עֹלָה/עֹלָה" (*olah*), *TDOT* 11:110.

²⁷⁸⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 308–9.

²⁷⁸⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

²⁷⁸⁹Speiser, "The Epic of Gilgamesh," in *ANET*, 11:166–9, 95,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁷⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

Read Gen 8:21. What soothed God’s wrath? Why was Noah the appropriate person to do this? What made this covenant necessary? How does the biblical account differ from others in the ANE?

A Promise of Stability

c) Gen 8:22: In this new creation after the flood (Gen 8:13–19),²⁷⁹¹ the Lord’s blessing resulted in global stability. During our era the earth will return neither to primordial chaos nor to paradise (Cf. Gen 1:1–2; Rom 8:18–23).²⁷⁹² God will not add to the curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17–19).

The Lord promised, “As long as all the days of the earth, sowing and harvesting, and cold and heat, and summer and the beginning of winter, and day and night shall not cease.” This statement limits the continuation of these patterns to while the earth remains.²⁷⁹³ Once again, the natural world would return to a predictable rhythm.²⁷⁹⁴ The Lord assures us of regular cycles of the seasons and times of day until we enter the new creation (Rev 21–22:5).²⁷⁹⁵ Although the human heart remains erratic, nature will not be (Gen 8:20–21).²⁷⁹⁶

God promised this in a series of four poetic couplets.²⁷⁹⁷ “Sowing (*zera*) and harvesting (*qatsir*)” alludes to the seasonal cycles of cold (*qor*) and heat (*khom*) necessary to maintain a food supply (Gen 1:11–12). “Day (*yom*) and night (*laylah*)” refers to the diurnal pattern which began in Gen 1:14–18.²⁷⁹⁸

The word translated as “cease” (*shabat*) comprises the verb corresponding to the noun “Sabbath.”²⁷⁹⁹ It points to something coming to an end (Gen 2:1–3).²⁸⁰⁰ God promised that ruptures of this order shall not occur while this world exists in its present form.²⁸⁰¹

This concept flatly contradicts the premise of the fertility cults which many of the people of Israel soon accepted as reality (Num 25:1–9; 2 Ki 23:4–8).²⁸⁰² Adherents of these sects contended that the sexual activities of the gods directly affected the earth’s productivity.²⁸⁰³ Consequently, people engaged in sacred prostitution to prompt the gods to act.²⁸⁰⁴

²⁷⁹¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 224.

²⁷⁹²Walton, *Genesis*, 330–1.

²⁷⁹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 143.

²⁷⁹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310.

²⁷⁹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 191.

²⁷⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310.

²⁷⁹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310.

²⁷⁹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 143.

²⁷⁹⁹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שַׁבָּת” (*shābath*), *BDB*, 991.

²⁸⁰⁰E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת” (*shābath*), *TDOT*, 14:381–6, 382.

²⁸⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 190.

²⁸⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310–1.

²⁸⁰³Eugene Fisher, “Gilgamesh and Genesis: The Flood Story in Context,” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 392–403, 393,

[Http://www.godawa.com/chronicles_of_the_nephilim/Articles_By_Others/Fisher-GilgameshAndGenesis.pdf](http://www.godawa.com/chronicles_of_the_nephilim/Articles_By_Others/Fisher-GilgameshAndGenesis.pdf).

²⁸⁰⁴Joseph P. Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:791–3, 792.

In the Canaanite pantheon, the storm god Baal produced fertile rains. His consort Anath and the goddess Asherah were both highly sexualized figures. Their adherents believed that divine amorous activities increased the yield of their harvests.²⁸⁰⁵ One poem about Baal and Anath recounts this assertion by Asherah:

“Now, too, the seasons of his rains will Baal observe, the seasons... with snow; And [he will] peal his thunder in the clouds, flashing his lightning to the earth...The Maiden Anath rejoices, stamps with her foot so the earth quakes. There, she is off on her way unto Baal upon Zaphon’s summit, o’er a thousand fields, ten thousand acres.

“Laughing, the Maiden Anath lifts up her voice and cries, ‘Receive, Baal, the glad tidings I bring thee. They will build thee a house like thy brethren’s and a court like unto thy kindred’s. Summon weeds into thy house, herbs into the midst of thy palace. The mountains shall bring thee much silver, the hills a treasure of gold; they’ll bring thee god’s grandeur aplenty, a house of most pure lapis lazuli.’ Puissant Baal rejoiced.”²⁸⁰⁶

A hymn to the Mesopotamian goddess Inana makes an explicit connection to agricultural fertility. It claims, “You are she who creates apples in their clusters...You are she who creates the date spadices in their beauty.”²⁸⁰⁷

Read Gen 8:22. What are the implications of God’s vow to not add to the curse upon the ground? Why did he make that promise? How does this poem differ from other Ancient Near Eastern accounts? Why did fertility cults ensnare so many people in ancient Israel?

A Renewed Mandate

d) Gen 9:1: Within the overall structure of the chiasm depicting the flood narrative (Gen 6:9–9:19), God’s fourth speech (Gen 9:1–17) parallels his first oration in Gen 6:13–22.²⁸⁰⁸ This later passage specifies important details of the covenant which the Lord announced in Gen 8:20–22.²⁸⁰⁹ God’s adherence to this covenant does not depend upon human obedience. Nevertheless, the Lord required Noah and his descendants to abide by precise obligations. Therefore, this pact was not unilateral.²⁸¹⁰

The beginning of this speech utilizes a common Hebrew literary device called an *inclusio* by repeating the blessing of Gen 9:1 in Gen 9:7.²⁸¹¹ This technique uses repetition to bracket the

²⁸⁰⁵Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:792.

²⁸⁰⁶Ginsberg, “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, IIAB5:64–97, 133,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n157/mode/2up. Italics original.

²⁸⁰⁷Naomi F. Miller, “Symbols of Fertility and Abundance in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, Iraq,” *AJA* 117, no. 1 (1 January 2013): 127–33, 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.3764/aja.117.1.0127.pdf>.

²⁸⁰⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

²⁸⁰⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 312.

²⁸¹⁰Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

²⁸¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

enclosed material and to emphasize the unity of thought within those book-ending verses.²⁸¹² In this case, Gen 9:2–6 informs us how to fulfill the obligations of the decree in Gen 9:1 and Gen 9:7.²⁸¹³ God called Noah, as a second Adam,²⁸¹⁴ to fulfill the original human mandate of Gen 1:28–29.²⁸¹⁵ These directives concern the proliferation of life, the preservation of life, and the provision for life.²⁸¹⁶

Moses wrote, “And God blessed Noah and his sons. And he said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’” This blessing parallels that which the Lord gave to Adam and Eve.²⁸¹⁷ In fact, this represents the third time the Lord delivered this directive to multiply and occupy our planet (Cf. Gen 8:15–17).²⁸¹⁸ Gen 10 and 11 unfold how Noah’s descendants experienced this divine decree.²⁸¹⁹

The Epic of Gilgamesh gives this account of the hero Utnapishtim's encounter with the god who had sought to annihilate every person on earth with the flood: “Thereupon Enlil went aboard the ship. Holding me by the hand, he took me aboard. He took my wife aboard and made (her) kneel by my side. Standing between us, he touched our foreheads to bless us, ‘Hitherto Utnapishtim has been but human. Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods. Utnapishtim shall reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers!’ Thus, they took me and made me reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers.”²⁸²⁰

The chief god Enlil quickly overcame his rage over the survival of humanity. Instead of wiping out Utnapishtim and his wife, Enlil exiled them far away from the gods’ presence.²⁸²¹

In the Atrahasis Epic’s account, human overpopulation prompted the gods to unleash the flood.²⁸²² So, the goddess of childbirth intervened after the deluge to appease the chief god:²⁸²³ “In addition, let there be a third category among the peoples. Let there be among the peoples women who bear and women who do not bear. Let there be among the peoples the *Pašittu*-demon to snatch the baby from the lap of her who bore it. Establish *Ugbabtu*-women, *Entu*-women, and *Igišitu*-women, and let them be taboo and so stop childbirth.”²⁸²⁴ Here the gods initiated artificial barrenness, sterility, and a high infant mortality rate.²⁸²⁵

The account in Genesis rejects this curse.²⁸²⁶ Given that God regards reproduction with

²⁸¹²Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd Ed., 303.

²⁸¹³Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

²⁸¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313. “Second Adam (<https://www.theopedia.com/jesus-as-the-second-adam>)” is also one of the titles ascribed to Jesus.

²⁸¹⁵Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 169.

²⁸¹⁶Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 64.

²⁸¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

²⁸¹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

²⁸²⁰Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:189–96, 95,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

²⁸²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313.

²⁸²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313.

²⁸²⁴Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atrahasis,” in *RANE*, 31.

²⁸²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313.

his favor,²⁸²⁷ we should understand it as a privilege rather than a command to obey. Therefore, those who choose not to have children do not violate Scriptural obligations. The Lord gave this blessing for humanity to fill the earth. How wonderful it would be if we succeeded in utilizing our spiritual privileges as well as we have this physical one. Sadly, our world-wide population is approaching the limits which the earth can reasonably sustain.²⁸²⁸

In Gen 1:26–28, God commissioned Adam and Eve to expand the garden until Eden covered the whole earth. Then all could see that God rules through the work of his images (Eph 3:10).²⁸²⁹ Yet, the Lord did not give Noah and his family absolute dominion. He intended them to fulfill his intentions for the earth and its creatures. As those created in God’s image, he appointed people to fill the earth and rule as benevolent kings (Ps 8:3–9).²⁸³⁰

Read Gen 9:1. What made Noah a Second Adam? How does this verse mesh with Gen 1:26–28? In what ways does it differ from other Ancient Near Eastern views? How can you fulfill this commission?

Every Moving Living Thing

e) **Gen 9:2–4:** The Lord said to Noah and his family, “Fear of you and terror of you will be on every animal of the earth and on every bird of the heavens, on all which move on the ground and on all fish of the sea. Into your hand they are given. Every moving thing which is alive, to you will be for food. Like the green vegetation I gave to you, to you [I give] all.”

These verses contain some significant differences from the creation account (Cf. Gen 1:28–30).²⁸³¹ No longer would humanity rule over the animals strictly in benevolence.²⁸³² “Fear (*mora*) and terror (*khath*)” in the animal world likely began after the fall.²⁸³³ In the aftermath of the flood, the enmity between people and creatures escalated.²⁸³⁴ As a result, human authority yielded ghastly experiences for animals. A radically different environment exists than that of Gen 1:31.²⁸³⁵

After the flood, God deemed certain types of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects acceptable for food. The Lord later declared some of these unclean (Lev 11:29–30).²⁸³⁶ The text refers to these animals by the way they maneuvered, “creeping” or “moving lightly” (*ramas*),

²⁸²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 143–4.

²⁸²⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 81–2.

²⁸³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 67.

²⁸³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313.

²⁸³²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

²⁸³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

²⁸³⁴Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

²⁸³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313–4.

²⁸³⁶R. E. Clements, “רָמַשׁ” (*rāmash*), *TDOT* 13:512–4, 512–3.

rather than by a scientific classification.²⁸³⁷ These small creatures served as prey for other species. They did not include cattle or domesticated animals.²⁸³⁸

“Into your hand they are given” conveys that God placed these creatures under humanity’s power (Cf. Gen 16:6; Gen 30:35; Gen 39:3–6).²⁸³⁹ Formerly, the Lord sanctioned only a vegetarian diet (Gen 1:29).²⁸⁴⁰ Now people can use animals for food.²⁸⁴¹ Then, the Lord expanded what people could consume to include “every moving thing that is alive.”²⁸⁴² Just as for Moses’s original audience, this ruled out consuming creatures which were already dead when a person came upon them (Lev 22:8; Deut 14:21; Ezek 44:31). Otherwise—in this covenant with Noah—God did not clearly differentiate between clean and unclean animals.²⁸⁴³

However, the Lord commanded Noah to take seven pairs of every clean animal and bird onto the ark. That Noah sacrificed them indicates he knew the difference between the two categories. Given the mention of clean animals elsewhere in the flood account, God may have restricted people to eating clean animals (Gen 7:2–3; Gen 8:20).²⁸⁴⁴ In the ancient world, people rarely ate meat unless an animal died, or they sacrificed it. Most people who kept domesticated animals used them for their milk and their hair or wool.²⁸⁴⁵

God continued, “But flesh with its life, [that is] its blood, you shall not (*lo*) eat.” In Hebrew grammar, two kinds of prohibitions exist. The one used here is the strongest form. It has the nuance of “Thou shalt not!” as in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1–17). On this matter, the Lord expected strict obedience.²⁸⁴⁶

Adam could eat from any tree in the garden but one (Gen 2:16–17). Likewise, here the Lord gave Noah and his descendants one overt prohibition.²⁸⁴⁷ He would not permit consuming flesh with its blood. While remedies existed for eating an unclean animal, God would “cut off” (*karath*) those who ate blood.²⁸⁴⁸

In the Old Testament, God equated blood with life (Lev 17:10–16; Deut 12:23–25).²⁸⁴⁹ He viewed eating blood as equivalent to murder and treachery (Lev 17:1–4; 1 Sam 14:31–34).²⁸⁵⁰ Even today, people often take a pulse to determine whether life remains.²⁸⁵¹ Within the sacrificial system, the Lord reserved both fat and blood for himself (Lev 3:2–3; 16–18). If people slaughtered an animal for consumption, they could use the fat for other purposes. However, they

²⁸³⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*remesh*,” *BDB*, 943,

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

²⁸³⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 341–2.

²⁸³⁹ J. Bergman, W. von Soden, and P. R. Ackroyd, “*ṭ*” (*yād*), *TDOT* 5:393–426, 399–400.

²⁸⁴⁰ Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

²⁸⁴¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

²⁸⁴³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸⁴⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192–3.

²⁸⁴⁵ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:4.

²⁸⁴⁶ Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 317,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/316/mode/2up>.

²⁸⁴⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 314.

²⁸⁴⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193.

²⁸⁴⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144.

²⁸⁵⁰ S. David Sperling, “Blood,” *ABD* 1:761–3, 762.

²⁸⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193.

still had to discard the blood (Lev 7:22–27).²⁸⁵²

One of the few bans which remained in place for gentiles in the early church consisted of consuming blood (Acts 15:28–29).²⁸⁵³ However, the apostles may have left this prohibition in place to avoid offending Jewish followers of Christ.²⁸⁵⁴ Prior to eating an animal, one had to drain its blood. In effect, this returned the animal’s life force to God, the one who created it.²⁸⁵⁵ The Lord demanded that people treat even the carcasses of animals with dignity.²⁸⁵⁶ All life deserves respect, not abuse (Gen 9:9–10; Deut 12:15–18).²⁸⁵⁷

By slaughtering and eating animals in accordance with God’s commands, those who ate could recognize his provision for and blessing upon them. This resembles the common practice in our day of thanking the Lord prior to eating a meal.²⁸⁵⁸ No comparable prohibition existed in the ancient extra-biblical world. Therefore, we cannot attribute the ban on consuming blood to Ancient Near Eastern thought. In this regard, Noah and Israel remain unique.²⁸⁵⁹

Read Gen 9:2–4. How was the blessing upon Noah and his sons like that given to Adam and Eve? How did it differ? In what way did their diet change after the flood? Why was consuming blood still off-limits?

Blood for Blood

c) Gen 9:5–7: In the Lord’s covenant with Noah, people could shed the blood of an animal for sacrifice or in the process of obtaining food (Gen 8:20–9:4). However, God declared human blood off-limits.²⁸⁶⁰ The Lord said to Noah and his sons, “And surely your blood for your lives I will require. From the hand of every wild animal, I will require it. And from the hand of a person, from the hand of his brother, I will require the life of the person. Whoever pours out the blood of a person, by a person his blood shall be poured out, because in his image God made humanity.”

Within this short passage, the Lord mentioned bringing someone to account for taking human life three times (Cf. Ps 9:12).²⁸⁶¹ He condemned even animals who kill people to death (Exod 21:28–32). Although God had not demanded the life of Cain for killing his brother (Gen 4:8–11), beginning after the flood murderers would pay with their lives.²⁸⁶² The Lord made

²⁸⁵²Sperling, “Blood,” *ABD* 1:761.

²⁸⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 314.

²⁸⁵⁴Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 65.

²⁸⁵⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:4.

²⁸⁵⁶Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

²⁸⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 144–5.

²⁸⁵⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:4.

²⁸⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 314.

²⁸⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

²⁸⁶¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193.

²⁸⁶²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

provision for six cities of refuge in Israel for those who accidentally killed another person. Yet, even in such cases, the guilty party could not leave the city safely until the death of the high priest (Num 35:9–34).

The poetic arrangement of Gen 9:6 emphasizes that the punishment must fit the crime (Lev 24:17–22).²⁸⁶³ Note the chiasm embedded in this verse:

A Whoever pours out
 B the blood
 C of a person
 C' by a person
 B' his blood
 A' shall be poured out.²⁸⁶⁴

Escalations of violence can occur easily (Cf. Gen 4:23–24). In fact, such behavior prompted God to send the flood (Gen 6:1–2, 11–13). The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) ensured repayment of the guilty party without excessive punishment.²⁸⁶⁵ In the case of murder, the just penalty is death. In ancient Israel, a close relative of the one murdered acted as the executioner.²⁸⁶⁶ However, by the time of the Greco-Roman Empire, the government assumed this function (1 Pet 2:13–14).²⁸⁶⁷

Until recently, many scholars viewed the law of retaliation as a vestige of a barbaric culture.²⁸⁶⁸ According to the Mosaic law, if a person among the elite of society killed his slave, that slave would be avenged (*naqam*) (Exod 21:18–26).

In contrast, the earliest Akkadian law code, the Laws of Eshnunna (ca. 18th century BC), states:

“If a man has no claim against a(nother) man, but (nevertheless) distrains (seizes) the (other) man’s slave-girl, detains the distrainee in his house and causes (her) death, he shall give two slave-girls to the owner of the slave-girl as a replacement. If he has no claim against him, but (nevertheless) distrains the wife of a *muškēnum* (palace official) (or) the child of a *muškēnum* and causes (their) death, it is a capital offense. The distrainer who distrained shall die.”²⁸⁶⁹

In Akkad at that time, the death penalty applied only for offenses against the gods or those associated with royalty.²⁸⁷⁰

Among extant Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) law codes, the 18th century BC Code of Hammurabi first established the law of retribution. Yet even there, the social class of the person

²⁸⁶³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193.

²⁸⁶⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 253.

²⁸⁶⁵H. B. Huffmon, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321–2, 321.

²⁸⁶⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:6–17.

²⁸⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

²⁸⁶⁸John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1992), 411.

²⁸⁶⁹Albrecht Goetze, trans., “The Laws of Eshnunna,” in *ANET*, 23–4, 162.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n187/mode/2up.

²⁸⁷⁰Hartley, *Leviticus*, 411.

killed determined the penalty:²⁸⁷¹

“If a seignior (free man) held (a debt of) grain or money against a(nother) seignior and distrained (someone as) his pledge and the pledge has then died a natural death in the house of his distrainer, that case is not subject to claim. If the pledge has died from beating or abuse in the house of his distrainer, the owner of the pledge shall prove it against his merchant, and if it was the seignior’s son, they shall put his son to death; if it was the seignior’s slave, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver and also forfeit everything else that he lent.

“If a seignior struck a(nother) seignior’s daughter and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If that woman has died, they shall put his daughter to death. If by a blow he has caused a commoner’s daughter to have a miscarriage, he shall pay five shekels of silver. If that woman has died, he shall pay one-half mina [twenty-five shekels] of silver. If he struck a seignior’s female slave and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay two shekels of silver. If that female slave has died, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver.”²⁸⁷²

Contrary to these ancient law codes, the text in Gen 9:6 indicates that money cannot recompense murder regardless of a person’s social class.²⁸⁷³ Nor can someone put the child of a killer to death (Deut 24:16).²⁸⁷⁴ Consequently, the biblical law of retribution represents an important advancement in the ANE judicial system.²⁸⁷⁵

The Lord decreed the death penalty in the case of murder because, “in the image of God he made humanity” (Gen 1:26–27). Even after the fall, we continue to retain our status as divine image-bearers (Gen 5:1–3).²⁸⁷⁶ A murderer kills someone who resembles God.²⁸⁷⁷ Among believers, this alone should suffice to prevent us from engaging in violent activity.²⁸⁷⁸ No sin exhibits greater disdain for human life than murder.²⁸⁷⁹

This explains why humanity continues to enjoy the unique status which the animal kingdom does not.²⁸⁸⁰ Despite our expulsion from paradise (Gen 3:22–24), sin does not completely mar our likeness to the Lord.²⁸⁸¹ Nevertheless, we must treat both human and animal life with respect (Gen 9:4; Deut 25:4; Prov 12:10).²⁸⁸²

Echoing the mandates to the sea creatures and to all the animals (Gen 1:20; Gen 8:17),²⁸⁸³ the Lord commanded Noah and his sons, “And you, be fruitful, and multiply, and swarm on the

²⁸⁷¹Huffmon, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321.

²⁸⁷²Hammurabi, “Code of Hammurabi,” in *ANET*, 209–14, 175, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n199/mode/2up. A mina was worth 50 shekels.

²⁸⁷³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

²⁸⁷⁴Huffmon, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321.

²⁸⁷⁵Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 183.

²⁸⁷⁶Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

²⁸⁷⁷Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 65.

²⁸⁷⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 315.

²⁸⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193.

²⁸⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 193–4.

²⁸⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 315.

²⁸⁸²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

²⁸⁸³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 194.

earth, and multiply on it.” God called Noah and his descendants to produce life, not to wantonly take it.²⁸⁸⁴

Read Gen 9:5–7. According to the Old Testament, who should suffer the death penalty for killing a person? How does the biblical text differ from other ANE documents in this regard? What sets people apart from animals? How does the Lord regard life?

Live in Peace

2) Rom 12:17–18: In Rom 12:9–16, Paul exhorted his readers to engage with their neighbors in sincere love.²⁸⁸⁵ First, he described how to relate to fellow believers.²⁸⁸⁶ Then, he declared, “Bless the ones persecuting you. Bless and do not curse” (Rom 12:14). In these verses, he expanded upon that directive, addressing how to respond to those who hate us.²⁸⁸⁷ The apostle began this section by writing, “Never evil for evil repay, have regard for what is praiseworthy before all people.”

This may represent a standard formula from the early church (Cf. 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9).²⁸⁸⁸ However, the basis for this teaching occurs in the Old Testament, even though it appears to overturn the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) (Exod 21:24–25; Exod 23:4–5; Prov 20:22).²⁸⁸⁹ Paul’s statement also reflects the teaching of Jesus (Matt 5:38–48).²⁸⁹⁰

“Have regard for” (*pronoēō*) appears in the present tense. This indicates that believers must continually reflect upon and promote positive attitudes and actions.²⁸⁹¹ Sensitivity to common decency requires us to willingly behave accordingly (2 Cor 8:18–21).²⁸⁹² In contrast to the typical word for “good” (*agathos*), which Paul used in Rom 12:21,²⁸⁹³ here the apostle employed a term which reflects moral laudability (*kalos*) (Rom 7:21; Heb 13:18).²⁸⁹⁴

Since sin affects the ability of people to think righteously, Paul called his readers not to live by the standards of those around us (Rom 1:21).²⁸⁹⁵ Instead, we must conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with what the Lord considers noble (Prov 3:3–7; Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12).²⁸⁹⁶

²⁸⁸⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

²⁸⁸⁵Moo, *Romans*, 416.

²⁸⁸⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 784.

²⁸⁸⁷Moo, *Romans*, 412.

²⁸⁸⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:645.

²⁸⁸⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 747.

²⁸⁹⁰Moo, *Romans*, 412.

²⁸⁹¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 785. For participles in Koine Greek, the present tense reflects a continuous or repetitive action.

²⁸⁹²Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 747–8.

²⁸⁹³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀγαθός” (*agathos*), *BDAG*, 3–4, 4.

²⁸⁹⁴Walter Grundmann, “καλός” (*kalos*) *TDNT* 536–50, 549.

²⁸⁹⁵Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:645–6.

²⁸⁹⁶Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 748.

Claiming to know Christ while living disgracefully dishonors him.²⁸⁹⁷

Paul then wrote, “If [it is] possible, as far as it depends on you, with all people live in peace.” Jesus commended peaceful coexistence in a hostile world (Matt 5:9; Mark 9:50).²⁸⁹⁸ Nevertheless, despite our best efforts, people who hate Christ may despise his followers also (Matt 10:16–20; John 15:18–21).

We cannot compromise our faith to gain a peaceful life. When conflict emerges between the moral demands of the Lord and of our neighbors, our allegiance must lie with Christ (Acts 4:18–20; Acts 5:27–29).²⁸⁹⁹ Yet, this never gives us license to conduct ourselves in an offensive manner (1 Pet 3:13–17).²⁹⁰⁰

People living in the Greco-Roman milieu also lauded those who promoted peace.²⁹⁰¹ The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55–135 AD) contended this, “A wise and good person neither quarrels with any one himself, nor, as far as possible, suffers another to do so. The life of Socrates affords us an example of this too...since he not only everywhere avoided quarreling himself but did not even suffer others to quarrel.”²⁹⁰²

Read Rom 12:17–18. Why shouldn’t we return evil for evil? How can we obey Paul’s command to do what is right in everyone’s eyes when people disagree on what is good? Think of an area of conflict you are experiencing. What can you do to live with others in peace?

Leave Vengeance to God

b) Rom 12:19: Paul recognized that sometimes even our best efforts to create a peaceful relationship result in failure (Rom 12:17–18).²⁹⁰³ Therefore, he commanded, “Not yourselves taking revenge, beloved, but giving a place for the wrath [of God], as it is written, ‘Mine [is] vengeance. I will repay’ says the Lord.”

Many commentators believe that Paul inserted the word “beloved” (*agapētos*) because he recognized the difficulty of what he exhorted Christians in Rome to do.²⁹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, those

²⁸⁹⁷Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:646.

²⁸⁹⁸Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 748.

²⁸⁹⁹Moo, *Romans*, 412.

²⁹⁰⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 785–6.

²⁹⁰¹Keener, *IVPBBNT*, Rom 12:17–8.

²⁹⁰²Epictetus, “Discourses,” in *The Works of Epictetus: His Discourses, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments*, 4.5, 2161–2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D5>.

²⁹⁰³Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 680.

²⁹⁰⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 786.

who seek vengeance trespass into activity which God reserves for himself.²⁹⁰⁵ When the Lord determines the right time has come, whether in this life or at the last judgment, he shall execute justice (Rom 1:18; Rom 2:5–8; Rom 9:22).²⁹⁰⁶

A major difference exists between the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament concerning vengeance. The OT limits the injunction against taking revenge to fellow Jewish people (Lev 19:18; 2 Chron 28:8–15; Prov 24:28–29).²⁹⁰⁷ For Christians, knowing what Jesus did for us when we were still his enemies enables us to refrain from taking matters into our own hands (Rom 5:6–9; Luke 6:27–37).²⁹⁰⁸

Paul's contemporary, the Greco-Roman statesman Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) wrote: "We must, therefore, refrain from anger, whether he who provokes us be on a level with ourselves, or above us, or below us. A contest with one's equal is of uncertain issue, with one's superior is folly, and with one's inferior is contemptible. It is the part of a mean and wretched man to turn and bite one's biter: even mice and ants show their teeth if you put your hand to them, and all feeble creatures think that they are hurt if they are touched. "It will make us milder tempered to call to mind any services which he with whom we are angry may have done us, and to let his deserts balance his offense. Let us also reflect, how much credit the tale of our forgiveness will confer upon us, how many men may be made into valuable friends by forgiveness...He who refuses to pardon, how often has he begged it for himself? ...If anyone is angry with you, meet his anger by returning benefits for it. A quarrel which is only taken up on one side falls to the ground. It takes two men to fight."²⁹⁰⁹

Paul grounded his rationale for not taking revenge in the beginning of Deut 32:35,²⁹¹⁰ where the Hebrew text says, "To me [is] vengeance and recompense." Evidently, he cited the same Aramaic translation utilized by the author of Heb 10:30.²⁹¹¹ By preceding the verb translated as "I will repay" (*antapodidōmi*) with the redundant word "I," this verse emphasizes that the Lord himself will exact justice (2 Sam 22:47–49; Jer 51:55–57; Nah 1:1–3).²⁹¹² We must not usurp his authority as the judge of all (Rom 2:1–2).²⁹¹³

Concerning revenge, the Jewish apocryphal work the Testament of Gad (second century BC) says, "And if he be shameless and persist in his wrong-doing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging."²⁹¹⁴

The Essenes of Qumran concurred:

"I will pay to no man the reward of evil. I will pursue him with goodness. For judgement of all

²⁹⁰⁵Moo, *Romans*, 413.

²⁹⁰⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 786–7.

²⁹⁰⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 787.

²⁹⁰⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 648.

²⁹⁰⁹L. Annaeus Seneca, "Of Anger," in *Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog "On Clemency"* (trans. Aubrey Stewart; London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 34, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Of_Anger/Book_II#XXXIV.

²⁹¹⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:646–7.

²⁹¹¹Seifrid, "Romans," *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 680.

²⁹¹²Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 12:19. Since the ending of a Greek verb includes the first, second or third person, adding a pronoun makes that pronoun emphatic. In this case, the text literally says, "I I will repay."

²⁹¹³Seifrid, "Romans," *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 680–1.

²⁹¹⁴Platt Jr., "The Testament of Gad," *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, 2:8, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe290.htm>.

the living is with God and it is he who will render to man his reward...my soul shall not desire the riches of violence. I will not grapple with the men of perdition until the Day of Revenge, but my wrath shall not turn from the men of falsehood, and I will not rejoice until judgment is made.”²⁹¹⁵

Read Rom 12:19. Why does the Lord command us to leave revenge to him? How can you practice that in a situation you currently face?

Responding with Kindness

c) Rom 12:20. Paul exhorted the believers in Rome to meet evil with love and courtesy, rather than seeking to avenge themselves (Rom 12:17–19).²⁹¹⁶ He wrote, “But if hunger the one hating you [has], feed him. If thirst, give him something to drink. For doing this, burning embers you shall heap on his head.” The apostle quoted the Greek translation of Prov 25:21–22.²⁹¹⁷

However, the context of this passage in Romans does not limit our hospitality toward our enemies to giving them food and drink.²⁹¹⁸ It alludes to various acts which express love.²⁹¹⁹ By behaving in such a way, we absolve those who persecute us and do good in the sight of all people (Rom 12:9–17).²⁹²⁰ Should we fail to do this, we practice retaliation, albeit indirectly.²⁹²¹

A major controversy over this text has raged for millennia concerning the meaning of the phrase, “burning embers you shall heap on his head.”²⁹²² Within the Old Testament, “burning embers” usually refers to God’s judgment upon evil (Ps 18:7–15; Ps 140:9–11; Prov 6:28).²⁹²³

In this homily on this text, John Chrysostom (347–407 AD) compared those who harm others to Cain (Gen 4:1–16):

“He that is wronged, when he is feeble, is not taken so much with any goods of his own as with the vengeance upon the person who has pained him. For there is nothing so sweet as to see an enemy chastised...For if anyone abuses you, he has not hurt you at all, but himself severely. And if again he wrong you, the harm will be with the person who does the wrong.

“Did you never notice that even in the courts of law those who have had wrong done them are honored, and stand and speak out with entire freedom, but those who have done the wrong, are bowed down with shame and fear?... Were he even to whet his sword against you, and to stain

²⁹¹⁵Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 1QS 10:17–8, 85, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n145/mode/2up.

²⁹¹⁶Moo, *Romans*, 417.

²⁹¹⁷Randall Tan, David A. DeSilva, and Isaiah Hoogendyk, eds., *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear Septuagint: H.B. Swete Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008–12), Prov 25:21–2.

²⁹¹⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:648.

²⁹¹⁹Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 681.

²⁹²⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 788.

²⁹²¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:648.

²⁹²²Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 750.

²⁹²³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 788.

his right hand in your life-blood, it is not you that he has done any harm to, but himself that he has butchered...[Consider him] who was first taken off thus by a brother's hand. For he went away to the haven...having gained a glory that dies not away; but the other lived a life worse than any death, groaning, and trembling, and in his body bearing about the accusation of what he had done."²⁹²⁴

However, Chrysostom's view of the Lord executing greater revenge than we can does not mesh with Paul's concern about loving our enemies.²⁹²⁵ We cannot seek greater harm for our enemies by refraining from taking matters into our own hands and consider that "overcoming evil" (Rom 12:21).²⁹²⁶

Consequently, Augustine (354–430) wrote, "The coals of fire are the burning lamentations of repentance by which that man's pride is healed and he grieves that he has been an enemy of the man who relieves his misery."²⁹²⁷ Most modern commentators concur with Augustine.²⁹²⁸ By meeting the contempt of our enemies with kindness, they may experience shame for their behavior and then seek to learn why we chose to respond to them with love.²⁹²⁹

The concept of carrying coals of fire on one's head as a sign of repentance appears to originate from an ancient Egyptian practice for exonerating the guilt of one's sins.²⁹³⁰ According to a text which describes the aftermath of the theft of a book of magic spells:²⁹³¹ "Pharaoh said, 'Setne, I did what I could for thee before, saying, "They will slay thee if thou take not this book to the place whence thou broughtest it," and until this time thou gavest no heed. Let this book be taken to [its owner], a fork and stick in thine hand, and a censer of fire on thine head.' Setne came out from the presence of Pharaoh, a fork and stick in his hand, a censer of fire on his head."²⁹³²

Only truly contrite people willingly carry a censer of burning coals on their heads, especially when holding other objects with both hands. In the Aramaic paraphrase of Prov 25:21–22, some added words make the context clear. The rabbis wrote, "Yahweh will hand him over to thee" or "Yahweh will make him thy friend." They viewed the heaping of coals as a method to convert one's enemy into an ally.²⁹³³ Similarly, the Babylonian Talmud states, "The

²⁹²⁴John Chrysostom, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (NPNF1–11)* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. J. B. Morris and W. H. Simcox, revised by George B. Stevens; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1889), Homily 22, 923–4, https://archive.org/stream/HomiliesOnTheActsOfTheApostlesAndTheEpistleToTheRomans/11_chrysostom_john_saint_d407_homilies_on_the_acts_of_the_apostles#page/n921/mode/2up.

²⁹²⁵Moo, *Romans*, 413.

²⁹²⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:648–9, note 1.

²⁹²⁷Augustine, *Saint Augustine: Christian Instruction; Admonition and Grace; The Christian Combat; Faith, Hope and Charity* (ed. Robert P. Russell, John Courtney Murray, and Bernard M. Peebles; trans. John J. Gavigan; The Fathers of the Church; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1950), 136.

²⁹²⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:649.

²⁹²⁹Moo, *Romans*, 413.

²⁹³⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹³¹Lise Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2004), 64.

²⁹³²F. L. L. Griffith, trans., *Stories of the High Priests of Memphis: The Dethon of Herodotus and the Demotic Tales of Khamaus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1900), 38,

<https://archive.org/stream/storiesofhighpri00grifuoft#page/n38/mode/2up>.

²⁹³³Friedrich Lang, "σῶρεῦθ" (*sōreuō*), *TDNT* 7:1094–6, 1095, note 5.

Lord...will cause it to be at peace with thee.”²⁹³⁴ Consequently, Paul’s citation of this proverb most likely created positive connotations for his original audience.²⁹³⁵

In fact, the apostle went even farther than prohibiting revenge. When others bring us harm, the Lord calls to respond with kindness, moving them toward repentance. Even if our efforts fail and our enemies intensify their animosity,²⁹³⁶ we can emerge from the fray with a clear conscience. Our greatest example to emulate is Christ himself (1 Pet 2:21–24).²⁹³⁷

Read Rom 12:20. Why would Paul include the proverb about heaping burning coals on someone’s head after urging his readers to avoid taking revenge? What practical implication does this have for you?

Overcoming Evil with Good

d) Rom 12:21: Paul summed up this section of his letter (Rom 12:14–21) in this verse.²⁹³⁸ He wrote, “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” The apostle used the present tense to indicate that we must consciously and persistently strive to achieve this goal.²⁹³⁹

As we can see in novels, movies, and even on the road, a desire for revenge remains deeply embedded in human nature.²⁹⁴⁰ When we choose to avenge ourselves, the evils done to us and those which emanate from our own hearts emerge as the victors. We become like the one opposing us.²⁹⁴¹ Such behavior fails to reflect that God has transformed our hearts and minds into the image of Christ (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:14–16; 1 Pet 2:21–25).²⁹⁴²

Paul calls us to do more than merely abstain from evil. Instead, we must actively pursue doing good.²⁹⁴³ By treating our enemies with kindness, they may respond by becoming our friends and allies.²⁹⁴⁴ Even in our era, jailers of persecuted Christians come to Christ due to the demeanor of their captives.²⁹⁴⁵

Many believers in Rome recognized this concept.²⁹⁴⁶ In addition to Paul’s previous quote from Prov 25:21–22, the apocryphal Testament of Benjamin (second century BC) states, “And do ye, my children, flee evil-doing, envy, and hatred of brethren, and cleave to goodness and

²⁹³⁴b. Sukkah 52a, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Sukkah.pdf>.

²⁹³⁵Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 751.

²⁹³⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 789.

²⁹³⁷Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 751.

²⁹³⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹³⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 751. In Koine Greek, a present tense command indicates continuous or repetitive action.

²⁹⁴⁰Moo, *Romans*, 417.

²⁹⁴¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹⁴²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 789.

²⁹⁴³Moo, *Romans*, 417.

²⁹⁴⁴Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹⁴⁵Open Doors, “Iranian Jailer Transformed Because of Faithful Prisoner,”

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/takeaction/pray/tag-prayer-updates-post/iranian-jailor-transformed-because-of-faithful-prisoner/>.

²⁹⁴⁶Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 12:21.

love.”²⁹⁴⁷ The Testament of Joseph goes farther, saying, “And if anyone seeketh to do evil unto you, do well unto him, and pray for him, and ye shall be redeemed of the Lord from all evil.”²⁹⁴⁸

Furthermore, Polyaeus, a second century AD Greco-Roman historian, recounted this event from the third century BC Punic Wars:

“Hamilcar, one of the ablest generals that the Carthaginians ever had, was in command of their forces in Africa. But after a series of great successes, he was opposed by a faction, who were jealous of his reputation, and they charged him with planning to undermine the liberties of the people. Through their influence, he was condemned, and executed; and his brother Gesco was banished. New generals were then appointed; but under their command, the Carthaginian armies met with nothing but repeated defeats, until their very survival became a matter of doubt. In these difficulties, what could they do? They could not raise Hamilcar from his tomb.

“They therefore sent a contrite letter to Gesco, recalling him from exile and appointing him to be general of their armies. They promised to hand over to him his own, and his brother's enemies, for him to punish as he wished. Gesco, on his return to his country, ordered his enemies to be brought before him in chains. He ordered them to lie down upon their bellies on the ground, and he thrice put his foot lightly upon their necks. Then he said that, by this humiliation, he had taken sufficient revenge on them for his brother's death. After this, he dismissed them, adding, ‘I will not return evil with evil, but repay evil with good.’

“This conduct won Gesco the favor and ready obedience of all parties, both of friends and enemies; as someone who was both amiable and great. And he soon brought them success in their public affairs; he conquered the enemy by his courage, and he gained the support of the vanquished by the sweetness of his nature.”²⁹⁴⁹

Despite the traditional nature of Paul’s admonition to overcome evil with good, he recognized that the presence of the Holy Spirit must enable believers to reach this ideal (Rom 5:3–5).²⁹⁵⁰

However, even Christ—who perfectly overcame the world—did not see all his enemies become friends (John 16:33).²⁹⁵¹ We have no guarantee that loving others will result in a positive response from them.²⁹⁵² Although people may continue to hate us, we can refuse to consider them enemies in our own hearts and minds.²⁹⁵³ Love requires service, sacrifice, forgiveness, and seeking restoration to fellowship with us and with the Lord (Rom 12:9–13).²⁹⁵⁴ It consists of an attitude which God commands us to adopt, rather than an emotion. By cooperating with the

²⁹⁴⁷Rutherford H. Jr. Platt, “The Testament of Benjamin,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 4.3. At <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe295.htm>, the reference appears in 2.1.

²⁹⁴⁸Rutherford H. Platt Jr., trans., “The Testament of Joseph,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha House, 1926), 18.2. At <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe293.htm>, the reference is 2:68.

²⁹⁴⁹Polyaeus, “Polyaeus: Stratagems - Book 5, Chapters 1–15,” 5.11,

<http://www.attalus.org/translate/polyaeus5A.html#11.1>. Adapted from the 1793 translation by R. Shepherd.

²⁹⁵⁰Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 752.

²⁹⁵¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹⁵²Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 756.

²⁹⁵³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹⁵⁴Gerhard Kittel, “ἀγάπη” (*agapē*) *TDNT* 1:21–55, 51.

Spirit so that we live in love,²⁹⁵⁵ we demonstrate the reality of the transforming power of the gospel even to those who hate us.²⁹⁵⁶

Read Rom 12:21. How can you overcome evil? What practical steps can you take to love others well?

Submitting to Governing Authorities

f) Rom 13:1: This verse and the ones which follow it segue from the avoidance of personal vengeance to proper relationships with government officials (Rom 12:14–13:7). Since the believers in Rome lived in the capital of the empire, this topic resonated with them.²⁹⁵⁷ Peter wrote similar admonitions to Christians in Asia Minor (1 Pet 2:13–17).²⁹⁵⁸ Therefore, Paul likely derived his commands from traditional material within the early church.²⁹⁵⁹

In the preceding section of this letter, Paul exhorted his readers not to take revenge but to leave judgment to God (Rom 12:17–21).²⁹⁶⁰ One can imagine the questions arising from that teaching: “Does God allow those who commit evil to continue in their wicked ways as long as they live?” “Must we overlook serious offenses against us, our families, and others?”²⁹⁶¹

Paul previously informed them that corruption taints everything in this world until the arrival of a new creation (Rom 8:20–21).²⁹⁶² This caused them to question whether God expects people who live in anticipation of the age to come to reject every aspect of secular society, such as human government.²⁹⁶³

The apostle affirmed the role of political regimes by writing, “Every person to governing authorities must be submissive.” By placing “every person” first in the sentence, Paul emphasized that this mandate applies to all people.²⁹⁶⁴ In the New Testament (NT), when “authority” (*exousia*) pertains to someone bearing power, it can have two different connotations.²⁹⁶⁵ The word can refer either to human government and officials or to the transcendent rulers of the spiritual realm.²⁹⁶⁶

In the past, some commentators asserted that this term applies to angelic powers which operate through people.²⁹⁶⁷ However, that view encounters several difficulties. Typically, when

²⁹⁵⁵Moo, *Romans*, 416.

²⁹⁵⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:650.

²⁹⁵⁷Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 759.

²⁹⁵⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 793.

²⁹⁵⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 759.

²⁹⁶⁰Moo, *Romans*, 421.

²⁹⁶¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 792.

²⁹⁶²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 791.

²⁹⁶³Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 681.

²⁹⁶⁴Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:656. In Koine Greek, authors placed what they wished to emphasize at the beginning of a sentence or clause.

²⁹⁶⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 795.

²⁹⁶⁶Werner Foerster, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *TDNT*, 1:560–75, 571.

²⁹⁶⁷Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 760.

“authorities” means spiritual forces, the term occurs in conjunction with “dominions” (*kuriotēs*), “powers” (*dynamis*), or “rulers” (*archē*).²⁹⁶⁸ The modifier “governing” strengthens this case,²⁹⁶⁹ as *hyperechō* applies only to people in power over or more important than someone else (Cf. 1 Pet 2:13 and the Greek translation of Gen 25:23).²⁹⁷⁰

Although Paul referred to a word related to “rulers” (*archon*) in Rom 13:3, he wrote about human leaders in that verse.²⁹⁷¹ Consequently, even scholars who once held the supernatural view, such as Cranfield, now recognize that Paul likely referred strictly to civil government in this passage.²⁹⁷² These authorities range from local bureaucrats to the highest human rulers in the land.²⁹⁷³

Notably, Paul called his readers to submit (*hypotassō*) to governing authorities. This word carries a slightly different nuance than “to obey” (*peitharcheō*).²⁹⁷⁴ In the NT, “to submit” incorporates a wide range of meaning.²⁹⁷⁵ Here it consists of voluntary subjection of oneself to another person, accompanied by the respect appropriate for someone of higher rank.²⁹⁷⁶ Paul calls us to recognize that we stand under our civil rulers and to live accordingly.²⁹⁷⁷

Elsewhere in the NT, “to submit” consists of a willingness to renounce one’s own desires in deference to another person.²⁹⁷⁸ This attitude should exist between all people (Eph 5:18–25; Luke 2:51; 1 Pet 5:1–5). Humility necessarily precedes submission (Phil 2:3).²⁹⁷⁹ As Eph 5:21 clarifies, both parties share mutual responsibilities.²⁹⁸⁰

Regarding that verse, John Calvin wrote:

“God has bound us so strongly to each other that no man ought to endeavor to avoid subjection; and where love reigns, mutual services will be rendered. I do not except even kings and governors, whose very authority is held for the *service* of the community. It is highly proper that all should be exhorted to be subject to each other in their turn. But as nothing is more irksome to the mind of man than this mutual subjection, he directs us to *the fear of Christ*, who alone can subdue our fierceness, that we may not refuse the yoke, and can humble our pride, that we may not be ashamed of serving our neighbors.”²⁹⁸¹

Even kings must understand that God calls them to submit themselves to the needs of their subjects (2 Ki 21:16; 2 Ki 24:1–4).²⁹⁸² Paul wrote to people living under an authoritarian

²⁹⁶⁸Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *BDAG*, 352–3, 353.

²⁹⁶⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 760.

²⁹⁷⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ὑπερέχω” (*hyperechō*), *BDAG*, 1033.

²⁹⁷¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 795–6.

²⁹⁷²Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:656, 659–60.

²⁹⁷³Moo, *Romans*, 421.

²⁹⁷⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 797. Cranfield notes that Paul did not choose any of the three NT words meaning “to obey” here (2:660).

²⁹⁷⁵Gerhard Delling, “ὑποτάσσω” (*hypotassō*), *TDNT*, 8:39–46.

²⁹⁷⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ὑποτάσσω” (*hypotassō*), *BDAG*, 1042.

²⁹⁷⁷Moo, *Romans*, 422.

²⁹⁷⁸Delling, “ὑποτάσσω” (*hypotassō*), *TDNT* 8:45.

²⁹⁷⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 761.

²⁹⁸⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:661.

²⁹⁸¹John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesian* (trans. William Pringle; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 316–7. Italics original.

²⁹⁸²Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:662.

government, unlike many of us. Nevertheless, he expected his readers to treat civil authorities with respect, to pay taxes, and to pray for them (Rom 13:6–7; 1 Tim 2:1–4).²⁹⁸³

Typically, this also involves obeying our rulers.²⁹⁸⁴ As long as we live in this era of the now and not yet, God calls us to abide by the political institutions of our nations.²⁹⁸⁵ As with all other relationships, human laws may conflict with the ordinances of God.²⁹⁸⁶ When that occurs, our submission to the Lord takes precedence (Matt 22:15–22; Acts 4:18–31; Acts 5:26–29).²⁹⁸⁷

Not until Paul’s lifetime did Roman emperors adopt the title “Lord” for themselves. The earliest known example of this refers to Claudius.²⁹⁸⁸ That papyrus, dated to 49 AD (699), calls him “Tiberius Claudius Caesar, our Lord.”²⁹⁸⁹ This put early Christians on a collision course with the Roman adoption of emperor worship.²⁹⁹⁰ The refusal of Jesus’s followers to worship Roman gods and their efforts to convince others to abandon burning incense to the emperor led to their persecution as atheists.²⁹⁹¹ Eventually, Roman authorities declared such behavior a crime worthy of death.²⁹⁹² Although Roman rulers did not require making sacrifices to the emperor in the apostles’ lifetimes, both Peter and Paul died for their faith under Nero (reigned 54–68 AD).

The church historian Eusebius (ca. 275–339) wrote:

“When the government of Nero was now firmly established, he began to plunge into unholy pursuits, and armed himself even against the religion of the God of the universe...He was the first of the emperors who showed himself an enemy of the divine religion.

“The Roman Tertullian [ca. 155–220] is likewise a witness of this. He writes as follows, ‘Examine your records. There you will find that Nero was the first that persecuted this doctrine, particularly when after subduing all the east, he exercised his cruelty against all at Rome. We glory in having such a man the leader in our punishment. For whoever knows him can understand that nothing was condemned by Nero unless it was something of great excellence. Thus, publicly announcing himself as the first among God’s chief enemies, he was led on to the slaughter of the apostles. It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day.’”²⁹⁹³

When Paul wrote to the Romans (ca. 57 AD), Nero had not yet begun his persecution of

²⁹⁸³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:662.

²⁹⁸⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 797.

²⁹⁸⁵Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 760.

²⁹⁸⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:662.

²⁹⁸⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 797.

²⁹⁸⁸Werner Foerster, “κύριος” (*kurios*), *TDNT* 3:1039–98, 1054.

²⁹⁸⁹Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri, “Report of a Lawsuit (P.Oxy. 1 37),” <http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/hgv/20699>.

²⁹⁹⁰Henry Fairfield Burton, “The Worship of the Roman Emperors,” *The Biblical World* 40, no. 2 (1 August 1912):80–91, 90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3141986.pdf?_=1471457695856.

²⁹⁹¹Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 3rd Ed., 38.

²⁹⁹²Burton, “The Worship of the Roman Emperors,” 90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3141986.pdf?_=1471457695856.

²⁹⁹³Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; vol. 1 of *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*; Edinburgh; London; New York: T & T Clark, 1890), 25:1, 3–5, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.vii.xxvi.html>.

Christians. This may account for the lack of exceptions in his letter.²⁹⁹⁴

The apostle then cited the reason for our submission to governing authorities, writing, “For there is no authority except by God, and those which exist are by God put in place.” This concept of the Lord granting power to human rulers reflects Old Testament teaching (2 Sam 12:7). God planned Judah’s exile to Babylon and the nation’s release (Jer 29:4–7; Isa 44:28; 2 Chron 36:22–23).²⁹⁹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar II finally grasped this truth after God disciplined him (Dan 4:17, 28–37).²⁹⁹⁶ However, his successor Belshazzar failed to learn this lesson, and the Lord permanently removed him from office (Dan 5:1–5, 25–30).²⁹⁹⁷

Paul left no room for doubt: ultimately the Lord sets all political leaders in their places.²⁹⁹⁸ No one, even an ungodly ruler, can exercise authority unless the Lord grants it (Isa 44:28–45:7).²⁹⁹⁹ Yet, this truth does not exempt political leaders from God’s judgment when they abuse the offices he granted to them.³⁰⁰⁰ The Lord holds all rulers accountable for their actions.³⁰⁰¹ Evil people will reject those who suffer for a just cause.³⁰⁰² Consequently, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “If we fall into human hands, if we suffer and die by human violence, we may be sure that everything comes from God... Therefore, ‘Be not afraid!’”³⁰⁰³

By not being overcome by evil but overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:21), Christians bear testimony to this lost world that God has begun his new creation in the church community (Rom 8:15–30).³⁰⁰⁴ Where this world and the body of Christ clash, political rulers either wisely withdraw or resort to violence. When brutality occurs, suffering believers need the full support of the world-wide church (Rom 8:31–39; Heb 13:1–3).³⁰⁰⁵

During the Nazi era, Bonhoeffer made this statement:

“The church was mute when it should have cried out, because the blood of the innocent cried out to heaven. The church did not... resist to the death the falling away from faith and is guilty of the godlessness of the masses... The church confesses that it has misused the name of Christ by being ashamed of it before the world and by not resisting strongly enough the misuse of that name for evil ends. The church has looked on while injustice and violence have been done... “The church confesses that it has witnessed the arbitrary use of brutal force, the suffering in body and soul of countless innocent people, that it has witnessed oppression, hatred, and murder without raising its voice for the victims and without finding ways of rushing to help them... The church confesses that it has looked on silently as the poor were exploited and robbed... The church confesses its guilt toward the countless people whose lives have been destroyed by slander, denunciation, and defamation... The church confesses that it has coveted security,

²⁹⁹⁴Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–2.

²⁹⁹⁵Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 681.

²⁹⁹⁶Moo, *Romans*, 422.

²⁹⁹⁷Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 681.

²⁹⁹⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 798.

²⁹⁹⁹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:663.

³⁰⁰⁰Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 761–2.

³⁰⁰¹Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 681–2.

³⁰⁰²Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 109.

³⁰⁰³Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 197.

³⁰⁰⁴Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 243–4.

³⁰⁰⁵Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 245–6.

tranquility, peace, property, and honor to which it had no claim...The church confesses itself guilty of violating all the Ten Commandments. It confesses thereby its apostasy from Christ.”³⁰⁰⁶ Bonhoeffer provides a strong reminder that God calls all believers to protect those who cannot help themselves when they face injustice (Jer 22:3–4; Ezek 12:19; Ezek 33:7–9; Mic 6:6–16). **Read Rom 13:1.** How do we know that Paul had human authorities in mind rather than angelic ones? Why must we submit to such rulers? How must we respond when the edicts of government authorities directly contradict those of the Lord?

Engaging in Anarchy

g) Rom 13:2: Since the Lord places all political leaders in office (Rom 13:1), Paul wrote, “Therefore, whoever resists (*antitassō*) authority has opposed the ordinance of God, and the ones who have set themselves against (*anthistēmi*) [it] upon themselves judgment shall receive.” The compound word *antitassō* literally means “against order,”³⁰⁰⁷ signaling strong opposition to something or someone (Cf. the Greek translation of Prov 3:34).

According to the 1st–2nd century AD Testament of Dan:

“I know that in the last days, ye shall depart from the Lord, and ye shall provoke Levi unto anger, and fight against (*antitassō*) Judah; but ye shall not prevail against them, for an Angel of the Lord shall guide them both; for by them shall Israel stand.”³⁰⁰⁸

In the New Testament, the very rare word translated as “ordinance” (*diatagē*) occurs only here and in Acts 7:53.³⁰⁰⁹ However, Paul did use a related verb in Gal 3:19.³⁰¹⁰ Refusing to recognize the legitimate right of human governments to wield authority equates to rebelling against the Lord (Matt 22:15–22; Rom 13:6–7).³⁰¹¹ Acts 25:7–12 recounts Paul’s approach to ruling regimes.

“Judgment” (*krima*) refers to the decision of a judge, with the ruling typically going against the one under trial. This results in condemnation (Mark 12:38–40; Acts 24:24–25; 1 Cor 11:27–34).³⁰¹² Consequently, the Jewish expression “judgment shall receive” forms an idiom meaning “shall be condemned.”³⁰¹³ Due to the context of this passage, this judgment will come

³⁰⁰⁶Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Clifford J. Green, ed., Reinhard Krauss, et al., *Ethics* (DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 138–41.

³⁰⁰⁷Gerhard Dellling, “τάσσω” (*tassō*), *TDNT*, 8:27–31.

³⁰⁰⁸R. H. Charles, trans., “Testament of Dan,” in *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Black, 1908), 128, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/128/mode/2up>.

³⁰⁰⁹Result of Logos 7 word study on “διαταγή” (*diatagē*).

³⁰¹⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “διαταγή” (*diatagē*), *BDAG*, 237.

³⁰¹¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 799.

³⁰¹²Friedrich Büchsel, “κρίμα” (*krima*), *TDNT* 3:942.

³⁰¹³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “κρίμα” (*krima*), *BDAG*, 567.

from God, not merely from the civil authorities.³⁰¹⁴ Those who engage in anarchy,³⁰¹⁵ persistently rebelling against human rulers, subject themselves to God’s wrath at the final judgment. They await certain condemnation.³⁰¹⁶

This concept of allegiance to one’s government commonly appeared in the Greco-Roman world.³⁰¹⁷ The second century AD Stoic author Hierocles wrote an entire work on the subject called *How to Behave Toward One’s Fatherland*.³⁰¹⁸

According to Plato (427–327 BC), when a friend offered to help Socrates escape from prison to avoid his execution, the condemned man said this:³⁰¹⁹ “Then consider whether, if we go away from here without the consent of the state, we are doing harm to the very ones to whom we least ought to do harm...and whether we are abiding by what we agreed was right...If, as I was on the point of running away (or whatever it should be called), the laws and the commonwealth should come to me and ask, ‘Tell me, Socrates, what have you in mind to do? Are you not intending by this thing you are trying to do, to destroy us, the laws, and the entire state?’...Or do you think that state can exist and not be overturned, in which the decisions by the courts have no force but are made invalid and annulled by persons?”³⁰²⁰

Thus, Socrates endured the death penalty to avoid sabotaging the government. He recognized that civil authorities enacted good laws in addition to bad legislation.³⁰²¹

Read Rom 13:2. How does refusing to obey governing authorities relate to rebelling against God? What hints do we have in this verse that anarchists will face the Lord’s judgment? How do you respond when the ordinances of human rulers contradict those of God? Does that amount to rebellion? Why or why not?

Do What is Good

h) Rom 13:3: Paul continued his theme of the origin and purpose of human government (Rom 13:1–2).³⁰²² He wrote, “For rulers are not a cause for fear for good behavior but for evil. Do you

³⁰¹⁴Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:664.

³⁰¹⁵Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 762.

³⁰¹⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 799.

³⁰¹⁷Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰¹⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰¹⁹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰²⁰Plato, “Crito,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1* (trans. Harold North Fowler; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1966), 49e–50c,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DCrito%3Asection%3D49e>.

³⁰²¹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰²²Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 763.

want not to be afraid of the authority?”

In AD 49, the emperor Claudius expelled all Jewish people from Rome.³⁰²³ Suetonius (ca. 69–130/140), a Roman historian, wrote, “He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.”³⁰²⁴ Most likely, this refers to the preaching of the gospel by Jewish believers.³⁰²⁵

As a result, the church became composed entirely of Gentiles until the automatic repeal of the edict upon Claudius’s death in AD 54 (Cf. Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3).³⁰²⁶ Paul appears to have written his letter within five years after the exile ended.³⁰²⁷ By belonging to a foreign religion, Roman authorities considered Christians subversive to the social order.³⁰²⁸ Therefore, Paul called his readers to practice good citizenship. Morally laudable behavior not only frees us from fear of punishment, it brings us approval from secular leaders.³⁰²⁹

For example, in Greco-Roman households, no one held men and slave owners accountable for their treatment of women and slaves.³⁰³⁰ This was not the case in Christian homes, which rejected the complete subordination of women to their husbands and cruelty toward slaves (Eph 5:25–33; Eph 6:9; 1 Pet 3:7–9).³⁰³¹ As a result, Christian women and slaves received more freedom and power than their non-Christian friends enjoyed.³⁰³²

In the early church, Christianity spread faster among women than among men. After all, males had more to lose in terms of their social status by converting to a despised minority religion. The discrepancy in numbers was so great that Celsus, a 2nd century AD philosopher, complained, “[Christians] desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children.”³⁰³³

The obedience expected of wives in Greco-Roman antiquity included allegiance to their husbands’ religions,³⁰³⁴ as Plutarch (46–122 AD) wrote in *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

³⁰²³ James D. G. Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 838–50, 839.

³⁰²⁴ C. Tranquillus Suetonius, “Divus Claudius,” in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; an English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1889), 25.4.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3A1ife%3Dcl.%3Achapter%3D25>.

³⁰²⁵ Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 852–3.

³⁰²⁶ F. F. Bruce, “Christianity Under Claudius,” *BJRL* 44, no. 2 (1 March 1962): 309–26, 318,
https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bjrl/claudius_bruce.pdf.

³⁰²⁷ Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 13.

³⁰²⁸ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰²⁹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 800.

³⁰³⁰ David L. Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” *USQR* 39, no. 3, January 1, 1984: 161–73, 166.

³⁰³¹ David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD* 3:318–20, 319.

³⁰³² Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” 169.

³⁰³³ Origen, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans., *Against Celsus* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 3.44, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen163.html>.

³⁰³⁴ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Pet 3:1.

tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor.³⁰³⁵

People in Greco-Roman society regarded most Christian women as highly insubordinate solely by their religious commitment.³⁰³⁶ Only by leading exemplary lives could believers counter the appearance of undermining the social order.³⁰³⁷

Aristotle's 4th century BC view on government and household rule remained in effect in Paul's era:³⁰³⁸

“Under each of these forms of government we find friendship existing between ruler and ruled, to the same extent as justice. The friendship of a king for his subjects is one of superiority in beneficence; for a king does good to his subjects, inasmuch as being good he studies to promote their welfare, as a shepherd studies the welfare of his sheep...

“The friendship between husband and wife again is the same as that which prevails between rulers and subjects in an aristocracy; for it is in proportion to excellence, and the better party receives the larger share [of good], whilst each party receives what is appropriate to each... There is little or no friendship between ruler and subjects in a tyranny. For where there is nothing in common between ruler and ruled, there can be no friendship between them either, any more than there can be justice. It is like the relation between a craftsman and his tool...

“All these instruments it is true are benefited by the persons who use them, but there can be no friendship, nor justice, towards inanimate things; indeed not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as slave. For master and slave have nothing in common: a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave. Therefore, there can be no friendship with a slave as slave, though there can be as human being: for there seems to be some room for justice in the relations of every human being with every other that is capable of participating in law and contract, and hence friendship also is possible with everyone so far as he is a human being. Hence even in tyrannies there is but little scope for friendship and justice between ruler and subjects; but there is most room for them in democracies, where the citizens being equal have many things in common.”³⁰³⁹

Under the best of circumstances, Aristotle compared a king's subjects, women, and slaves to a farmer's animals in relation to those who ruled over them.

When considering authority figures, Paul advised, “Do good and you will have approval from them.” This aligned with typical Greek philosophy.³⁰⁴⁰

Diodorus Siculus, a first century BC historian, wrote:

“Throughout our entire treatise our practice has been to employ the customary freedom of speech enjoyed by history, and we have added just praise of good men for their fair deeds and meted out just censure upon bad men whenever they did wrong. By this means...we shall lead men whose

³⁰³⁵Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom (Conjugal Praecepta)*, 19,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D19>.

³⁰³⁶Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11–3:12,” 166.

³⁰³⁷Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rom 13:1–7.

³⁰³⁸Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 67.

³⁰³⁹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. H. Rackham; Aristotle in 23 Volumes; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 8.11.1–7,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0054:book=8:chapter=11&highlight=tyranny>.

³⁰⁴⁰Herbert Preisker, “ἐπαινος” (*epainos*), *TDNT* 2:586–8, 586.

nature fortunately inclines them to virtue undertake, because of the immortality fame accords them, the fairest deeds, whereas by appropriate [criticisms] we shall turn men of the opposite character from their impulse to evil.³⁰⁴¹

Claiming to know Christ while living disgracefully dishonors him.³⁰⁴² Paul exhorted his readers to live for the glory of God in a world of sinful people.

Read Rom 13:3. Why did Greco-Romans consider Christians subversive? How did Paul seek to allay that tension? What do good governments do?

Bearing the Sword

i) Rom 13:4: Ultimately, Paul grounded his rationale for behaving laudably in theology, rather than for personal benefit (Cf. Rom 13:1–3). Concerning each civil ruler, he wrote, “For a servant (*diakonos*) of God he is to you for good. But if evil you are doing, be afraid.”

In the New Testament, a “servant of God” typically refers to someone in leadership in the church (Col 1:7; 1 Tim 4:6).³⁰⁴³ Paul utilized this word to refer to the office of a deacon (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–13; Rom 16:1).³⁰⁴⁴ However, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (OT), the term applies to civic leaders and royal officials (Esth 2:1–2).³⁰⁴⁵

A Jewish apocryphal work exhorted:

“Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations. For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High; he will search out your works and inquire into your plans. Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly, or keep the law, or walk according to the purpose of God, he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places” (Wisdom of Solomon 6:1–5, NRSVCE).

This secular meaning appears to be what Paul intended.³⁰⁴⁶ Whether rulers know it or not, they serve the Lord’s purposes (Isa 10:5–16).³⁰⁴⁷ As God’s servants, such rulers have two major functions.³⁰⁴⁸ By enacting just laws, they encourage people to behave morally, and they deter evildoing by punishing transgressors.³⁰⁴⁹ The Lord intends that governments reflect his wrath against evil.³⁰⁵⁰

³⁰⁴¹Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 15.1.1,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0084%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D1>.

³⁰⁴²Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:646.

³⁰⁴³Moo, *Romans*, 422.

³⁰⁴⁴Hermann W. Beyer, “διάκονος” (*diakonos*), *TDNT* 2:87–93, 89–90, 93.

³⁰⁴⁵Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 764.

³⁰⁴⁶Moo, *Romans*, 422.

³⁰⁴⁷Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:665.

³⁰⁴⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:665.

³⁰⁴⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 801.

³⁰⁵⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:666.

Paul explained, “For not without cause the sword (*machaira*) he bears.” Here “the sword” functions as a metaphor for execution.³⁰⁵¹ The rare Greek verb *phoreō* has the nuance of something being carried continually or worn for a long time (Matt 11:8; 1 Cor 15:49).³⁰⁵² Human government retains the power of life and death over those who commit great evil.³⁰⁵³

This brings us to the hotly contested issue of capital punishment. The basis for execution as the penalty for murder lies in the recognition that all people are created in the image of God (Gen 9:6).³⁰⁵⁴ God enacted the death penalty prior to the debut of the Mosaic law. Consequently, the arrival of Christ did not negate it as part of the ceremonial law.³⁰⁵⁵

Some Christians argue that capital punishment does not mesh with the ethics of Jesus, particularly in his call to avoid revenge.³⁰⁵⁶ However, when Christ denounced the Pharisees for putting aside God’s commands in favor of human tradition, he cited an OT text concerning the death penalty without any qualifications (Mark 7:9–13). Had his death and resurrection voided it, Christ would have chosen a different verse. Yet, in the remainder of this passage, Jesus set aside the kosher dietary restrictions as no longer necessary (Mark 7:14–19).³⁰⁵⁷ Furthermore, Jesus pointed out to Pilate that God endowed him with his ability to order crucifixions (John 19:10–11). Paul also accepted the validity of the death penalty (Acts 25:11–12).³⁰⁵⁸

On the other hand, the current guideline in the United States instructs a jury to determine that a person’s guilt is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” This does not rise to the level of the biblical requirement (Deut 19:15).³⁰⁵⁹ If our courts held this standard, very few people convicted of murder would remain eligible for the death penalty.³⁰⁶⁰

In addition, the application of the death penalty as practiced in the United States reflects bias. Those convicted of murder who belong to a racial minority are far more likely to receive a death sentence than Caucasian murderers, especially when the victim was white.³⁰⁶¹ Those who cannot afford a good lawyer often receive inadequate representation in court. Such individuals receive capital punishment at a higher rate.³⁰⁶² This has led some death penalty proponents to argue for an increase in executions by holding Caucasians and the wealthy to the same standard.³⁰⁶³

³⁰⁵¹W. Michaelis, “μάχαιρα” (*machaira*), *TDNT* 4:524–7, 525–6.

³⁰⁵²Konrad Weiss, “φορέω” (*phoreō*), *TDNT* 9:83–4, 84.

³⁰⁵³Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 764.

³⁰⁵⁴Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 264.

³⁰⁵⁵Bruce W. Ballard, “The Death Penalty: God’s Timeless Standard for the Nations?” *JETS* 43, no. 3 1 September 2000):471–87, 472, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-pp471-487_JETS.pdf.

³⁰⁵⁶Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Ed., 262.

³⁰⁵⁷Ballard, “The Death Penalty: God’s Timeless Standard for the Nations?” 475–6, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-pp471-487_JETS.pdf.

³⁰⁵⁸Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 116.

³⁰⁵⁹Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Ed., 253.

³⁰⁶⁰Ballard, “The Death Penalty: God’s Timeless Standard for the Nations?” 483, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-pp471-487_JETS.pdf.

³⁰⁶¹Matt Stichter, “The Structure of Death Penalty Arguments,” *Res Publica* 20, no. 2 (1 May 2014): 135–6, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272017150_The_Structure_of_Death_Penalty_Arguments.

³⁰⁶²Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Ed., 264.

³⁰⁶³Stichter, “The Structure of Death Penalty Arguments,” 136, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272017150_The_Structure_of_Death_Penalty_Arguments.

Another issue to consider is the tendency of witnesses to lie, especially when prosecutors promise convicts reduced sentences in exchange for testifying.³⁰⁶⁴ In capital cases, lawyers must fully question witnesses multiple times to detect inconsistencies in their testimony. The Mosaic law deterred providing false information by insisting that a lying eyewitness receive the penalty which the judge would have ordered for the accused person (Deut 19:16–21).³⁰⁶⁵

Thankfully, DNA testing makes a significant difference in this regard. Recent improvements in testing techniques have exonerated many death row prisoners.³⁰⁶⁶ The Innocence Project has done fantastic work to reduce the conviction of innocent people and to release wrongly incarcerated prisoners (Prov 24:11–12).³⁰⁶⁷

Where the guilt of one accused of murder is absolutely certain, Scripture seems to warrant the application of the death penalty.³⁰⁶⁸ However, even in those cases, governments must fairly apply capital punishment. A just society cannot permit discrimination.³⁰⁶⁹

Regarding why we should submit to government authority, Paul also wrote, “for of God he is a servant, an avenger for wrath against the one doing evil.” The punishments which rulers inflict upon the guilty serve as an extension of the Lord’s judgment.³⁰⁷⁰ Paul’s Jewish readers in Rome recognized this concept (Prov 24:21–22; Isa 5:26–29; Isa 8:7–8; Isa 13:1–5).³⁰⁷¹

The Wars of the Jews made a similar statement concerning God and government: “While Josephus (37–100 AD) was making this exhortation to the Jews, many of them jested upon him from the wall, and many reproached him; nay, some threw their darts at him: but when he could not himself persuade them by such open good advice, he betook himself to the histories belonging to their own nation, and cried out aloud, ‘O miserable creatures! Are you so unmindful of those that used to assist you, that you will fight by your weapons and by your hands against the Romans? When did we ever conquer any other nation by such means? And when was it that God, who is the Creator of the Jewish people, did not avenge them when they had been injured? Will not you turn again, and look back, and consider whence it is that you fight with such violence, and how great a Supporter you have profanely abused? Will not you recall to mind the prodigious things done for your forefathers and this holy place, and how great enemies of yours were by him subdued under you?...You fight not only against the Romans, but against God himself.’”³⁰⁷²

In conclusion, we should not separate the call to avoid vengeance in Rom 12:17–21 from

³⁰⁶⁴Stichter, “The Structure of Death Penalty Arguments,” 140–1,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272017150_The_Structure_of_Death_Penalty_Arguments.

³⁰⁶⁵Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 270.

³⁰⁶⁶Ballard, “The Death Penalty: God’s Timeless Standard for the Nations?” 482–3,

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-pp471-487_JETS.pdf.

³⁰⁶⁷Innocence Project. <http://www.innocenceproject.org/about/>.

³⁰⁶⁸Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 3rd Ed., 264.

³⁰⁶⁹Ballard, “The Death Penalty: God’s Timeless Standard for the Nations?” 486, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-pp471-487_JETS.pdf.

³⁰⁷⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 802.

³⁰⁷¹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 765.

³⁰⁷²Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5.377,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D5%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D9%3Awhiston%20section%3D4>.

the recognition that the Lord has endowed governments with the responsibility to uphold justice.³⁰⁷³ God charges secular rulers to do for us what God has forbidden: taking revenge with our own hands.³⁰⁷⁴ Since the Lord appoints governing authorities to reward those who behave well and to penalize evildoers, he commands us to submit to them with all due respect.³⁰⁷⁵

Read Rom 13:3–4. How did Paul describe the functions of governing authorities? Why must we submit to secular rulers? What will happen to people who refuse to obey them? How does Rom 12:17–13:4 give you guidance when faced with injustice? In what ways would you reform capital punishment?

A Covenant with All Living Things

3) Gen 9:8–11: In the verses prior to these, the Lord blessed Noah and his sons and then gave them several prohibitions (Gen 9:1–7).³⁰⁷⁶ In keeping with the overall literary structure of a chiasm in the flood narrative (Gen 6:9–9:19),³⁰⁷⁷ Gen 9:9 repeats several key terms from Gen 6:17.³⁰⁷⁸ Furthermore, this passage refers to the covenant with Noah which the Lord formally established in Gen 6:18.³⁰⁷⁹ While God announced the destruction of the entire world before the flood, here he proclaimed its preservation.³⁰⁸⁰

Moses and his original audience understood the concept of covenants well.³⁰⁸¹ They consist of formal treaties ratified by an oath between two parties.³⁰⁸² Typically, one group or individual imposed a covenant upon another as an obligation.³⁰⁸³ They bound one or both parties to uphold stipulations: performing or refraining from certain duties.³⁰⁸⁴ Unlike most covenants, God made this pact unilaterally. He promised to keep it regardless of the human ability to obey the commands he delivered in Gen 9:4–6.³⁰⁸⁵

This passage begins by saying, “Then God spoke to Noah and his sons, saying ‘And

³⁰⁷³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 792.

³⁰⁷⁴Moo, *Romans*, 421.

³⁰⁷⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 800.

³⁰⁷⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁰⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

³⁰⁷⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³⁰⁷⁹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 74.

³⁰⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

³⁰⁸¹Walton, *Genesis*, 343.

³⁰⁸²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:17.

³⁰⁸³M. Weinfeld, “בְּרִית” (*berith*), *TDOT* 2:255–79, 255.

³⁰⁸⁴Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” *ABD* 1: 1179.

³⁰⁸⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 246.

behold, I myself am establishing my covenant with you and your seed after you, and with all living beings which [are] with you: birds, and cattle, and every animal on the earth with you, of all which go out from the ark with you, to every animal of the earth.”

The Hebrew construction of the verb “establishing” (*qum*) makes it difficult to determine whether the Lord spoke of beginning a new treaty or continuing an existing one.³⁰⁸⁶ A majority of scholars believe it refers to a previously established relationship.³⁰⁸⁷ Some argue that God set this covenant in place at creation due to the blessing of humanity and the animals in Gen 1:20–22.³⁰⁸⁸ However, the Lord did not bless the land animals in Gen 1:24–25.

Most experts assert that God referred to the legal agreement he instituted in Gen 6:18,³⁰⁸⁹ since that verse first employs the term “covenant” (*berith*).³⁰⁹⁰ Thus, Gen 9:9–17 likely represents the fulfillment of the Lord’s earlier promise to Noah.³⁰⁹¹ Not only did God make this covenant unilateral, it was universal.³⁰⁹² Within nine verses, the Lord repeated the phrase “every living being” (*kol nephesh khay*) eight times.³⁰⁹³ All on earth come under its promise.³⁰⁹⁴ This reflects the Lord’s passionate care for both his human and nonhuman creation (Prov 12:10; Jon 4:11; Isa 11:6–9). It also proves the unilateral nature of this covenant, as animals cannot enter into binding agreements.³⁰⁹⁵

The Lord repeated, “And I establish my covenant with you. And all flesh will never again be cut off by the waters of the flood. And there will never again be a flood to ruin the earth.” This creates the antithesis of Gen 6:13, 17.³⁰⁹⁶ Hebrew grammar uses various degrees of negation. Here the Lord stated the strongest form, which means “never.”³⁰⁹⁷ Years later, God referred to the certainty of redemption for his people by citing this promise (Isa 54:7–10).³⁰⁹⁸

To be “cut off” (*kharath*) depicts God’s judgment against sin (Gen 17:14; Mic 5:10–15; Zeph 1:1–6),³⁰⁹⁹ removing someone from the safety of the Lord’s care and into death.³¹⁰⁰ By stating twice that such a flood will never again cut off all living things, the Lord made this pronouncement emphatic. However, this covenant does not mean that judgment upon all will never occur,³¹⁰¹ only that God will not send another cataclysmic flood (Gen 8:22).³¹⁰²

³⁰⁸⁶J. Gamberoni, “*qum*,” *TDOT* 12:589–612, 600. Here the verb occurs as a hiphil participle.

³⁰⁸⁷Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 75–6.

³⁰⁸⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³⁰⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 194.

³⁰⁹⁰Result of Logos 7 word study on “בְּרִית” (*berith*).

³⁰⁹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁰⁹²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

³⁰⁹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³⁰⁹⁴Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

³⁰⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁰⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

³⁰⁹⁷Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 317,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/316/mode/2up>. This is an imperfect verb paired with *lo* (<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/518/mode/2up>) (“not”).

³⁰⁹⁸Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 66.

³⁰⁹⁹G. F. Hasel, “בְּרִית” (*berith*), *TDOT* 7:345–52, 345.

³¹⁰⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³¹⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³¹⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

a) **Read Gen 9:8–11.** Do you think that this speech refers to the covenant which the Lord promised to Noah in Gen 6:18? Why or why not? Whom did God include in this compact? What is its limitation? How does this passage impact your understanding of God’s care for those he creates? What can you do to emulate him?

A Bow Set in a Cloud

b) **Gen 9:12–17:** God promised Noah and his descendants to never again send such a devastating flood upon the earth (Gen 9:8–11).³¹⁰³ Yet, the Lord gave another speech in which he ratified that oath with a sign.³¹⁰⁴ Moses reported, “And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between me and you and every living being which [is] with you for eternal generations.’”

In Hebrew, a “sign” (*oth*) consists of an item, an experience, or a ceremony which enables people to perceive or remember that something is true.³¹⁰⁵ Signs can include leather boxes containing Old Testament (OT) verses which people strapped to their arms or foreheads, miracles, significant events which occurred after having been foretold, or practices which set Israel apart from others (Deut 6:8, 22; Exod 3:12; Exod 31:13).³¹⁰⁶

At critical junctures of human history, the Lord gave the rainbow, circumcision, and the Sabbath each as a sign of a covenant which he established (Gen 17:9–13; Exod 31:16–17).³¹⁰⁷ Christians observe a sign of the new covenant by participating in the sacrament of The Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:20).³¹⁰⁸ Typically, signs of the covenant remind those who participate in them of God’s presence and their resulting obligations.³¹⁰⁹

To Noah and all his descendants, God said, “My bow (*qesheth*) I have set in a cloud, and it will be for a sign of a covenant between me and the earth.” The Hebrew language does not distinguish between a rainbow and an archer’s bow.³¹¹⁰ Therefore, a major controversy has developed among OT scholars concerning whether this verse is alluding to Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) mythologies. Even the critically acclaimed *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* provides two competing entries without reaching a definitive conclusion.³¹¹¹

³¹⁰³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³¹⁰⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 194.

³¹⁰⁵F. J. Helfmeyer, “אוֹת” (*oth*), *TDOT* 1:167–88, 170.

³¹⁰⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

³¹⁰⁷Helfmeyer, “אוֹת” (*oth*), *TDOT* 1:181–2.

³¹⁰⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³¹⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

³¹¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 317.

³¹¹¹T. Kronholm and H.-J. Fabry, “קֶשֶׁת” (*qesheth*), *TDOT* 13:201–8, 206.

People in the ANE often depicted their gods using a bow and arrows to vanquish their foes. According to the Akkadian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, Marduk defeated the evil water goddess Tiamat. Using a word related to the Hebrew verb for “separated” (*badhal*) (Cf. Gen 1:6–7), 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... All the gods apportioned the stations of heaven and earth...The seven gods of destiny set up the three hundred [in heaven]. Enlil raised the bow, his weapon, and laid (it) before them. The gods, his fathers, saw the net he had made. When they beheld the bow, how skillful its shape, his fathers praised the work he had wrought.

“Raising (it), Anu spoke up in the Assembly of the gods, as he kissed the bow, ‘This is my daughter!’ He named the names of the bow as follows: ‘Longwood is the first, the second is Accurate; its third name is Bow-Star, in heaven I have made it shine.’”³¹¹²

People in the ANE believed that constellations shaped like a bow signified the gods’ anger.³¹¹³ An Assyrian relief depicts the god Assur with his bow upturned in a gesture of peace.³¹¹⁴ Another shows two hands of a god extending from the clouds,³¹¹⁵ with one lifted in blessing and another grasping an inverted bow.³¹¹⁶ These gods laid aside their divine wrath and turned their bows away from humanity.³¹¹⁷

Old Testament texts also describe Yahweh as a warrior who wields a bow and arrows against his enemies (Deut 32:22–23, 42–43; Ps 18:13–15; Hab 3:8–12).³¹¹⁸ While some scholars acknowledge the familiarity of Moses’ original audience with divine archers, they assert that this tradition does not inform our understanding of the rainbow.³¹¹⁹ Others contend that the ANE perspective of a weapon in a non-threatening position fits perfectly with God’s promise to never again inflict such destruction upon the earth.³¹²⁰

Experts do agree that a rainbow reflects the cessation of the Lord’s enmity directed toward humanity (Gen 6:5–7).³¹²¹ Against the backdrop of clouds—which had previously wrought such great destruction—God placed a sign of mercy.³¹²² However, this does not necessarily indicate that rainbows did not exist prior to the flood.³¹²³

³¹¹²“Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” *ANET*, 4.135–40, 6:79–90, 67, 69. Italics mine.

³¹¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³¹¹⁴Wikimedia Commons, “File: Ashur God.Jpg,” https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashur_god.jpg. This site has a good photo.

³¹¹⁵British Museum, “Broken Obelisk,”

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=269322001&objectId=277955&partId=1. Photos of this very important artifact are on this site.

³¹¹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 345.

³¹¹⁷Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 248.

³¹¹⁸Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 247.

³¹¹⁹Kronholm, “*qesheth*,” *TDOT* 13: 206.

³¹²⁰Fabry, “*qesheth*,” *TDOT* 13: 206.

³¹²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 317.

³¹²²Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 67.

³¹²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 196.

John Calvin considered such a notion “frivolous.”³¹²⁴ God granted theological significance to a natural sign,³¹²⁵ consecrating what had been a routine occurrence.³¹²⁶ The Lord also did that with circumcision.³¹²⁷ He adopted an already ancient practice as a sign of his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9–10).³¹²⁸

God said, “And it shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth and the bow will be seen in the cloud, then I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and all living beings of flesh. And it shall never again happen that the waters shall become a flood to destroy all flesh. And when the bow is in the cloud, then I will see it to remember an eternal covenant between God and all living beings of flesh which are upon the earth.”

Whenever a rainbow emerges through the clouds, it reminds the Lord of his covenant with Noah.³¹²⁹ This enables him to overlook human depravity.³¹³⁰ God’s response to seeing a sign conforms to what Moses’ original audience experienced only a year earlier, when he passed over every home with blood above the door (Exod 12:12–13).³¹³¹ The Hebrew word “remember” (*zakhar*) does not necessarily mean that something has been forgotten (Cf. Gen 8:1).³¹³² Instead, it reinforces one’s commitment to a covenant (Lev 26:45; Ps 74:2; Jer 14:20–21).³¹³³ God is simultaneously omniscient and involved in the care of those dwelling on the earth.³¹³⁴

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the flood hero heard a goddess declare that she would use her necklace as a sign to remind her of the flood:

“The gods smelled the savor. The gods smelled the sweet savor. The gods crowded like flies about the sacrificer. When at length as the great goddess arrived, she lifted up the great jewels which [the god] Anu had fashioned to her liking, ‘Ye gods here, as surely as this lapis upon my neck I shall not forget, I shall be mindful of these days, forgetting (them) never.’”³¹³⁵

Much as the Lord employs the rainbow, the goddess vowed to use her necklace as a sign to remind her of the flood.³¹³⁶

God’s covenant with Noah concluded with a summary statement concerning the rainbow. “And God said to Noah, ‘This [is] the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh which is upon the earth.’”

Throughout the pronouncement of this covenant, the Lord never gave Noah any commands to obey. It was strictly unilateral.³¹³⁷ God’s covenant with Noah is the first of several such pacts which the Lord has made throughout redemptive history. Ultimately, they shall

³¹²⁴Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 299, <https://archive.org/stream/commentariesonfi01calvuoft#page/298/mode/2up>.

³¹²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 345.

³¹²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³¹²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 345.

³¹²⁸Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 66–7.

³¹²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 196.

³¹³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³¹³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 319.

³¹³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

³¹³³H. Eising, “זָכַר” (*zakhar*), *TDOT* 4:70–82, 70.

³¹³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146.

³¹³⁵E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:159–65, 95.

³¹³⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 345.

³¹³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 319.

culminate with the renewal of all creation when he releases the earth from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:19–23). With each covenant which God enacts, we come one step closer to his plan for world-wide blessing (Rev 21:1–5).³¹³⁸

Read Gen 9:12–17. How long shall this covenant continue? With whom did the Lord make it? Do you think the ANE concept of a god’s upturned bow corresponds to the sign of the rainbow? Why or why not? How can God remember something when he is omniscient? What encouragement does this passage give to you?

The World Destroyed by Water

4) 2 Pet 3:5–6: The author of 2 Peter wrote these verses to counter the belief that waiting for the return of Christ is absurd because “everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Pet 3:3–4).³¹³⁹ He employed three main points in his counterargument that the Lord does indeed intervene in human history.³¹⁴⁰ Only by opting to ignore God’s activities in creating the universe and unleashing the flood could his opponents reach their conclusions.³¹⁴¹

Much in this passage proves difficult to interpret, especially in 2 Pet 3:5.³¹⁴² The theory regarding how the universe works which people of that era accepted accounts for much of our frustration.³¹⁴³

He began by writing,³¹⁴⁴ “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice (*lanthanō*) that the heavens and earth were long ago formed out of water and by means of water by the word of God.” This did not involve simply forgetting but deliberately choosing to reject the truth.³¹⁴⁵ Josephus (37–100 AD) used the word in a similar way when he wrote, “He could not conceal (*lanthanō*) his being a liar from Vespasian, who condemned him to die.”³¹⁴⁶

“Heavens and earth” forms a word-pair which encompasses all of creation (Matt 5:18; Matt 11:25; Rev 20:11–15).³¹⁴⁷ This common literary device, called a merism, names polar opposites, with the understanding that they include everything between them, such as “from A to Z.”³¹⁴⁸ In other words, the Lord spoke the entire cosmos into existence (e.g. Ps 33:6–9; Prov

³¹³⁸Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 76.

³¹³⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 168.

³¹⁴⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 366–7.

³¹⁴¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 297.

³¹⁴²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 168.

³¹⁴³Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 302.

³¹⁴⁴Whether this letter was written by Peter or only in his name remains a hotly debated topic, even among evangelical New Testament scholars.

³¹⁴⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 169.

³¹⁴⁶Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, 425.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0150%3Awhiston+section%3D76>.

³¹⁴⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “οὐρανός” (*ouranos*), *BDAG*, 737.

³¹⁴⁸Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 302.

8:27–29; Heb 11:3).³¹⁴⁹ “And God said” occurs nine times in Gen 1 alone.³¹⁵⁰ Our world exists only because God said it should.³¹⁵¹ The scoffers in Peter’s day asserted that the universe does not change. In reality, the cosmos requires divine intervention for its existence and stability (Col 1:15–17).³¹⁵²

The difficult aspect of 2 Pet 3:5 occurs with the assertion that the heavens and earth were “formed out of and by means of water.”³¹⁵³ It alludes to the account where the Lord separated water vapor from liquid water (Gen 1:2, 6–8).³¹⁵⁴ This passage does not assert that water is the element which forms the earth.³¹⁵⁵ Instead, God separated and gathered the waters to form dry ground (Gen 1:9–10).³¹⁵⁶

Yet, the clearest reason to assert that the Lord created the world by means of water and his word is that the phrase parallels the way he destroyed it in Noah’s day (Gen 7:4, 11–12).³¹⁵⁷ In his second argument that God remains at work in our world, the author continued, “Through which the world (*kosmos*) of that time was destroyed by being flooded with water.” Noah’s flood provided an important point against the mockers’ contention that this world system will always continue.³¹⁵⁸

The Greek verb translated as “was destroyed” (*apollumi*) has multiple meanings, some of which reflect less than annihilation.³¹⁵⁹ These include “to ruin, to kill, to lose, to fail to obtain,” and “to perish” (Rom 14:15; Matt 2:13; Luke 15:8–9; 2 John 8; Matt 26:52).³¹⁶⁰ Many of these nuances do not indicate that an object ceased to exist, but that it no longer remains in its initial state.³¹⁶¹ The flood did not annihilate the earth or all its inhabitants. Noah, his family, and some animals survived (Gen 8:15–19).³¹⁶² While it wrought judgment against fallen humanity, the deluge did not wreak complete and utter destruction upon the earth (Gen 7:21–24; Gen 8:6–11).³¹⁶³ Consequently, the world (*kosmos*) in this passage refers to corrupt humanity, not to the planet (Cf. 2 Pet 2:5).³¹⁶⁴

Creation and the destruction of the ungodly both occurred through water and the word of

³¹⁴⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 15.

³¹⁵⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 376.

³¹⁵¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 298.

³¹⁵²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 374–5.

³¹⁵³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 170.

³¹⁵⁴Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 297.

³¹⁵⁵Leonhard Goppelt, “ὕδωρ” (*hudor*), *TDNT* 8:314–33, 328.

³¹⁵⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 297.

³¹⁵⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 170.

³¹⁵⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 376.

³¹⁵⁹Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 468, note 77, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³¹⁶⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀπόλλυμι” (*apollumi*), *BDAG*, 115–6.

³¹⁶¹Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 468, note 77, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³¹⁶²Gale Z. Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” *JETS* 40, no. 1 (3 January 1997): 53–4, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³¹⁶³Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 467, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³¹⁶⁴Hermann Sasse, “κόσμος” (*kosmos*), *TDNT* 3:867–98, 890.

God.³¹⁶⁵ The Lord used them in the days of Noah to purge the world from unrighteousness.³¹⁶⁶ Peter's interest concerned the judgment of the wicked, not cosmology.³¹⁶⁷

a) Read 2 Pet 3:5–6. Why did Peter address the issue of the destruction of the world? What did he mean by saying that the earth was formed out of water and by means of water? In what sense was the world destroyed in the days of Noah?

Reserved for Fire

b) 2 Pet 3:7: This verse says, “But now the heavens and the earth by his word are being reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and [the] destruction of ungodly people.” The author of 2 Peter divided human history into three periods separated by two cataclysmic events (Cf. 2 Pet 3:5–6).³¹⁶⁸ People who deny the return of Christ shall be caught as unaware as those in Noah's lifetime (Matt 24:37–39).³¹⁶⁹ God will surely intervene once again.³¹⁷⁰ In the future, God shall bring about a conflagration of fire, rather than a flood to destroy humanity.³¹⁷¹ The Lord promised to never send a deluge of such magnitude as the one in Noah's era (Gen 9:11–17).³¹⁷²

The center of the debate over this verse concerns what the author meant by his claim that fire will destroy the world.³¹⁷³ Aside from 2 Pet 3:10, this concept of universal annihilation by flames occurs nowhere else in Scripture.³¹⁷⁴ Divine judgment by fire does appear in the Old Testament (OT) (Gen 19:24–25; Lev 10:1–2; Num 16:3–7, 35).³¹⁷⁵ In some instances, a metaphorical judgment by fire reflects the worst kind of disaster (Isa 30:30–33; Isa 66:15–16; Nah 1:6; Zeph 3:8).³¹⁷⁶

Bauckham asserts that the Lord will use fire to destroy the planet. He admits that OT views of the end-times do not include such a universal conflagration but instead point to the destruction of wicked people. He cites Jewish and Greek sources as the origin of his theory.³¹⁷⁷

A first century AD Jewish prophecy attributed to Eve says, “On account of your

³¹⁶⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 171.

³¹⁶⁶Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 54, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³¹⁶⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 299.

³¹⁶⁸Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 299. Whether the author of 2 Peter was the apostle or someone writing in his name remains controversial, even among evangelical scholars.

³¹⁶⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 171.

³¹⁷⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 377.

³¹⁷¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 171.

³¹⁷²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 377–8.

³¹⁷³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 172.

³¹⁷⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 378.

³¹⁷⁵Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 300.

³¹⁷⁶Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 177–8.

³¹⁷⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 300.

conspiracies, our Lord will bring upon your race the wrath of his judgment, first by water, and second by fire. By these two will the Lord judge all the human race.”³¹⁷⁸

Early Christian authors also disagreed on this topic.³¹⁷⁹ Justin Martyr, a second century AD apologist, wrote:

“Wherefore God delays causing the confusion and destruction of the whole world, by which the wicked angels and demons and men shall cease to exist...because of the seed of the Christians, who know that they are the cause of preservation in nature. Since, if it were not so...the fire of judgment would descend and utterly dissolve all things, even as formerly the flood left no one but him only with his family who is by us called Noah...from whom again such vast numbers have sprung, some of them evil and others good. For so we say that there will be the conflagration.”³¹⁸⁰

Irenaeus (ca 125–202 AD), condemned such thinking.³¹⁸¹ He contended, “Neither is the substance nor the essence of the creation annihilated (for faithful and true is he who established it), but *the fashion of the world passes away*.”³¹⁸²

Gnosticism was a popular view which claimed that all matter is inherently evil.³¹⁸³ Consequently, its adherents believed that Jesus came as a purely spiritual being. They asserted that he neither came to earth in bodily form nor suffered death on the cross (John 1:14; Col 2:8–9; 1 John 4:1–3).³¹⁸⁴ Gnostics concluded that the cosmos would be destroyed, allowing their inner “sparks of light” to return to the Kingdom of Light. They posed a significant threat to the church, causing Paul to warn Timothy to avoid such beliefs (1 Tim 6:20–21).³¹⁸⁵

Irenaeus wrote that his Gnostic opponents believed, “When these things have taken place as described, then shall that fire which lies hidden in the world blaze forth and burn; and while destroying all matter, shall also be extinguished along with it, and have no further existence.”³¹⁸⁶

Instead, Irenaeus affirmed that God shall restore the world (Cf. Rom 8:16–22): “Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are derived from heretical discourses, they are both ignorant of God’s dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption...it is necessary to tell them respecting those things, that it behooves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise

³¹⁷⁸Berlie Custis, Gary A. Anderson, and R. Layton, trans., *The Life of Adam and Eve* (1995), 49.3, <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/anderson/vita/english/vita.lat.html>.

³¹⁷⁹Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 467, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³¹⁸⁰Justin Martyr, “The Second Apology of Justin Martyr,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (ANF01)* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; trans. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1886), 7.1–3, 190, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/190>.

³¹⁸¹Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Gnosticism,” *DNTB*, 414–8, 414. Note that *gnōsis* (<https://archive.org/stream/greekenglishlex00liddrich#page/314>) means “knowledge” in Greek.

³¹⁸²Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (ANF01)* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; trans. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1886), 5.36.1, 566, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/566>. Italics original.

³¹⁸³Kurt Rudolph, “Gnosticism,” *ABD* 2:1033–40, 1033.

³¹⁸⁴Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Gnosticism,” *New Dictionary of Theology (NDT)*, 272–4, 273.

³¹⁸⁵Kurt Rudolph, “Gnosticism,” *ABD* 2:1033.

³¹⁸⁶Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 1.7.1, 325, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/324>.

again to behold God in this creation which is *renovated*, and that the judgment should take place afterwards.

“For it is just that *in that very creation* in which they toiled or were afflicted...they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being *restored to its primeval condition*, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous.”³¹⁸⁷

The theologian Origen (ca. 184–254 AD) wrote that flames will consume only evil things:

“But as it is in mockery that [the Greek philosopher] Celsus says we speak of ‘God coming down like a torturer bearing fire...’ We shall make a few remarks, sufficient to enable our hearers to form an idea of the defense which disposes of the ridicule of Celsus against us...The divine word says that our God is ‘a consuming fire,’ and that ‘He draws rivers of fire before Him;’ nay, that He even entereth in as ‘a refiner’s fire...’ to purify His own people.

“But when He is said to be a ‘consuming fire,’ we inquire what are the things which are appropriate to be consumed by God. And we assert that they are wickedness, and the works which result from it...For [1 Cor 3:10–15 concludes] ‘The fire will try each man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work be burned, he shall suffer loss...’ And, in like manner, ‘rivers of fire’ are said to be before God who will thoroughly cleanse away the evil which is intermingled throughout the whole soul.”³¹⁸⁸

Earlier in this letter, the author warned of “heresies which lead to destruction” (2 Pet 2:1–3). Paul also mentioned the eternal condemnation of false teachers (Cf. 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 4:3; 2 Thess 2:8–10).³¹⁸⁹ Even the OT passages which speak of punishment by fire at the end of this age refer to the destruction of wicked people, not of the cosmos (Isa 66:10–24; Ezek 38:18–23; Zeph 1:14–18; Mal 4:1–3).³¹⁹⁰

Just as the Lord distinguished between righteous Noah and his contemporaries, so he will do on the day of judgment (Gen 6:1–8; Matt 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50).³¹⁹¹ “Destruction” (*apōleia*) consists of physical death and eternal separation from God (Matt 7:13–14; Heb 10:37–39; Rev 17:8). Mockers who scoff at the notion of the return of Christ shall experience his fury (Rev 20:11–15).³¹⁹²

The Essenes of Qumran (second century BC–70 AD), held similar views. In this Hymn of Thanksgiving, they attributed the coming destruction to the devil:

“I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit, and from the hell of

³¹⁸⁷Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (ANF01)*, 5.32.1, 561, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/560>. Italics mine.

³¹⁸⁸Origen, *Against Celsus* (trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 4.13, 502, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefathe00menzgoog#page/n478/mode/2up>.

³¹⁸⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 93.

³¹⁹⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 378.

³¹⁹¹D. A. Carson, “2 Peter,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1058.

³¹⁹²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 172.

Abaddon. Thou hast raised me up to everlasting height. I walk on limitless level ground, and I know there is hope for him whom Thou hast shaped from dust for the everlasting Council. Thou hast cleansed a perverse spirit of great sin that it may stand with the host of the Holy Ones, and that it may enter into community with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven...And yet I, a creature of clay, what am I? Kneaded with water, what is my worth and my might? For I have stood in the realm of wickedness and my lot was with the damned...

“It was a time of the wrath of all Satan and the bonds of death tightened without any escape...The torrents of Satan shall reach to all sides of the world. In all their channels a consuming fire shall destroy every tree, green and barren, on their banks; unto the end of their courses it shall scourge with flames of fire and shall consume the foundations of the earth and the expanse of dry land.

“The bases of the mountains shall blaze and the roots of the rocks shall turn to torrents of pitch; it shall devour as far as the great Abyss. The torrents of Satan shall break into Abaddon, and the deeps of the Abyss shall groan amid the roar of heaving mud. The land shall cry out because of the calamity fallen upon the world, and all its deeps shall howl. And all those upon it shall rave and shall perish amid the great misfortune.

“For God shall sound His mighty voice, and His holy abode shall thunder with the truth of His glory. The heavenly hosts shall cry out and the world’s foundations shall stagger and sway. The war of the heavenly warriors shall scourge the earth; and it shall not end before the appointed destruction which shall be forever and without compare.

“I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou art as a fortified wall to me, and as an iron bar against all destroyers...Thou hast set my feet upon rock ...that I may walk in the way of eternity and in the paths which Thou hast chosen...”³¹⁹³

The *Babylonian Talmud* is even more explicit. Quoting a portion of Ps 46, it says: “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, as it is written, ‘Therefore we will not fear when the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.’”³¹⁹⁴

God and his heavenly forces shall destroy everything evil, but the Lord’s people will emerge safely.³¹⁹⁵ Just as our planet survived Noah’s flood, so shall God renew it when Jesus returns.³¹⁹⁶ When the apostle John began his description of the new heaven and earth in Rev 21:1, the Greek word he used for “new” (*kainos*) denotes something distinctly and qualitatively different. It does not mean that the object in question did not previously exist.³¹⁹⁷ Thus, our earth

³¹⁹³Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 1QH2:5–7, 197–9, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n311.

³¹⁹⁴b. Sanhedrin 92b, https://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_92.html.

³¹⁹⁵Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 50, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³¹⁹⁶Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 467, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³¹⁹⁷Johannes Behm, “καίνος” (*kainos*), *TDNT* 3:447–50, 447.

will be transformed, even as we will have been (1 Cor 15:50–57; 2 Cor 5:14–17; 1 Thess 4:13–18).³¹⁹⁸

a) Read 2 Pet 3:7. How did Noah’s flood parallel the destruction to come? Do you believe that the earth will be destroyed or renewed in the age to come? Why? What will happen to everything evil? Why can all of creation, including those who belong to Christ, have hope?

God’s Perception of Time

b) 2 Pet 3:8: In these verses, the author of 2 Peter addressed the turmoil within the Christian community resulting from the mockers’ question (2 Pet 3:3–4).³¹⁹⁹ He feared the confusion spread by the false teachers might undermine their faith.³²⁰⁰ Even steadfast believers can experience doubts regarding the delay in Jesus’s return.³²⁰¹ Those who remain committed to Jesus can be swayed by scoffers, who deliberately choose to forget the truth (2 Pet 2:1–3; 2 Pet 3:5).³²⁰² We need reminders concerning what Scripture teaches about the return of Christ to prevent us from discounting the notion of his imminent return.³²⁰³

This issue grabbed the attention of the original audience. In the previous letter attributed to Peter, the apostle had written, “The end of all [things] is near” (1 Pet 4:7). Furthermore, these believers may have experienced intense persecution, which dramatically increased their desire for Christ to return and set everything right. Had God forgotten his promise?³²⁰⁴

The author gave two reasons for the long wait.³²⁰⁵ First, to reassure them, he alluded to Ps 90:4.³²⁰⁶ This verse occurs in a song ascribed to Moses. It depicts the Lord’s reliability throughout our ephemeral lives (Ps 90:1–17).³²⁰⁷ He wrote, “But you, do not let this one [thing] escape your notice, beloved, that one day with the Lord [is] like a thousand years and a thousand years [is] like one day.” Our perception of time differs vastly from God’s. What seems like an age to us consists of a moment for him.³²⁰⁸

³¹⁹⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1040.

³¹⁹⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 185. Whether the apostle or someone writing in Peter’s name wrote this letter remains in dispute, even among evangelical scholars.

³²⁰⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 378–9.

³²⁰¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 185.

³²⁰²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 185–6.

³²⁰³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

³²⁰⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²⁰⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

³²⁰⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 306.

³²⁰⁷Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1058.

³²⁰⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

Some Jewish and early Christian scholars took Ps 90:4 quite literally,³²⁰⁹ using the verse to predict world history.³²¹⁰ By replacing the word “day” with “one-thousand years,” they concocted some interesting theories.³²¹¹ For example, they concluded that Adam lived for roughly a thousand years after his exile from Eden because that was still the same day in the Lord’s sight (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 5:3–5).³²¹²

Others viewed the six days of creation in Gen 1 as a template for human history (Gen 1:31).³²¹³ They theorized that after six thousand years, a one thousand-year millennium would arrive (Rev 20:4–6).³²¹⁴ This messianic age—called The Day of the Lord—would correspond to the seventh day, the first Sabbath (Gen 2:1–3).³²¹⁵

Consequently, Irenaeus (ca. 125–202 AD) wrote:

“For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says, ‘Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all his works.’ This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.”³²¹⁶

Such interpretations have a fatal flaw.³²¹⁷ Neither the author of 2 Peter nor Moses wrote, “One day is a thousand years.”³²¹⁸ Instead, they wrote, “One day is like (*hōs*) a thousand years.”³²¹⁹ They made an analogy, rather than a literal assertion.³²²⁰

The creation of the sun and moon on “a fourth day” highlights the difficulty of a precise definition for the term “day,” as light had been present since “a first day” (Gen 1:1–5, 14–19).” In addition, the Hebrew word “*yom*” often loses the specific meaning “day,”³²²¹ becoming a vague term for “time” or “moment.”³²²² 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 particular person or thing.³²²³

Consequently, the syntax of Genesis 1 permits a range of ideas in the length of time during which God created.³²²⁴ The lack of a definite article also permitted Moses to depict the

³²⁰⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 306.

³²¹⁰Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²¹¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 306.

³²¹²Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1059.

³²¹³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²¹⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

³²¹⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²¹⁶Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 5.28.3, 557, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/556>.

³²¹⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

³²¹⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²¹⁹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ὥς*” (*hōs*), *BDAG*, 1103–6, 1104.

³²²⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

³²²¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*יֹמִים*” (*yom*), *BDB*, 398–401,

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

³²²²Holladay, “*יֹמִים*” (*yom*), *CHALOT*, 529.

³²²³Gesenius, *GKC*, 407, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/406/mode/2up>.

³²²⁴Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 49.

events of days one through five in a sequence other than their chronological order for literary purposes.³²²⁵ Presenting the process in a series of “days” accommodates the finite thinking of human minds.³²²⁶

God sees the passage of time much differently than we do.³²²⁷ Psalm 90:4 simply compares the Lord’s infinitude and steadfastness to humanity’s ephemeral nature. One cannot use that song to deduce the length of a day in creation while remaining faithful to the meaning of the text.³²²⁸ Since God transcends time, the delay in Christ’s return should not disturb us. When discussing this topic, Jesus told a parable which warned his disciples to prepare for his arrival at any moment (Matt 24:36–43). He immediately followed that story with another which taught them to expect a long wait (Matt 25:1–13).³²²⁹

However, the author of this letter did not chide his readers for assuming Jesus would return soon.³²³⁰ He and Paul both expected Christ to come back to earth in their lifetimes (2 Pet 3:12–15; 1 Thess 2:19; 1 Thess 4:13–18).³²³¹

God allows millennia to pass as he achieves his aims.³²³² Christ’s decision not to return before now does not mean that he never will.³²³³ Therefore, we must develop patience.³²³⁴ What appears to take an eternity to us remains but a moment for God.

Read 2 Pet 3:8. How does God view time? What impact does this have upon you as you wait for Christ’s return?

The Lord has Patience

d) 2 Pet 3:9: In this verse, the author of 2 Peter continued his theme of God’s purposeful delay (2 Pet 3:3–9).³²³⁵ He wrote, “The Lord does not delay his promise, as some consider slowness, but he has patience toward you, not desiring anyone to be destroyed but all to come to repentance.” The beginning of this verse alludes to Hab 2:3, a passage in which God responded to the prophet’s cry for deliverance from ongoing injustice.³²³⁶ Just as the Lord assured Habakkuk that he had a reason for the delay, the author of 2 Peter urged his readers not to misunderstand their long wait.³²³⁷ Contrary to the mockers’ claims, the lag does not mean that

³²²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 77.

³²²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61.

³²²⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²²⁸Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1059.

³²²⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

³²³⁰Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186–7.

³²³¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379–80.

³²³²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

³²³³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

³²³⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186–7.

³²³⁵Whether the apostle or someone writing in Peter’s name penned this letter remains controversial, even among evangelical scholars.

³²³⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 310.

³²³⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

God reneged on his promise.³²³⁸ Christ shall return when the time is right (Acts 1:6–8).³²³⁹

The author did not merely contradict the scoffers. He provided his readers with a theological explanation for the reprieve.³²⁴⁰ Long-suffering as an attribute of God has a rich Old Testament tradition (Exod 34:4–7; Ps 86:1–5, 14–17; Ps 103:6–14; Jon 3:10–4:2; Neh 9:16–17).³²⁴¹ Therefore, one should not misconstrue the Lord’s restraint with those who oppose him as negligence.³²⁴² He withholds judgment to give them time to experience a change of heart (Acts 3:17–26).³²⁴³

Concerning the people who lived while Noah was building the ark (Gen 6:1–4), the Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) wrote, “But perhaps a hundred and twenty years are not the universal limit of human life, but only of the men living at that time, who were later to perish in the flood, after so great a number of years, which a benevolent benefactor prolonged, allowing for repentance for sins.”³²⁴⁴ Philo believed that God granted wicked people long life-spans to give them more opportunities to regret and turn away from their sins.

Jewish scholars in the third century AD engaged in similar discussions regarding the age to come. Citing Hab 2:3, one of them asserted:³²⁴⁵

“Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end. For they would say, since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come. But [even so], wait for him, as it is written, ‘Though he tarry, wait for him.’ Should you say, ‘We look forward [to his coming] but He does not.’ Therefore, Scripture saith, ‘And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.’ But since we look forward to it, and He does likewise, what delays [his coming]? — The Attribute of Justice delays it.”³²⁴⁶

This concept occurred in Greco-Roman thought also. Plutarch (46–122 AD) noted: “Much more becomes it us, beholding God, with whom there is neither dread nor repentance of anything, deferring nevertheless his punishments to future time and admitting delay, to be cautious and circumspect in these matters, and to deem as a divine part of virtue that mildness and long-suffering of which God affords us an example, while by punishing he reforms some few, but by slowly punishing he helpeth and admonisheth many.”³²⁴⁷

These extra-biblical authors recognized God’s delay in judging evil as an opportunity for contrition.

The author of 2 Peter then explained the rationale for God’s patience. He is “not desiring

³²³⁸Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 311.

³²³⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 187.

³²⁴⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 311.

³²⁴¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 312.

³²⁴²J. Horst, “μακροθυμέω” (*makrothumeō*), *TDNT* 4:374–87, 386.

³²⁴³Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 312.

³²⁴⁴Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Trans. Ralph Marcus (LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1953), 1.91, 60, <https://archive.org/stream/questionsanswers00philuoft#page/60>.

³²⁴⁵Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 311.

³²⁴⁶*b*. Sanhedrin 97b, http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_97.html.

³²⁴⁷Plutarch, “De Sera Numinis Vindicta,” in *Plutarch’s Morals* (ed. William W. Goodwin; Boston; Cambridge: Little, Brown; John Wilson & son, 1874), 5, 147–8, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0302%3Asection%3D5>.

anyone to be destroyed but all to come to repentance.” In this instance, “to be destroyed” (*apollumi*) refers to eternal ruin (1 Cor 1:18–19; Matt 10:28; James 4:12).³²⁴⁸ Christ’s delay reflects God’s deep concern for humanity, rather than his indifference to our plight (Joel 2:11–14; Rom 2:3–5).³²⁴⁹

Repentance (*metanoia*) in the New Testament typically consists of a religious and moral conversion which inaugurates a new relationship with God.³²⁵⁰ Total surrender to the way of the Lord results in forgiveness and a radical laying aside of evil. It transforms a person’s actions, thoughts, and words (Luke 24:46–47; Acts 5:30–32; 2 Tim 2:24–26).³²⁵¹ Only by such a change of heart can we receive eternal life and escape God’s wrath (Matt 3:1–12; Acts 11:15–18).³²⁵²

However, the author did not refer to conversion in this verse.³²⁵³ He wrote that God “is patient toward you,” meaning the recipients of his letter.³²⁵⁴ “Anyone” refers to those individuals,³²⁵⁵ not to everyone in the world (Cf. Matt 24:42–51).³²⁵⁶ Thus, he addressed those in the church who vacillated under the influence of the scoffers.³²⁵⁷ He admonished them to repent and to hold fast to their faith (2 Pet 3:14–18; 2 Cor 12:20–21).³²⁵⁸ God patiently gave them time to turn away from the destructive teaching of the mockers.³²⁵⁹

This concept of God calling believers to repent appears frequently in early Christian literature.³²⁶⁰

For example, in the Shepherd of Hermas (ca.100–160 AD), the author declared: “The Lord dwells in men that love peace, because He loved peace; but from the contentious and the utterly wicked He is far distant. Restore to Him, therefore, a spirit sound as ye received it... what do you think the Lord will do to you, who gave you a sound spirit, which you have rendered altogether useless, so that it can be of no service to its possessor?...Will not the Lord, therefore, because of this conduct of yours regarding His Spirit, act in the same way, and deliver you over to death?...”

“Do not trample His mercy under foot, He says, but rather honor Him, because He is so patient with your sins and is not as ye are. Repent, for it is useful to you. All these things which are written above, I, the Shepherd, the messenger of repentance, have showed and spoken *to the servants of God.*”³²⁶¹

This command to people in the early church reflects the call in 2 Pet 3:3–9 to turn aside

³²⁴⁸Albrecht Oepke, “ἀπόλλυμι” (*apollumi*), *TDNT* 1:394–6, 395–6.

³²⁴⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 187.

³²⁵⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀπόλλυμι” (*apollumi*), *BDAG*, 640–1, 640.

³²⁵¹J. Behm and E. Würthwein, “μετάνοια” (*metanoia*), *TDNT* 4:975–1008, 1000, 1002, 1004.

³²⁵²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 381.

³²⁵³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 382.

³²⁵⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 188.

³²⁵⁵Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 313.

³²⁵⁶Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 382.

³²⁵⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 188.

³²⁵⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 382.

³²⁵⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 188.

³²⁶⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 313.

³²⁶¹J. B. Lightfoot, trans., *The Shepherd of Hermas* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1891), 9.32–3, 480, <https://archive.org/stream/apostolicfathers00lighuoft#page/480>. Italics mine.

from believing scoffers and take advantage of the delay in the Lord's return. Someday, God's patience shall come to an end (Isa 14:26–27; Rom 2:4–11).³²⁶²

Read 2 Pet 3:9. Do you think that this passage refers to the Lord giving all people or believers time to repent? Why? How does this admonition speak to you?

The Day of the Lord Will Come

e) **2 Pet 3:10:** Since Christ had not yet returned, the author of 2 Peter did not want his readers to think they could remain complacent.³²⁶³ God has only postponed judgment day (2 Pet 3:3–9).³²⁶⁴ Therefore, he wrote, “But it will come—the day of the Lord—as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be consumed by heat and destroyed. And the earth and the works in it will be found.”

Each aspect of this cosmic imagery presents difficulty for translators and interpreters.³²⁶⁵ When studying apocalyptic (end-times) passages of Scripture, which includes 2 Pet 3,³²⁶⁶ we must understand that their authors used heavily symbolic representations.³²⁶⁷ The author of 2 Peter may not have intended his readers to take what seems to be the fiery end of our planet at face value (Cf. Jer 23:29).³²⁶⁸ Therefore, we will carefully examine each of the images in this passage to differentiate what is likely metaphorical from what we should accept as literal.³²⁶⁹

By placing “it will come” first in the sentence, the author emphasized that Jesus will surely return.³²⁷⁰ In the Old Testament, “the day of the Lord” has several meanings. They include a time of God's vengeance upon Israel's enemies (Isa 13:1, 6–10; Ezek 30:1–5), his judgment on Israel and Judah (Amos 5:18–26; Joel 2:1–11), and a day of deliverance for all creation when he shall vindicate righteous people (Zeph 2:1–3; Mal 4:1–3).³²⁷¹

New Testament (NT) authors used the term when discussing Christ's return (1 Cor 1:4–8; Phil 1:6).³²⁷² Just like a thief, Jesus will come when people least expect him (Matt 24:36–44; 1 Thess 5:1–10).³²⁷³ For those who fail to repent, that day remains a great threat (Rev 3:1–3; Rev 16:15).³²⁷⁴ In this verse, the author of 2 Peter warned his readers against falling into

³²⁶²Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 312–3.

³²⁶³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 383. Whether the apostle or someone writing in Peter's name penned this letter remains controversial, even among evangelical scholars.

³²⁶⁴Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 314.

³²⁶⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

³²⁶⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, 2nd Ed.*, 275.

³²⁶⁷Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 2nd Ed.*, 445.

³²⁶⁸Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 464, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³²⁶⁹Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 2nd Ed.*, 445.

³²⁷⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 383. In Koine Greek, the word “but” cannot come first in a sentence.

³²⁷¹Richard H. Hiers, “Day of the Lord,” *ABD* 2:82–3, 82.

³²⁷²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 383.

³²⁷³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

³²⁷⁴Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*. 314–5.

complacency.³²⁷⁵ The return of Christ can occur at any time.³²⁷⁶

A second century BC Jewish work conveys a similar idea. It says: “Do not say, ‘I sinned, and what happened to me?’ For the Lord is slow to anger. Do not be so confident of atonement that you add sin to sin. Do not say, ‘His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins,’ for both mercy and wrath are with him, and his anger rests on sinners. Do not delay to turn to the Lord, nor postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will go forth, and at the time of punishment you will perish” (Sirach 5:4–7, RSV).

While we know the end of this age will come, we cannot foretell the time of its demise.³²⁷⁷ The signs which precede it are vague enough for us to easily miss them.³²⁷⁸ A careful reading of the discourse in Matt 24 reveals that Jesus primarily discussed what his disciples should not view as indicators that he will return soon.³²⁷⁹

Similarly, a rigorous examination of 2 Pet 3:10 discloses that the author conveyed neither the utter destruction of this planet nor its replacement by a new one.³²⁸⁰ Instead, the Lord shall radically transform our world into an everlasting, unchanging state of perfection.³²⁸¹ Contrary to the scoffers’ inferences, everything shall not always continue as it has (2 Pet 3:3–4).³²⁸²

In one sense, “the heavens” (*ouranos*) refers to the physical sky which envelops the earth.³²⁸³ Yet, Scripture closely links the heavens to the dwelling place of the Lord, giving the typical New Testament (NT) usage of the physical location a cosmic aspect (Matt 3:16–17; John 1:51; Acts 7:55–60). God controls the universe from the heavens (Eph 1:9–11; Heb 9:22–28).³²⁸⁴ Even that unseen spiritual realm shall come to an end (Matt 5:18; Heb 12:25–29).³²⁸⁵

This apocalypse will occur so forcefully and rapidly that the heavens will make a roaring noise.³²⁸⁶ When spoken, “*roizēdon*” evokes the sound of rapid hissing and crackling.³²⁸⁷ Here it alludes to a sudden rush of flames.³²⁸⁸

The Essenes wrote this:

“The deeps of the Abyss shall groan amid the *roar* of heaving mud. The land shall cry out because of the calamity fallen upon the world, and all its deeps shall howl. And all those upon it shall rave and shall perish amid the great misfortune. For *God shall sound His mighty voice*, and His holy abode shall thunder with the truth of His glory. The heavenly hosts shall cry out and the

³²⁷⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 383.

³²⁷⁶Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

³²⁷⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 314.

³²⁷⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 383.

³²⁷⁹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 24:6–8.

³²⁸⁰Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 465, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³²⁸¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 305.

³²⁸²Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 467, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³²⁸³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*οὐρανός*” (*ouranos*), *BDAG*, 737–9, 738.

³²⁸⁴Helmut Traub, “*οὐρανός*” (*ouranos*), *TDNT*, 5:497–543, 514.

³²⁸⁵Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*παρέρχομαι*” (*parerchomai*), *BDAG*, 775–6, 776.

³²⁸⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ροιζήδον*” (*roizēdon*), *BDAG*, 907.

³²⁸⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 315.

³²⁸⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

world’s foundations shall stagger and sway.”³²⁸⁹

It remains uncertain whether the roaring will emanate from the fire or from the thunder of God’s voice as he comes in judgment (Ps 18:12–14; Joel 3:14–16; 1 Thess 4:16).³²⁹⁰

The author of 2 Peter’s next phrase also presents us with questions. He wrote, “and the elements will be consumed by heat and destroyed.” The word translated as “elements” (*stoicheion*) has three meanings.³²⁹¹ In antiquity, Greeks believed that four major elements constituted everything around us.³²⁹²

For example, Plato (ca. 428–348 BC) taught:

“It is necessary...to discuss first the problem of *fire and its fellow elements*. For in regard to these it is hard to say which particular element we ought really to term *water* rather than fire, and which we ought to term any one element rather than each and all of them...First of all, we see that which we now call ‘water’ becoming by condensation...stones and *earth*; and again, this same substance, by dissolving and dilating, becoming breath and *air*; and air through combustion becoming fire; and conversely, fire when contracted and quenched returning back to the form of air and air once more uniting and condensing into cloud and mist; and issuing from these, when still further compressed, flowing water; and from water earth and stones again: thus we see the elements passing on to one another, as it would seem, in an unbroken circle the gift of birth.”³²⁹³

Some scholars believe that the author of 2 Peter wrote of these four building blocks of the universe: water, earth, air, and fire.³²⁹⁴ They assert that God will annihilate everything which exists in a great conflagration.³²⁹⁵

Others contend that these elements consist of the heavenly bodies separate from the earth, such as the sun, moon, stars, and other planets.³²⁹⁶ This fits well with Isa 34:4–5.³²⁹⁷ Concerning the attributes of God, a second century AD bishop asserted, “For the heavens are His work, and the earth is His creation, and the sea is His handiwork; man is His formation and His image; sun, moon and stars are His *elements*.”³²⁹⁸

In another possibility, “elements” describe the religious rituals which enslave people before they place their faith in Christ (Gal 4:1–10; Col 2:8, 20–23).³²⁹⁹ A few scholars claim that

³²⁸⁹Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 1QHa Col xi, 198–9, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n313. Italics mine.

³²⁹⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 315.

³²⁹¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 189.

³²⁹²Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 315.

³²⁹³Plato, “Timaeus,” 49b–d,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0180%3Atext%3DTim.%3Asection%3D49b>.

³²⁹⁴Gerhard Dellling, “στοιχεῖον” (*stoicheion*), *TDNT* 7:666–87, 686.

³²⁹⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 384–5.

³²⁹⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 316.

³²⁹⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 384.

³²⁹⁸Theophilus, “Theophilus to Autolycus,” in *Fathers of the Second Century Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire) (ANF02)* (ed. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 1.4, 90, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather027898mbp#page/n101/mode/2up>.

³²⁹⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 384.

these elements represent hostile spiritual forces which rule over nature.³³⁰⁰ In either case, these views do not fit the context of 2 Peter,³³⁰¹ in which “the elements will be consumed by heat and will be destroyed.”

This leaves us with a mystery to unravel. Did the author of 2 Peter mean that flames will consume our planet to the extent that God will have to create a different earth? Or did he have in mind a purifying fire which prepares this world for renovation?³³⁰² The first verb which the apostle used (*kausoomai*) in the NT only here and in 2 Pet 3:12.³³⁰³ It means “to be beset with burning” or “to suffer from great heat.”³³⁰⁴

Lucian, a second century AD Greek satirical author declared, “For by all I can learn *burning* is the quickest of deaths; a man has but to open his mouth, and all is over.”³³⁰⁵

In contrast, *luō*, the second verb in the clause, has a wide range of meanings.³³⁰⁶ These include “to loosen” (Matt 16:19), “to untie” (Mark 1:7), “to set free” (1 Cor 7:27), “to destroy” (John 2:19), “to break into its parts” (Acts 27:41), “to abolish” (Acts 2:24), “to put an end to” (Matt 5:19) and “to ransom” (Rev 1:5).³³⁰⁷ While the author wrote of a physical change, *luō* does not usually indicate annihilation. Notably, he employed the stronger verb (*apollumi*) in 2 Pet 3:6–7 when he described what Noah’s flood did to the world and its inhabitants.³³⁰⁸

At this point, 2 Pet 3:10 gets really complicated, which is why so many Bible translations differ on the last word of this verse (Cf. NASB, CSB, and NIV).³³⁰⁹ Ancient Greek manuscripts which scholars consider fairly reliable include at least five different options.³³¹⁰ The most likely candidate to reflect the original verb is “to be found” (*heuriskō*).³³¹¹ It appears in the earliest and most authoritative manuscripts, including two from the fourth century, *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*.³³¹² This yields a translation which says, “and the earth and the works in it will be found.”

Many modern versions include translations with little support from the Greek manuscripts because “will be found” does not seem to fit the context of the passage.³³¹³ However, among text critical scholars, this is precisely why that word is most likely correct, especially coupled with the manuscript evidence. When faced with difficult passages, Greek scribes often substituted words which made more sense in the context of what they were

³³⁰⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 316.

³³⁰¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 190.

³³⁰²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 385.

³³⁰³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “καυσόω” (*kausōō*)” *BDAG*, 536.

³³⁰⁴Johannes Schneider, “καυσόω” (*kausōō*)” *TDNT* 3:644.

³³⁰⁵Lucian, “The Death of Peregrine,” in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata, Volume IV* (trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler; Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), 21, 86, <https://archive.org/stream/worksoflucianofs04luciuoft#page/86>. Italics mine.

³³⁰⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “λύω” (*luō*), *BDAG*, 606–7.

³³⁰⁷Friedrich Büchsel, “λύω” (*luō*), *TDNT*, 4:335–7.

³³⁰⁸Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 53.

³³⁰⁹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 190.

³³¹⁰Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus, 28th edition*, 714.

³³¹¹Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd. Ed.*, 636.

³³¹²Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus, 28th edition*, 714. Fourth century AD.

³³¹³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 385.

transcribing.³³¹⁴

Significantly, only one papyrus (P⁷², 3rd–4th century) has the word “destroyed” (*luō*) after “will be found”.³³¹⁵ “Will be burned up” (*katakaiō*) appears in several modern translations.³³¹⁶ Yet, the earliest manuscript in its favor dates from the fifth century. A few manuscripts include another form of *katakaiō*, but these occur no earlier than the tenth century.³³¹⁷ Furthermore, a scribe would be highly unlikely to substitute “will be found” for “will be burned up.”³³¹⁸ “Will vanish” (*aphanizō*) occurs in one fifth century document (C).³³¹⁹

Since the manuscripts do not include punctuation, a few commentators suggest adding a third person pronoun and a question mark. This yields the question, “Will [it] be found?” However, most experts reject that notion.³³²⁰ Some scholars suggest adding the word “not” (*ou*) to “will be found” to make sense of the text.³³²¹ Only two ancient witnesses, texts in the Sahidic language and one Syriac manuscript, support that reading.³³²²

The most recent update of the *Novum Testamentum Graecae* (NA28) includes the word “not,”³³²³ in contrast to the 27th edition.³³²⁴ This reflects a new technique which does not rely upon additional manuscript evidence.³³²⁵ Despite adhering to the NA²⁸ for the entire NT, the United Bible Society’s *Greek New Testament, Fifth Rev. Ed. (UBS 5)* gives the word “not” a “C” rating in its textual apparatus.³³²⁶ The decision in this case remains highly controversial among textual criticism scholars, with many supporting the previous reading of *heuriskō*. Most experts strenuously avoid adding words to the ancient Greek manuscripts, unless there is no other way to understand the text.³³²⁷ Consequently, the *Tyndale House Greek New Testament* continues to omit the word “not.”³³²⁸

The United Bible Society gave “will be found” a grade of “D” for authenticity, noting that it “seems to be devoid of meaning in the context.” Yet, as the oldest available reading,³³²⁹ that word remains the best option we have.³³³⁰ However, examining other appearances of the

³³¹⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 191.

³³¹⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 385.

³³¹⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 317.

³³¹⁷Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus, 28th edition*, 714.

³³¹⁸Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 317.

³³¹⁹Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus, 28th edition*, 714.

³³²⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 386.

³³²¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 317.

³³²²Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd. Ed.*, 636.

³³²³Erwin Nestle et al, *Novum Testamentum Graecae, 28th Ed (NA28)* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013), 714, <http://www.nestle-aland.com/en/read-na28-online/text/bibeltext/lesen/stelle/71/30001/39999/>.

³³²⁴Erwin Nestle Eberhard Nestle Barbara Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graecae, 27th Edition (NA27)* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 614.

³³²⁵Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus, 28th edition*, 714.

³³²⁶Barbara Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament, 5th Rev. Ed.* (Muenster, Germany; Stuttgart: Institute for New Testament Textual Research, 2014), 781.

³³²⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 318.

³³²⁸Dirk Jongkind and Peter Williams, eds., *The Greek New Testament Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Crossway, 2017), 314.

³³²⁹Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd. Ed.*, 636.

³³³⁰Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 468, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

verb minimizes the enigmatic nature of this conundrum. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament and in the New Testament, “to be found” (*heuriskō*) often connotes having one’s morals or religious nature scrutinized. Either people or God can conduct this judicial investigation (Gen 44:16; Dan 5:22–28; Ezra 10:17–19; 1 Cor 15:15; 1 Pet 1:7–8; Rev 14:5).³³³¹

A similar concept occurs in the Psalms of Solomon, a first century BC Jewish work: “Sinners rose up against us because of our sins; they laid hold of us and expelled us; those to whom you did not promise removed us with force, and they did not glorify your honored name...They desolated the throne of David in arrogance...And you, God, will cast them down and remove their seed from the earth...You will repay them according to their sins, God, so that *it will be found* against them according to their works. God will have no pity on them; he searched their seed and let not one of them go; the Lord is faithful in all his judgments that he makes upon the earth.”³³³²

Consequently, we can interpret this clause in 2 Pet 3:10 as, “and the earth and the works in it will be laid bare” (Rom 2:14–16; Heb 4:8–13).³³³³ Our planet has served the center stage throughout human history. A scorching flame shall reveal all the evil which people have perpetrated upon the earth, exposing their sin (Isa 2:19–21; Isa 26:20–21; 1 Cor 3:10–15; Rev 6:12–17).³³³⁴

Indeed, the author used the same verb to admonish the recipients of this letter to be found blameless in God’s sight at the time of Christ’s return (2 Pet 3:14).³³³⁵ Thus, he emphasized the impending judgment of people, rather than the destruction of the universe.³³³⁶ The same conflagration which will annihilate unrighteousness will purify the earth (Zech 13:8–9; Mal 3:1–6; 1 Cor 3:10–17).³³³⁷ Those whom the Lord sees as righteous shall survive this process.³³³⁸

This interpretation meshes with the Wisdom of Solomon, an apocryphal Jewish work (2nd century BC–1st century AD):

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and *found them* worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace, he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation, they will shine forth and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever” (Wisdom 3:1–

³³³¹Herbert Preisker, “εὐρίσκω” (*heuriskō*), *TDNT* 2:769–70.

³³³²Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Ps Sol 17:6–12.

³³³³Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 468, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³³⁴Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 319–20.

³³³⁵Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 50, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³³⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 319.

³³³⁷Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 54, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³³⁸Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10,” 408, www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Wolters/AMW2Peter3.pdf.

8, NRSVCE).

The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 80–120 AD) affirms this:

“It is good therefore to learn the ordinances of the Lord...and to walk in them. For he that doeth these things shall be glorified in the kingdom of God; whereas he that chooseth their opposites shall perish together with his works. For this cause is the resurrection, for this the recompense... The day is at hand, in which everything shall be destroyed together with the Evil One. The Lord is at hand and his reward...And may God, who is Lord of the whole world, give you wisdom, judgment, learning, knowledge of His ordinances, patience. And be ye taught of God, seeking diligently what the Lord requireth of you, and act that *ye may be found* in the day of judgment.”³³³⁹

On the day of the Lord, God will lay bare the heavens and earth.³³⁴⁰ Everything will be exposed as it really is and be purified from all evil, just as fire removes the dross from metal ore. During Noah’s flood, the Lord cleansed the world by water (Gen 7:17–24; Gen 8:6–11). In the future, he shall decontaminate it with fire.³³⁴¹ Total annihilation shall not be necessary (Rom 8:16–25).³³⁴² Instead, God shall renew the heavens and the earth (Rev 21:1–5).³³⁴³

Read 2 Pet 3:10. What are the implications of the day of the Lord coming like a thief? How will fire affect the cosmos? What will this conflagration do to people? How does knowing this impact you?

Hastening the Day of God

f) 2 Pet 3:11–12: After discussing the return of Jesus in 2 Pet 3:3–10,³³⁴⁴ the author of this letter shifted his attention to how we should respond to that knowledge.³³⁴⁵ He wrote, “Since all these [things] are being destroyed (*luō*) in this way, it is necessary for you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”

Luō has a wide range of meanings.³³⁴⁶ These include “to loosen” (Matt 16:19), “to untie” (Mark 1:7), “to set free” (1 Cor 7:27), “to destroy” (John 2:19), “to break into its parts” (Acts 27:41), “to abolish” (Acts 2:24), “to put an end to” (Matt 5:19) and “to ransom” (Rev 1:5).³³⁴⁷

³³³⁹J. B. Lightfoot, trans., “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. 2* (New York; London: MacMillan, 1891), 21:1–6, 287–8, <https://archive.org/stream/apostolicfathers00lighuoft#page/286>. Italics mine.

³³⁴⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 386.

³³⁴¹Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10,” 407–8, www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Wolters/AMW2Peter3.pdf.

³³⁴²Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 55, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³⁴³Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 469, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³⁴⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 196.

³³⁴⁵Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1059. Whether Peter or someone writing in his name penned 2 Peter remains highly controversial even among evangelical scholars.

³³⁴⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*λύω*” (*luō*), *BDAG*, 606–7.

³³⁴⁷Friedrich Büchsel, “*λύω*” (*luō*), *TDNT*, 4:335–7.

While the author wrote of a physical change, *luō* does not usually indicate annihilation. Notably, he employed the stronger verb (*apollumi*) in 2 Pet 3:6–7 when he described what Noah’s flood did to the world and its inhabitants.³³⁴⁸

Given that the author used the present tense for “being destroyed,” he proclaimed that God is already undoing our current system.³³⁴⁹ The process of dissolution began in Eden (Gen 3:17–19; 2 Cor 4:16–18; Rom 8:20–21).

As the people of God, we must ready ourselves to inhabit the new age (1 Pet 1:13–17).³³⁵⁰ Everything we do should reflect the holiness of Christ (2 Pet 1:2–11).³³⁵¹ Within the New Testament (NT) the word translated as “looking for” (*prosdokaō*) usually occurs in the context of anticipating end-time salvation (Cf. Matt 11:2–5; Luke 3:15; Luke 12:42–48).³³⁵² The author employed the term three times in 2 Pet 3:11–13 to emphasize the earnest expectancy believers should foster when considering the return of Christ.³³⁵³

“Hastening” (*speudō*) implies that we can cause something to occur by exerting extra effort.³³⁵⁴ This appears to allude to Isa 60:18–22.³³⁵⁵ In most Jewish apocryphal literature, the Lord himself speeds the coming of the day of God.³³⁵⁶

According to the Apocalypse of Baruch (first–second century AD):
 “I besought the Mighty One and said, “Thou alone O Lord knowest of aforetime the deep things of the world, and the things which befall in their times Thou bringest about by the word. And against the works of the inhabitants of the earth *Thou dost hasten* the beginnings of the times. And the ends of the seasons Thou alone knowest...But thou doest everything easily by a nod. [You] revealest to those who fear Thee what is prepared for them that henceforth they may be comforted.”³³⁵⁷

On the other hand, in the *Babylonian Talmud* (first century BC to fifth century AD), a group of rabbis discussed the necessary conditions for the messiah to arrive. They argued: “Rabbi Johanan also said, ‘The son of David will come only in a generation that is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked. In a generation that is altogether righteous—as it is written, “Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever” [Ps 37:29]. Or altogether wicked—as it is written, “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor” [Isa 59:16]; and it is [elsewhere] written, “For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it” [Isa 48:11].

“Rabbi Alexandri said, ‘Rabbi Joshua ben Levi pointed out a contradiction. “It is written, in its

³³⁴⁸Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 53, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³⁴⁹Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 468, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³⁵⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 324.

³³⁵¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 197.

³³⁵²Christian Maurer, “προσδοκάω” (*prosdokaō*), *TDNT* 6:725–7, 726.

³³⁵³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 390.

³³⁵⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “σπεύδω” (*speudō*), *BDAG*, 938.

³³⁵⁵Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1060.

³³⁵⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

³³⁵⁷R. H. Charles, trans., *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; MacMillan, 1918), 54:1–4, 71, <https://archive.org/stream/apocalypseofbaru00char#page/70>.

time [will the Messiah come]” [Song 2:7], whilst it is also written, “I [the Lord] will hasten it [Isa 60:22]!—If they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time.”” Rabbi Alexandri said, ‘R. Joshua opposed two verses, “It is written, ‘And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven’ [Dan 7:13] whilst [elsewhere] it is written, ‘[behold, thy king cometh unto thee...] lowly, and riding upon an ass [Zech 9:9]!’—If they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.”’³³⁵⁸

These rabbis believed that God’s people speed the messiah’s coming by their repentance. Furthermore, their behavior would determine the manner of his arrival.³³⁵⁹ In their view, if every Israelite would repent or keep the law perfectly for a day, the messiah would return to deliver them from foreign domination and usher in the new age of peace.³³⁶⁰

Consequently, an Aramaic expansion of Song 8:14 pleads, “Watch over us and observe our trouble and affliction from the highest heavens, till such time as you are pleased with us and redeem us and bring us up to the mountains of Jerusalem, where the priests will offer up before you incense of spices.”³³⁶¹

This Jewish concept of hastening the age to come by our repentance extends into Christian teaching.³³⁶² The Lord takes the actions of his people into account when determining the time for Christ to return (Acts 3:19–21).³³⁶³ Godliness advances the day of the Lord,³³⁶⁴ as does prayer and preaching the gospel to all people-groups (Matt 6:10; Matt 24:14).³³⁶⁵

Nevertheless, God remains sovereign.³³⁶⁶ While he calls us to live holy lives, he also determines our steps (Deut 30:6–10; Ps 80:14–19; Ezek 36:24–27; Phil 2:12–13; Eph 2:4–10).³³⁶⁷ Our behavior matters, yet God’s control persists.³³⁶⁸ We must hold both truths in tension, as we seek to expedite the return of Christ.³³⁶⁹

His second coming will result in cataclysmic judgment and glorious renewal,³³⁷⁰ “because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed (*luō*) and the elements, consumed by heat, are melted.”

Stoics believed time is cyclical. They taught that a great conflagration periodically consumed the earth and then the planet was renewed.³³⁷¹

³³⁵⁸b. Sanhedrin 98a, http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_98.html.

³³⁵⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

³³⁶⁰N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 187.

³³⁶¹Penelope Robin Junkermann, “The Relationship Between Targum Song of Songs and Midrash Rabbah Song of Songs” (Manchester, UK: University of Manchester, 2010), 182,

<https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:105720&datastreamId=FULL-TEXT.PDF>.

³³⁶²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 198.

³³⁶³Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

³³⁶⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 390.

³³⁶⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 198–9.

³³⁶⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

³³⁶⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 390.

³³⁶⁸Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 198.

³³⁶⁹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 391.

³³⁷⁰Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1060.

³³⁷¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 300.

Cicero (106–43 BC) wrote:

“The stars are of a fiery substance, and for this reason they are nourished by the vapors of the earth, the sea and the waters, which are raised up by the sun out of the fields which it warms and out of the waters; and when nourished and renewed by these vapors the stars and the whole ether shed them back again, and then once more draw them up from the same source, with the loss of none of their matter, or only of an extremely small part which is consumed by the fire of the stars and the flame of the ether.

“As a consequence of this...there will ultimately occur a conflagration of the whole world, because when the moisture has been used up neither can the earth be nourished nor the air continue to flow, being unable to rise upward after it has drunk up all the water; thus nothing will remain but fire, by which, as a living being and a god, once again a new world may be created and the ordered universe be restored as before.”³³⁷²

Contrary to Stoic beliefs, the destruction which the author of 2 Peter proclaimed will be a one-time event which does not result from a natural progression.³³⁷³

He then elaborated upon the theme of the destruction of the heavens and the earth from 2 Pet 3:10. The verb “to melt” (*tēkō*) appears nowhere else in the NT. However, it occurs frequently in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (53 x) and in Greco-Roman literature (970 x).³³⁷⁴ In this case, it depicts a future event despite being written in the present tense.³³⁷⁵ Koine Greek authors employed this literary device to convey certainty or the impending nature of an event.³³⁷⁶

The Greek translation of Isa 64:1–2 says, “If you open the sky, trembling will take hold of the mountains at you, and they will melt like wax melts before a fire. And fire will consume the enemies, and your name will be evident among the enemies” (Cf. Mic 1:2–4).³³⁷⁷ Second Clement (ca. 130–160 AD) connects this destruction with the revealing of human evil:

“Seeing, therefore, brethren, that we have received no small opportunity for repentance, let us turn to the God who calls us, while we still have one who awaits us. For if we bid farewell to these enjoyments and conquer our soul by giving up its wicked lusts, we shall share in the mercy of Jesus. But you know that ‘the day’ of judgment is ‘already approaching as a burning oven, and some of the heavens shall melt,’ and the whole earth shall be as melting lead in the fire, and *then*

³³⁷²M. Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum Academia* (vol. 19 of *Cicero in Twenty-Eight Vols.*; trans. H. Rackham; LCL; Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1933), 2.118–9, 235–7, <https://archive.org/stream/denaturadeorumac00ciceuoft#page/234>.

³³⁷³Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

³³⁷⁴Result of word study of “τήκω” (*tēkō*) in Logos 7.

³³⁷⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 391.

³³⁷⁶Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 535–6.

³³⁷⁷Brannan et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Isa 64:1–2.

*shall be manifest the secret and open deeds of men.*³³⁷⁸

In a parallel NT passage, John described his vision of God sitting on a throne in judgment. He noted, “And from his face fled the earth and the heaven, and a place was not found (*heuriskō*) for them” (Rev 20:11). In keeping with 2 Pet 3:10, this likely refers to judgment upon sin in this world.³³⁷⁹

Read 2 Pet 3:11–12. How can you help to hasten Christ’s return? What will occur when he arrives?

New Heavens and a New Earth

g) 2 Pet 3:13: The author of this letter wrote, “But [there will be] new heavens and a new earth, according to his promise, in which righteousness dwells.”³³⁸⁰ In Koine Greek, we can translate two major terms as “new.” *Neos* indicates the appearance of something which was did not previously exist. Meanwhile, *kainos* suggests that something already in existence exhibits a distinctly different quality.³³⁸¹ In this case, the author used *kainos*.

In Rev 21:5, God exclaims, “Behold, new (*kainos*) I am making everything!” He did not say, “Behold, I am making new things!” This implies the restoration of the heavens and the earth to what God originally intended, rather than complete destruction.³³⁸² On the same day when the ungodly shall experience destruction,³³⁸³ those who belong to Christ shall step into the transformed realm of the new earth and heavens (2 Pet 3:3–12; Isa 65:17–24; Matt 19:27–29).³³⁸⁴ Based upon the description in Rev 21–22, a radical renovation will occur.³³⁸⁵

Noah stepped out of the ark into very different world than he previously experienced (Gen 8:6–14). We shall be even more amazed by the transformation of our renewed earth.³³⁸⁶ Our transformed planet shall be a place “in which righteousness dwells.” Aside from this allusion to Isa 32:16, the author provided no description of the new earth.³³⁸⁷ Righteousness and

³³⁷⁸Lake, Kirsopp, trans. “2 Clement,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with an English Translation, Vol. 1*. (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1912), 16:1–4, 154–5, <https://archive.org/stream/TheApostolicFathersV1#page/n167>. Italics mine.

³³⁷⁹Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 466, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³⁸⁰Whether the apostle or someone using his name wrote this letter remains highly controversial, even among evangelical scholars.

³³⁸¹Johannes Behm, “καίνος” (*kainos*), *TDNT* 3:447–54, 447.

³³⁸²Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 466–7, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³⁸³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 391.

³³⁸⁴Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 199.

³³⁸⁵Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 469, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³³⁸⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 326.

³³⁸⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 199–200.

justice permeate God’s kingdom (Matt 5:10–16; Matt 6:33; Heb 1:8–9).³³⁸⁸ Therefore, the age to come shall resound with the beauty and glory of God’s holy will (Matt 6:10).³³⁸⁹

As in Noah’s day, the world shall be cleansed from unrighteousness (Gen 6:1–13; Gen 7:11–12, 21–24).³³⁹⁰ Nothing evil can enter (Isa 66:22–24; Rev 22:12–15).³³⁹¹ Therefore, we must not abandon our hope, as the scoffers did, but live righteously (2 Pet 3:3–4, 14–18).³³⁹²

The author of 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD) concurred:

“And this is the second parable concerning those who deny the name of the dwelling of the holy ones and the Lord of Spirits. And into the heaven they shall not ascend, and on the earth they shall not come. Such shall be the lot of the sinners who have denied the name of the Lord of Spirits, who are thus preserved for the day of suffering and tribulation. On that day mine elect one shall sit on the throne of glory and shall try their works, and their places of rest shall be innumerable.

“And their souls shall grow strong within them when they see mine elect ones, and those who have called upon My glorious name. Then will I cause mine elect one to dwell among them. And I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light, and I will transform the earth and make it a blessing. And I will cause mine elect ones to dwell upon it. But the sinners and evil doers shall not set foot thereon. For I have provided and satisfied with peace my righteous ones and have caused them to dwell before me. But for the sinners there is judgement impending with me, so that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth.”³³⁹³

This apocryphal writer recognized that God will remake our world.³³⁹⁴

Our planet has a future.³³⁹⁵ The author of 2 Peter employed terms in this chapter which sound as if this world shall end. Nevertheless, scrutiny reveals that it shall undergo restoration rather than replacement (Acts 3:12, 19–21).³³⁹⁶ Only after its cleansing can the earth serve as a fitting place for the Lord’s resurrected people (1 Cor 15:50–58).³³⁹⁷

This paraphrase of 2 Pet 3:10–13 captures the apostle’s intent well:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens as we know them will pass from sight with a roar and the order of this world will be refined with intense heat, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare for judgment. Since all these things are to be refined in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, anticipating and hastening the day of God, when the heavens will be refined by burning and the impure order of

³³⁸⁸Gottlob Schrenk, “δικαιοσύνη” (*dikaiosunē*), *TDNT* 2:174–225, 199. This word can be translated as “justice” and as “righteousness.”

³³⁸⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 326.

³³⁹⁰Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 54–5, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³⁹¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 392.

³³⁹²Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 326.

³³⁹³Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” 45:1–6, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n197/mode/2up>.

³³⁹⁴Carson, “2 Peter,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1060.

³³⁹⁵Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 55, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³⁹⁶Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 201.

³³⁹⁷Moo, “Nature and the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 469, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

this world will melt in the intense heat of judgment! But according to his promise we are looking for renewed heavens and a renewed earth, in which righteousness dwells.”³³⁹⁸

Read 2 Pet 3:13. What evidence do we have in this verse that God will renovate—rather than replace—this planet? How should our knowledge that the Lord will judge evil will renew the earth affect the way we live? In what ways do we resemble Noah?

Set Free from the Slavery of Corruption

5) 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.³³⁹⁹ 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.³⁴⁰⁰ The apostle’s choice of “will be set free” (*eleutheroō*)³⁴⁰¹—rather than “undone” (*luō*)³⁴⁰² or “destroyed” (*apollumi*)³⁴⁰³ 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.³⁴⁰⁴

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).³⁴⁰⁵ We await the renovation of the earth when the new Jerusalem descends (Rev 21:1–2), not its replacement.³⁴⁰⁶

“The slavery (*douleia*) of corruption (*phthora*)” alludes to the inevitable decay of all

³³⁹⁸Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” 55, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp037-056_JETS.pdf.

³³⁹⁹Osborne, *Romans*, 212.

³⁴⁰⁰Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

³⁴⁰¹Danker, et al., “ἐλευθερωω” (*eleutheroō*), *BDAG*, 317.

³⁴⁰²Danker et al., “λυω” (*luō*), 607.

³⁴⁰³Danker, et al., “ἀπολλυμι” (*apollumi*), 117.

³⁴⁰⁴Moo, “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.

³⁴⁰⁵Danker et al., “κοσμος” (*kosmos*), 562.

³⁴⁰⁶Moo, “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.

created things.³⁴⁰⁷ This is consistent with Greek thought, with Paul’s earlier writing in 1 Cor 15:50,³⁴⁰⁸ 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.”³⁴⁰⁹

In Greco-Roman society, the strict dichotomy between slavery and freedom accentuated the radical nature of the transformation envisioned by Paul.³⁴¹⁰ The Old Testament (OT) depicts Israel’s exile as a reversal of creation order into chaos (Jer 4:23–27).³⁴¹¹

However, due to the Lord’s justice,³⁴¹² 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).³⁴¹³ 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).³⁴¹⁴ Then people will say, “This land which was desolate has become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek 36:35).³⁴¹⁵ The Lord shall banish evil and his elect will enter into complete harmony with our creator.³⁴¹⁶ At that time, God shall at last achieve his original intention for our planet (Gen 1:28).³⁴¹⁷

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.”³⁴¹⁸

³⁴⁰⁷Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (PCNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 201.

³⁴⁰⁸Moo, “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.

³⁴⁰⁹John 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>.

³⁴¹⁰Ceslas Spicq, “δοῦλος” (*doulos*), *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament (TLNT)*, Vol. 1, (James D. Ernest, trans., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 380.

³⁴¹¹Ciampa, “The History of Redemption, 273.

³⁴¹²Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 25.

³⁴¹³Matera, *Romans*, 201.

³⁴¹⁴Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 273.

³⁴¹⁵Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 34.

³⁴¹⁶Moo, “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.

³⁴¹⁷Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 81–2.

³⁴¹⁸R. 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>.

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 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;³⁴¹⁹ Isa 55:6–13; Isa 65:17–25 and Isa 66:22–23.³⁴²⁰

Since redeemed people must inhabit a fitting environment,³⁴²¹ the reclamation anticipated by believers shall extend to the created order.³⁴²² 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).³⁴²³

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?³⁴²⁴

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).³⁴²⁵ 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.³⁴²⁶

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).³⁴²⁷ 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).³⁴²⁸

³⁴¹⁹John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 564–5.

³⁴²⁰Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 16.

³⁴²¹Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

³⁴²²Schreiner, *Romans*, 437.

³⁴²³Ciampa 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.

³⁴²⁴Moo, “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.

³⁴²⁵Moo, “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.

³⁴²⁶Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 24–5, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

³⁴²⁷Moo, “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.

³⁴²⁸Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 25, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

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.³⁴²⁹ 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).³⁴³⁰

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?

³⁴²⁹ Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 113.

³⁴³⁰ 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.

Chapter 10: Noah Curses Canaan (Gen 9:18–27)

Moses depicted Noah's first act upon disembarking as engaging in worship, making a whole burnt offering (Gen 8:20).³⁴³¹ When the rest-inducing aroma of the sacrifice rose to God, he accepted both the offering and the one who made it.³⁴³² The Lord chose to make a covenant with all humanity, stating that he would never again disrupt his creation with such a catastrophic flood (Gen 8:21–22; Gen 9:11).³⁴³³

Noah soothed the Lord's justifiable indignation, even though people's hearts still incline toward evil.³⁴³⁴ Regular cycles of the seasons and the time of day would characterize the world.³⁴³⁵ Human hearts might be erratic, but nature will not be.³⁴³⁶

As a second Adam,³⁴³⁷ God called Noah to fulfill the original human mandate of Gen 1:28–29 by proliferating and preserving life (Gen 9:1, 7).³⁴³⁸ However, the enmity between people and creatures increased to the point of death (Gen 9:2–5).³⁴³⁹

Before eating an animal, one had to drain its blood. This returned the creature's life force to God, the one who had created it.³⁴⁴⁰ Even animals' carcasses had to be treated with dignity.³⁴⁴¹ While people could shed the blood of a creature for sacrifice or in the process of obtaining food, the Lord forbade spilling human blood.³⁴⁴² Since God made us in his image, a murderer kills someone who resembles the Lord.³⁴⁴³ Therefore, he instituted the death penalty for intentionally killing someone (Gen 9:6).³⁴⁴⁴ Noah's descendants must produce life, not wantonly take it.³⁴⁴⁵

Referring to the promise which the Lord made before the flood (Gen 6:17–20),³⁴⁴⁶ God established a universal and unilateral covenant with Noah and his descendants.³⁴⁴⁷ Such a deluge will never again cut off all living things. This covenant does not mean that humanity will never face judgment,³⁴⁴⁸ only that it will not come in the form of a flood (Gen 9:8–11).³⁴⁴⁹

Then God ratified his oath with a sign to indicate that his enmity toward humanity had ceased.³⁴⁵⁰ Against the backdrop of clouds—which had previously wrought such great destruction—the Lord placed an upturned bow (Gen 9:12–13).³⁴⁵¹ Whenever a rainbow emerges through the clouds, it reminds God of his covenant with Noah.³⁴⁵² This enables him to

³⁴³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

³⁴³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

³⁴³³Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

³⁴³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142–3.

³⁴³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 191.

³⁴³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310.

³⁴³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313. "Second Adam" is also one of the titles ascribed to Jesus.

³⁴³⁸Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 64.

³⁴³⁹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

³⁴⁴⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:4.

³⁴⁴¹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

³⁴⁴²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

³⁴⁴³Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 65.

³⁴⁴⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

³⁴⁴⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁴⁴⁶Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 74.

³⁴⁴⁷Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 246.

³⁴⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁴⁴⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

³⁴⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 317.

³⁴⁵¹Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 67.

³⁴⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 196.

temporarily overlook human depravity (Gen 9:14–17).³⁴⁵³ The Lord’s covenant with Noah is the first of several such pacts which God has made throughout redemptive history. Ultimately, they shall culminate with the purification and renewal of all creation (2 Pet 3:10–13). At that time, the Lord will release everything on earth from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:16–22).³⁴⁵⁴

The Sons of Noah

1) Gen 9:18–19: These verses represent the final part of the chiasm which recounts the flood (Gen 6:9–9:19). They form the conclusion which mentions Noah and his sons (Cf. Gen 6:9–10).³⁴⁵⁵ Here the focus shifts from Noah to his descendants.³⁴⁵⁶ Moses wrote, “And it happened that the sons of Noah went out from the ark: Shem and Ham and Japheth. And Ham, he [was the] father of Canaan. These three [were] the sons of Noah, and from these scattered all [the people] of the earth.”

By spreading out across the known world, the descendants of Noah fulfilled the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28; Gen 9:1, 7). This passage introduces the ancestor of the nations whom God commanded Moses’ original readers to displace (Gen 10:15–19; Exod 3:8; Deut 9:5).³⁴⁵⁷ Canaanites practiced polytheism, child sacrifice, and religious prostitution (Lev 18:24–25; Deut 12:29–31).³⁴⁵⁸ The behavior of Noah’s sons foreshadows the relationships between their descendants (Gen 9:20–23; Josh 11:16–20; Josh 16:10; Josh 17:12–13).³⁴⁵⁹

a) Read Gen 9:18–19. How did Noah resemble a second Adam? Why do you think Moses included Canaan in these verses?

Noah Planted a Vineyard

b) Gen 9:20–21: A considerable number of years have elapsed since Noah’s flood, as Ham produced four sons in the interim (Cf. Gen 8:15–18; Gen 10:6). Moses wrote, “Then Noah, a man of the ground (*adamah*), began by planting a vineyard.” He appeared to deliberately link Noah with Adam, the man whom God formed from the ground (Gen 2:7; Gen 3:17–19).³⁴⁶⁰ With Noah, humanity (*adam*) received a fresh start.³⁴⁶¹

Lamech called his son Noah (*noakh*), saying, “This one shall relieve (*nakham*) us from our work and from the painful toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has put under a curse” (Gen 5:29). He created a play on words between *nuakh*, which means “rest” and a similar sounding term which means “comfort” (*nakham*).³⁴⁶²

³⁴⁵³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁵⁴Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 76.

³⁴⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

³⁴⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁵⁸John Day, “Canaan, Religion of,” *ABD* 1:831–7, 833–5.

³⁴⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 197.

³⁴⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁶¹Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁶²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

Noah produced a luxury item,³⁴⁶³ indicating that rain came in the right amounts to grow lush crops rather than to obliterate life (Cf. Gen 7:17–24).³⁴⁶⁴ While the wine which Noah produced brought comfort from his toil, it yielded mixed results.³⁴⁶⁵ Hebrew scholars disagree whether Noah was the first person to ferment wine. Some hold that “began” (*khalal*) implies a completely new activity.³⁴⁶⁶ Others note that the same grammar occurs in a verse depicting the onset of the building of the temple after returning from exile (Ezra 3:8).³⁴⁶⁷

According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, winegrowing preceded the flood. The Noah figure Utnapishtim gave the men who built his boat “red wine, oil, and white wine.”³⁴⁶⁸ The earliest archaeological evidence for winemaking comes from the Zagros Mountains in northern Iran. Six nine-liter clay jars containing wine residue date to 5400–5000 BC.³⁴⁶⁹ This area lies close to the Ararat Mountains (Gen 8:4).

Concerning Noah, Moses reported, “And he drank from the wine, and he became drunk, and he uncovered himself inside his tent.” This seems incompatible with the earlier description of Noah as “a righteous man, having integrity in his generation” (Gen 6:9).³⁴⁷⁰ Yet, Moses neither condoned nor censured his behavior.³⁴⁷¹

Israelites considered wine one of God’s good gifts (Deut 14:26; Ps 104:14–15; Isa 62:8–9). In fact, the Lord compared Israel to a vineyard (Isa 5:1–7; Mark 12:1–12).³⁴⁷² Priests offered wine to God twice a day and included it with burnt sacrifices (Exod 29:38–42; Num 15:4–7).³⁴⁷³

Scripture also recognizes the perils of drunkenness (1 Sam 1:12–17; Prov 23:29–35; Hos 4:10–12; Jer 25:15–16, 27–29).³⁴⁷⁴ Inebriation and holiness cannot coexist.³⁴⁷⁵ God threatened to kill any priest who drank wine before entering the tabernacle (Lev 10:8–11). A key aspect of the Nazirite vow of dedication to God consisted of abstention from alcohol (Num 6:1–4).³⁴⁷⁶

The Lord particularly condemned drunkenness coupled with nakedness, employing this imagery as a sign of judgment (Lam 4:21–22; Hab 2:15–16).³⁴⁷⁷ Two nations which later oppressed and ensnared Israel arose after Lot’s daughters plied him with alcohol (Gen 19:30–38). David tried to cover his adultery by getting Uriah drunk so that he would ignore his sense of honor and go home to sleep with his wife (2 Sam 11:10–13).³⁴⁷⁸

One Ugaritic text describes the chief god, El, as too drunk to walk. It says, “El sits in his *mrzḥ*-shrine. [El] drinks [wi]ne to satiety, liquor, to drunkenness. El goes to his house, proceeds

³⁴⁶³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁶⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁶⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁶⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

³⁴⁶⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 345–6.

³⁴⁶⁸Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:72, 93, <https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n87/mode/2up>.

³⁴⁶⁹University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, “The Origins and Ancient History of Wine,” <http://www.penn.museum/sites/wine/wineneolithic.html>.

³⁴⁷⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁷¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁷²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷³W. Dommershausen, “יין” (*yayin*), *TDOT* 6:59–64, 63.

³⁴⁷⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

³⁴⁷⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

to his court. *Tkmm* and *Šnm* carry him.”³⁴⁷⁹ The verb used for “carry” implies that El could no longer walk.³⁴⁸⁰ Since the Ugaritic religion emphasized fertility rites,³⁴⁸¹ intoxication and prostitution likely occurred in tandem.³⁴⁸²

Read Gen 9:20–21. How does the Old Testament depict wine? Why did nudity coupled with drunkenness carry negative associations in Israel? How do you avoid the pitfalls which exist with alcohol consumption?

Ham Dishonors His Father

c) Gen 9:22–23: Concerning the incident with Noah’s vineyard (Gen 9:20–21), Moses focused upon how Noah’s son sinned him, rather than upon what Noah did.³⁴⁸³ This account illustrates the moral depravity of the descendants of Ham—Canaanites, Egyptians, and Babylonians—in contrast to the upright conduct of Shem and Japheth’s progeny (Gen 10:6–32).³⁴⁸⁴

Moses wrote, “And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw (*raah*) the nakedness of his father, and he told his two brothers outside.” This consisted of attentive observation,³⁴⁸⁵ to the point of voyeurism (Song 1:6; Song 6:11).³⁴⁸⁶ Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded children to render honor to their parents (Exod 21:15, 17; Deut 27:16; Prov 30:17; Mal 1:6).³⁴⁸⁷ This includes the first of the Ten Commandments which apply to relationships between people (Exod 20:12).³⁴⁸⁸ Ham compounded his error by telling his brothers about Noah’s disgraceful state (Prov 17:9).³⁴⁸⁹ According to one Ugaritic tale, the god Baal viewed sons as a blessing who would protect their fathers.³⁴⁹⁰ Baal said, “So shall there be a son in his house... Who smothers the life-force of his detractor... Who takes him by the hand when he’s drunk, carries him when he’s sated with wine.”³⁴⁹¹

A Mesopotamian man’s last will and testament illustrates the severity of the penalty for dishonor. He wrote, “And now therefore, my two sons... whichever of them shall bring a lawsuit against... or shall abuse... their mother, shall pay 500 shekels of silver to the king;

³⁴⁷⁹Cyrus H. Gordon, “El, Father of Šnm,” *JNES* 35, no. 4 (1 October 1976) 261–2, 261, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/372507>.

³⁴⁸⁰Gordon, “El, Father of Šnm,” 261, <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/372507>.

³⁴⁸¹Peter C. Craigie, “The Tablets from Ugarit and Their Importance for Biblical Studies,” *BAR* 9, no. 5 (1 September 1983). http://cojs.org/the_tablets_from_ugarit_and_their_importance_for_biblical_studies-peter_c_craigie-bar_9-05-sep-oct_1983/.

³⁴⁸²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 322.

³⁴⁸³Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁸⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147. The Hebrew word for “Egypt” is “*Mizraim*.”

³⁴⁸⁵H. F. Fuhs, “*raah*,” *TDOT* 13:210–42, 223–4.

³⁴⁸⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁴⁸⁷C. J. H. Wright, “Family,” *ABD* 2:761–9, 766.

³⁴⁸⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁸⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁴⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199–200.

³⁴⁹¹H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “The Tale of Aqhat,” in *ANET*, 1:24–33, 150.

<https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n139/mode/2up>.

he shall set his cloak upon the door bolt, and shall depart into the street.”³⁴⁹² In the Ancient Near East, a parent removing clothing from someone symbolized disinheritance.³⁴⁹³

This interpretation of Ham’s sins makes sense in its cultural context (Isa 51:17–18). Yet, some scholars who don’t recognize loyalty to one’s parents as a cardinal virtue seek deeper meaning in the text.³⁴⁹⁴ They allege unwarranted charges of incest with Noah or his wife,³⁴⁹⁵ or even Noah’s castration.³⁴⁹⁶ Such topics receive explicit attention elsewhere in the Pentateuch, making it unlikely that Moses avoided lurid details (Cf. Gen 19:4–5; Gen 35:22; Gen 49:1–4). Furthermore, Shem and Japheth’s actions refute such allegations.³⁴⁹⁷ Moses reported, “Shem and Japheth took the outer garment and they put it on two shoulders. And they walked backwards, and they covered [the] nakedness of their father. And their faces [were] backwards, and the nakedness of their father they did not see (*raah*).”

The repetition and detail in this account evoke the great effort expended by Shem and Japheth to avoid seeing their father’s nudity. One can imagine them plotting how to manage to clothe Noah without catching a glimpse of him. Perhaps they walked backwards until Noah’s toes came into view and then dropped the cloak over him.³⁴⁹⁸

Read Gen 9:22–23. How does this passage reveal the attitudes of Noah’s sons? Why do you think Moses included it?

Obedience in the Lord

2) Eph 6:1: Household codes were quite common in the ancient world.³⁴⁹⁹ In the Greco-Roman milieu, they regulated the behavior of women, children, and slaves toward husbands, parents, and masters.³⁵⁰⁰ However, Eph 6:1–4 follows the apostle’s exhortation for all Christians to exhibit submission to each other as an expression of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives (Eph 5:15–21).³⁵⁰¹ Jesus’s call to discipleship infringed upon traditional family responsibilities (Mark 3:31–35; Mark 10:28–31; Mark 13:12–13; Luke 8:1–3; Luke 9:59–62). Thus, Paul’s guidance regarding these relationships provided stability where entire households had converted to Christianity.³⁵⁰² As the apostle typically did, he first discussed the responsibilities of the household member considered subordinate in Greco-Roman society.³⁵⁰³

After finishing his charges to wives and husbands (Eph 5:21–33), Paul wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Significantly, Paul directly addressed

³⁴⁹²J. J. Finkelstein, trans., “Additional Mesopotamian Legal Documents: (17) Will and Testament,” in *ANET*, 546.

³⁴⁹³Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

³⁴⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200. Wenham is not among them.

³⁴⁹⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 322.

³⁴⁹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200.

³⁴⁹⁹John T. Fitzgerald, “Haustafeln,” *ABD* 3:80–1, 80.

³⁵⁰⁰Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD* 3:318.

³⁵⁰¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395.

³⁵⁰²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵⁰³Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395–6.

Christian children.³⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, the church in Ephesus likely included them in worship and community instruction.³⁵⁰⁵

Most girls married in their early teens;³⁵⁰⁶ boys came of age at twenty-five.³⁵⁰⁷ Those of Jewish background recognized that a shift of allegiance occurred when they married (Gen 2:23–24; Eph 5:25–31).³⁵⁰⁸ However, in the Roman world, the requirement of obedience lasted until one’s father died.³⁵⁰⁹

Paul commanded wives to submit (*hypotassō*) to their husbands (Eph 5:22).³⁵¹⁰ That leaves open the possibility of respectful disagreement.³⁵¹¹ He ordered children to go a step further and obey (*hypakouō*) their parents.³⁵¹² This connotes compliance free of objections.³⁵¹³

The phrase “in the Lord” (*en kuriō*) generates much controversy. It does not appear in some ancient manuscripts, including some dating back to the fourth century.³⁵¹⁴ However, it does occur in other equally old documents. Therefore, one manuscript (P⁴⁶) dated to ca. 200 makes the determination to include these words.³⁵¹⁵

Another issue concerns exactly what “in the Lord” means. Some scholars assert that the command to obey applies only to Christian parents.³⁵¹⁶ Others claim that children must comply to their parents’ expectations only when their orders do not conflict with God’s.³⁵¹⁷ In Ephesians Paul typically argues for behavior based upon what Jesus has done (Luke 2:41–52; Eph 1:3–14).³⁵¹⁸ However, the most likely possibility takes the context of the other household codes into consideration (Eph 5:18–22; Eph 6:5–7).³⁵¹⁹ One aspect of following the Lord consists of obeying one’s parents. In fact, the Spirit enables children to obey.³⁵²⁰ Elsewhere, Paul equated disobedience to one’s parents with failure to honor God as Lord (Rom 1:28–32; 2 Tim 3:1–6).³⁵²¹

He claimed that such behavior is “right” (*dikaios*). This noun refers to action which conforms to God’s laws.³⁵²² In the Greco-Roman world, people widely recognized the call to such obedience.³⁵²³

³⁵⁰⁴Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

³⁵⁰⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵⁰⁶Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 35.

³⁵⁰⁷Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 282.

³⁵⁰⁸Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

³⁵⁰⁹Gottlob Schrenk, “πατήρ” (*patēr*), *TDNT* 5:945–59, 951.

³⁵¹⁰Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵¹¹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 335–6.

³⁵¹²Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 335–6.

³⁵¹³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵¹⁴Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd. Ed., 341–2.

³⁵¹⁵Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, 28. revidierte Auflage, 601.

³⁵¹⁶Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

³⁵¹⁷Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 397.

³⁵¹⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395.

³⁵¹⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵²⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415–6.

³⁵²¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵²²Gottlob Schrenk, “δίκαιος” (*dikaios*), *TDNT* 2:182–91, 191.

³⁵²³Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

A first century BC Roman historian wrote of the authority granted to fathers in that society:

“These, then, are the excellent laws which Romulus enacted... Those he established with respect to reverence and dutifulness of children toward their parents, to the end that they should honor and obey them in all things, both in their words and actions, were still more august and of greater dignity and vastly superior to our laws. For those who established the Greek constitutions set a very short time for sons to be under the rule of their fathers, some till the expiration of the third year after they reached manhood, others as long as they continued unmarried, and some till their names were entered in the public registers...

“The punishments, also, which they ordered for disobedience in children toward their parents were not grievous: for they permitted fathers to turn their sons out of doors and to disinherit them, but nothing further. But mild punishments are not sufficient to restrain the folly of youth and its stubborn ways or to give self-control to those who have been heedless of all that is honorable; and accordingly, among the Greeks many unseemly deeds are committed by children against their parents.

“But the law giver of the Romans gave virtually full power to the father over his son, even during his whole life, whether he thought proper to imprison him, to scourge him, to put him in chains and keep him at work in the fields, or to put him to death, and this even though the son were already engaged in public affairs, though he were numbered among the highest magistrates, and though he were celebrated for his zeal for the commonwealth.”³⁵²⁴

Notably, Paul placed restraints upon fathers regarding how they treated their children (Eph 6:4). Although people commonly expected children to obey their parents, Paul contended that those who belong to Christ should live in a way which pleases the Lord (Col 1:9–10; Col 3:20; Eph 4:1–3).³⁵²⁵ This precludes obeying orders which contradict God’s commands.

a) Read Eph 6:1. How did Paul alter the format of Greco-Roman household codes? To whom does this apply? Why did Paul command children to obey their parents? What does such conformity signify?

Life-long Honor

b) Eph 6:2–3: After directing children who were still growing up to obey their parents (Eph 6:1), Paul quoted part of the fifth commandment.³⁵²⁶ He wrote, “Honor your father and your mother, which is the first command with a promise, in order that good to you it may be, and you will be long-lived on the earth.”

³⁵²⁴Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities* (trans. Earnest Cary; LCL; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1960), 2.26.1–4, 387–9,

<https://archive.org/stream/L319DionysiusOfHalicarnassusTheRomanAntiquitiesI12pdf/L319-Dionysius%20of%20Halicarnassus%20The%20Roman%20Antiquities%20I%3A1-2pdf#page/n437>.

³⁵²⁵Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵²⁶Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

This matches the beginning of the Greek translation of Exod 20:12.³⁵²⁷ To honor (*timaō*) someone consists of rendering esteem, dignity, and proper recognition to that person.³⁵²⁸ In Judaism, honoring one's parents paralleled the reverence accorded to the Lord (Lev 19:1–4).³⁵²⁹ Unlike the command to obey, this mandate applies to adults (Gen 2:23–24; Eph 5:25–31; Matt 19:16–19).³⁵³⁰ It includes supporting parents with financial needs (Matt 15:3–6; 1 Tim 5:3–6).³⁵³¹

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) asserted:

“And so [the aged], living in a tranquility worthy of their time of life, enjoy all abundance, and pass their old age in luxury; while their children make light of all the hardships they undergo to furnish them with the means of support, under the influence both of piety and also of the expectation that they also in their old age will receive the same treatment from their descendants; and so they now discharge the indispensable debt which they owe their parents, knowing that in proper time, they will themselves receive what they are now bestowing.

“And there are also others who are unable to support themselves, for children are no more able to do so at the commencement of their existence, than their parents are at the end of their lives. On which account the children, having while young been fed in accordance with the spontaneous promptings of nature, now with joy do in return support the old age of their parents.

“Is it not right, then, after these examples, that men who neglect their parents should cover their faces from shame, and reproach themselves for disregarding those things... For the children have nothing of their own which does not belong to the parents, who have either bestowed it upon them from their own substance or have enabled them to acquire it by supplying them with the means.”³⁵³²

Within the Ten Commandments, this is the first with an explicit promise for adhering to it.³⁵³³ Although Exod 20:4–6 does contain a pledge, it refers to keeping all the Lord's mandates.³⁵³⁴ Paul likely omitted “in the land which the Lord your God gives you” because it pertained to Israel.³⁵³⁵ For gentiles living in Asia Minor, that was irrelevant.³⁵³⁶ However, he did retain God's vow for a good, long life (Deut 5:33).³⁵³⁷ This refers to temporal—not eternal—benefits.³⁵³⁸

Nevertheless, we cannot universally apply this assurance. A one-to-one correlation between people who honor their parents and those who enjoy prosperity while reaching an advanced age does not exist.³⁵³⁹ The Lord does not make such guarantees (1 Ki 14:11–13).³⁵⁴⁰

³⁵²⁷Brannan et. al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Exod 20:12.

³⁵²⁸Johannes Schneider, “τιμάω” (*timaō*), *TDNT* 8:169–80, 174.

³⁵²⁹Frank S. Thielman, “Ephesians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 829.

³⁵³⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.

³⁵³¹Schneider, “τιμάω” (*timaō*), *TDNT* 8:169–80, 178–9.

³⁵³²Philo, “A Treatise Concerning the Ten Commandments Which Are the Heads of the Law,” in *The Works of Ohilo Judaeus, Vol. 3*, (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 23, 162–3, <https://archive.org/stream/workspphilojudaeu03philuoft#page/162>.

³⁵³³Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 396.

³⁵³⁴Thielman, “Ephesians,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 830.

³⁵³⁵Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵³⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵³⁷Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵³⁸Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336–7.

³⁵³⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁴⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

Read Eph 6:2–3. How does honoring parents differ from obeying them? Where did Ham go wrong (Gen 9:20–23)? How can you best honor your father and mother?

Nurturing and Feeding

c) Eph 6:4: In a society where men wielded life-long power over whether their children lived or died, Paul recognized that fathers needed instruction concerning behavior toward their children.³⁵⁴¹ As with husbands and slave owners, he commanded fathers not to abuse their authoritative position (Eph 5:25–28; Col 3:19; Eph 6:1–3, 9).³⁵⁴² 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.³⁵⁴³

The apostle wrote, “And fathers, do not provoke to anger your children but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord.” “Fathers” (*patēres*) occasionally refers to both parents (Cf. Heb 11:23).³⁵⁴⁴ However, in Greco-Roman society, the training and instruction of children remained their father’s responsibility, which is likely why he mentions only men here.³⁵⁴⁵ In contrast, Paul employed the generic word for “parent” (*goneus*) in Eph 6:1.³⁵⁴⁶

The verb he used for “provoke to anger” (*parorgizō*) occurs only twice in the New Testament (NT) (Rom 10:19) and only three times in Greek classics. However, it appears twenty-eight times in the Greek Old Testament books accepted by Protestants (Deut 4:25; Judg 2:11–12; Jer 7:18–19).³⁵⁴⁷ Paul also employed the related noun *parorgismos* in Eph 4:26, which is the only time it occurs in the NT.³⁵⁴⁸

Yet, his meaning remains clear. Fathers must evaluate the effect of their words and deeds upon their children before interacting with them (Col 3:21).³⁵⁴⁹ Driving children to exasperation or bitterness contradicts God’s plan for families.³⁵⁵⁰ This prohibits extreme or arbitrary demands, cruel discipline, biased treatment, sarcasm, and humiliation.³⁵⁵¹ Men must practice consideration and sensitivity to their children’s feelings (Eph 4:29–32).³⁵⁵²

Since fathers in the Greco-Roman world reigned supreme, people assumed they would treat their children harshly.³⁵⁵³ In fact, the original recipients of this letter likely expected Paul to command juveniles to not provoke their parents. No comparable admonition exists in Greco-

³⁵⁴¹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁴²Fitzgerald, “Haustafeln,” *ABD* 3:80.

³⁵⁴³Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD* 3:318.

³⁵⁴⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁴⁵Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 337.

³⁵⁴⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁴⁷Result of Logos 7 word study on “παροργίζω” (*parorgizō*).

³⁵⁴⁸Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παροργισμός” (*parorgismos*), *BDAG*, 780.

³⁵⁴⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁵⁰Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁵¹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁵²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417–8.

³⁵⁵³Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

Roman literature.³⁵⁵⁴ Although Greco-Romans universally viewed children as the property of their parents—as noted in Obedience in the Lord (Eph 6:1)—a few authors did recommend moderation in raising them.³⁵⁵⁵

For example, Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) advised:

“It is, I assure you, of the greatest service to boys that they should be soundly brought up, yet to regulate their education is difficult, because it is our duty to be careful neither to cherish a habit of anger in them, nor to blunt the edge of their spirit...A boy's spirit is increased by freedom and depressed by slavery: it rises when praised and is led to conceive great expectations of itself: yet this same treatment produces arrogance and quickness of temper: we must therefore guide him between these two extremes, using the curb at one time and the spur at another.

“He must undergo no servile or degrading treatment; he never must beg abjectly for anything, nor must he gain anything by begging; let him rather receive it for his own sake, for his past good behavior, or for his promises of future good conduct. In contests with his comrades, we ought not to allow him to become sulky or fly into a passion...we should allow him to enjoy his victory, but not to rush into transports of delight: for joy leads to exultation, and exultation leads to swaggering and excessive self-esteem.

“We ought to allow him some relaxation, yet not yield him up to laziness and sloth, and we ought to keep him far beyond the reach of luxury, for nothing makes children more prone to anger than a soft and fond bringing-up, so that the more only children are indulged, and the more liberty is given to orphans, the more they are corrupted.

“He to whom nothing is ever denied, will not be able to endure a rebuff, whose anxious mother always wipes away his tears, whose [servant who escorts him to school] is made to pay for his short-comings. Do you not observe how a man's anger becomes more violent as he rises in station?...

“Flattery, then, must be kept well out of the way of children. Let a child hear the truth, and sometimes fear it: let him always reverence it. Let him rise in the presence of his elders. Let him obtain nothing by flying into a passion: let him be given when he is quiet what was refused him when he cried for it: let him behold, but not make use of his father's wealth: let him be reprovved for what he does wrong...

“Above all, let his food be scanty, his dress not costly, and of the same fashion as that of his comrades: if you begin by putting him on a level with many others, he will not be angry when someone is compared with him.”³⁵⁵⁶

The verb which Paul chose as the standard for child-rearing (*ektrēphō*) contains two shades of meaning. On the one hand, it refers simply to “bringing up” a child. It also refers to nurturing and feeding someone (Eph 5:29; Gen 47:17).³⁵⁵⁷

Plutarch (46–122 AD) wrote:

“Lycurgus would not put the sons of Spartans in charge of purchased or hired tutors, nor was it lawful for every father to rear or train his son as he pleased, but as soon as they were seven years old, Lycurgus ordered them all to be taken by the state and enrolled in companies, where they were put under the same discipline and nurture (*ektrēphō*) and so became accustomed to

³⁵⁵⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁵⁵Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁵⁶Seneca, “Of Anger,” in *Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog “On Clemency,”* 4.21, 94, <https://archive.org/stream/minordialoguesto00seneuoft#page/94>.

³⁵⁵⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐκτρέφω” (*ektrēphō*), *BDAG*, 311.

share one another's sports and studies."³⁵⁵⁸ Nurturing involves more than simply bringing someone up to adulthood.³⁵⁵⁹

“Training” (*paideia*) and “instruction” (*nouthesia*) are roughly synonymous,³⁵⁶⁰ with the first term incorporating correction and discipline (2 Tim 3:16; 4 times in Heb 12:5–11).³⁵⁶¹ Authors typically used *paideia* in connection with the complete education of children (Prov 1:2, 7–8; Prov 4:1–5; Prov 19:20 in the Greek translation). In fact, the word is related to the terms for “child,” “tutor,” and “teacher.”³⁵⁶²

Similarly, *nouthesia* means “counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.”³⁵⁶³ It involves verbal admonition,³⁵⁶⁴ with the goal of redirecting a person’s mind onto the right course of action.³⁵⁶⁵ Old Testament authors regarded this training as one of the primary roles of parents (Deut 21:18–21; 1 Sam 3:11–14; Ps 78:1–8).³⁵⁶⁶

By the Greco-Roman era, once a boy reached seven years of age, the primary influence upon him officially shifted from his mother to his father.³⁵⁶⁷ Often, his parents hired a tutor.³⁵⁶⁸ Meanwhile, girls received instruction in managing a household.³⁵⁶⁹ In terms of basic education, women in Rome and in Asia Minor—where Ephesus is located—fared better than those in Judea or Greece.³⁵⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the rationale for educating Greco-Roman women appeared to be so that they could teach young boys.³⁵⁷¹

Quintilian, a great scholar of rhetoric (35–100 AD), asserted:

“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.”³⁵⁷²

³⁵⁵⁸Plutarch, “Lycurgus,” in *Plutarch's Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1914), 16.4, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0047%3Achapter%3D16%3Asection%3D4>.

³⁵⁵⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁶⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁶¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παίδεια” (*paideia*), *BDAG*, 748.

³⁵⁶²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁶³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “νουθεσία” (*nouthesia*), *BDAG*, 679.

³⁵⁶⁴Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁶⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 419.

³⁵⁶⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵⁶⁷Craig S. Keener, “Family and Household,” *DNTB* 353–68, 358.

³⁵⁶⁸Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 337.

³⁵⁶⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁷⁰Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 958.

³⁵⁷¹Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 144.

³⁵⁷²Quintilian, *Institutes* (trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 1.1.4–7, [Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0066%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D2%3Asection%3D29](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0066%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D2%3Asection%3D29).

However, Greco-Roman people frequently denounced highly educated women as promiscuous. In their society, a woman with a bold demeanor implied sexual availability.³⁵⁷³

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; 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 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.”³⁵⁷⁴

Despite his former adherence to the sect of the Pharisees (Phil 3:2–7), Paul did not limit training in the Scriptures to boys (Cf. 1 Tim 2:11).³⁵⁷⁵ This was rare at that time within Judaism.³⁵⁷⁶ While some rabbis taught that men should teach the Mosaic law to their daughters, others asserted 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).³⁵⁷⁷

Finally, we have the modifying phrase “of the Lord” in Paul’s admonition to train and instruct children. This involves following Christ’s example and practicing what he taught (Deut 6:4–9; Matt 22:34–40).³⁵⁷⁸

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) noted:

“The law...commands us to bring those children up in learning, and to exercise them in the laws, and make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors, in order to their imitation of them, and that they might be nourished up in the laws from their infancy, and might neither transgress them, nor have any pretense for their ignorance of them.”³⁵⁷⁹

Plato (427–347 BC) recognized the value of modeling proper behavior. He claimed, “The most effective way of training the young—as well as the older people themselves—is not by admonition, but by plainly practicing throughout one’s own life the admonitions which one

³⁵⁷³ Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 243.

³⁵⁷⁴ Juvenal, “Satire 6,” in *Juvenal and Persius* (trans. G. G. Ramsay; LCL; London; New York: Heinemann; Putnam, 1928), 6:434–61, 119–21, <https://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft#page/118/mode/2up>.

³⁵⁷⁵ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁷⁶ Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁷⁷ John 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>.

³⁵⁷⁸ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵⁷⁹ Josephus, “Against Apion,” in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 2.204, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0216%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston%20section%3D26>.

gives to others.”³⁵⁸⁰

Paul offered himself as an example worthy of emulation (1 Cor 4:14–17, 21). We, too, must educate our children with a godly demeanor, in addition to emphasizing Christian subject matter.³⁵⁸¹ Humility, respect, and submission to others represent core values in the families of believers (Eph 4:1–6; Eph 5:18–21).³⁵⁸²

Read Eph 6:4. How are parents to relate to their children? Why was this unusual in Paul’s era? What did the apostle expect Christian parents to teach their children?

A Slave of Slaves

3) Gen 9:24–25: Interpreters of this passage face two major issues. First, did Noah’s curse merely foretell what would happen or did it change the course of human history? Second, why did the calamity fall upon Canaan, rather than on Ham?³⁵⁸³ Moses wrote, “And Noah awoke from his wine, and he knew what his youngest son did to him. And he said, ‘Canaan be cursed. A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers.’” In the entire account of Noah’s experiences, Moses attributed only these words to him (Gen 6:8–9:29).³⁵⁸⁴ Furthermore, for the first time in Scripture, a human uttered a curse upon someone else.³⁵⁸⁵

Family patriarchs making pronouncements concerning their children appear throughout Genesis.³⁵⁸⁶ These declarations functioned much like reading a will to one’s heirs.³⁵⁸⁷ Typically, such statements focused upon productive soil, the descendants of their offspring, and the relationships between them (e.g. Gen 24:60; Gen 27:27–29, 39–40; Gen 49:1).³⁵⁸⁸

When the Lord curses someone or something, it remains binding (Gen 3:14, 17–19; Ps 37:22).³⁵⁸⁹ However, God is not obligated to afflict a person whom another human curses (2 Sam 16:9–12; Prov 26:2).³⁵⁹⁰ Consequently, scholars disagree whether the Lord spoke prophetically through Noah concerning his grandson.³⁵⁹¹

³⁵⁸⁰Plato, “Laws,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 10* (trans. R. G. Bury; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1967), 5.729c, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D5%3Apage%3D729>.

³⁵⁸¹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁸²Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 329.

³⁵⁸³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 323–4.

³⁵⁸⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁵⁸⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁵⁸⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁸⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁵⁸⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁵⁹⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 350.

³⁵⁹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

Some experts assert that Ham’s behavior served as the occasion when Noah cursed Canaan, rather than causing it.³⁵⁹² His voyeurism and mockery may have finally pushed Noah beyond the breaking point.³⁵⁹³ Similarly, Esau prepared a meal to accompany the moment when Isaac would bless him. Food did not provide the rationale for the decree (Gen 25:23–28; Gen 27:1–4).³⁵⁹⁴

Commentators have wrestled with this text for millennia,³⁵⁹⁵ seeking to determine why Noah singled out Canaan when Ham perpetrated the offense.³⁵⁹⁶ Some posit that a scribe erroneously added “Ham, the father of” to the standard Hebrew text of Gen 9:22.³⁵⁹⁷ However, most bible scholars avoid making such assertions unless there is no other way to interpret the text.³⁵⁹⁸ In one perspective, God had already blessed Noah and his sons,³⁵⁹⁹ and Noah could not overturn that benediction (Gen 9:1).³⁶⁰⁰

According to the *Midrash Rabbah*, a Jewish text which dates to shortly after the exile: “Rabbi Judah said, ‘Since it is written, “And God blessed Noah and his sons,” while there cannot be a curse where a blessing has been given, consequently, [Noah] said, “Cursed be Canaan.”’” Rabbi Nehemiah explained, ‘It was Canaan who saw it [in the first place] and informed them, therefore the curse is attached to him who did wrong.’”³⁶⁰¹

On the other hand, grammatical evidence suggests that Ham was Noah’s youngest son *qaton*, rather than the second-born (Cf. Gen 5:32).³⁶⁰² This also fits with the Hebrew treatment of word pairs, in which the shortest terms appear first.³⁶⁰³ In this scenario, “Shem, Ham, and Japheth” does not reflect their birth order.³⁶⁰⁴

Since Noah’s youngest son humiliated him, he cursed Ham’s youngest son.³⁶⁰⁵ Once again, Genesis reflects the corporate solidarity of the Ancient Near East.³⁶⁰⁶ What the patriarch of a family or clan did affected his descendants for good or for ill (Exod 20:5–6; Num 16:25–33; Josh 7:24–26; Jer 35:18–19).³⁶⁰⁷

People tend to reproduce children whose behavior resembles their own.³⁶⁰⁸ In this view, Canaan conducted himself during this episode in a manner which merited the sentence he received.³⁶⁰⁹ Egypt (Mizraim) and Canaan—two of the nations which descended from Ham—exhibited notoriously contemptible behavior (Gen 10:6; Lev 18:3).³⁶¹⁰ In Joshua’s era, the people

³⁵⁹²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁹³Walton, *Genesis*, 350.

³⁵⁹⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁵⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁵⁹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 197. Wenham disagrees with that claim.

³⁵⁹⁸Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 124.

³⁵⁹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶⁰⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁶⁰¹Freedman, trans, *Genesis* (vol. 1 of *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English*), 36:7–8, 292,

<https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp#page/n339>.

³⁶⁰²Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430>.

³⁶⁰³Shem (שׁם) and Ham both consist of two consonants. Japheth has three.

³⁶⁰⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁶⁰⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶⁰⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶⁰⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶⁰⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶⁰⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁶¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

of Canaan suffered the consequences of acting like Ham (Exod 23:23–24; Deut 9:4–5).³⁶¹¹ The struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman continued (Gen 3:15; Gen 4:9–11).³⁶¹²

“A slave (*evedh*) of slaves” creates a Hebrew superlative, meaning the lowest of subjects.³⁶¹³ We cannot determine whether this means that Canaan’s progeny would be the property of others or merely their servants. The term *evedh* covers a wide range of subordination to another person or nation. Even Israel’s king depicted himself that way when he wrote to the emperor of Assyria (2 Ki 16:7).³⁶¹⁴

However, we do know that Canaan’s offspring experienced subjugation to the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Approximately forty years after Moses penned Genesis, Shem’s descendants overtook Palestine (Josh 11:16–20; Josh 16:10; Josh 17:12–13).³⁶¹⁵ Slavery as an Ancient Near Eastern institution began ca. 4000 BC, when warriors took captives in battle. It later expanded to include debtors and their children (Lev 25:39–44; Neh 5:5).³⁶¹⁶

In Europe and the United States, people tragically misused this verse to assert that God commanded the subjugation of Africans.³⁶¹⁷ One abolitionist wrote, “I am persuaded that no passage in the sacred volume of revelation has suffered more abuse than ‘Noah’s curse or malediction.’”³⁶¹⁸

Ham’s name comes from a term meaning “hot” or “warm” (*ham*),³⁶¹⁹ yet proponents of slavery claimed that “Ham” meant “black” or “burnt.”³⁶²⁰ Although none of Canaan’s offspring included Africans with dark skin (Gen 10:15–19),³⁶²¹ advocates of slavery asserted that the curse applied to all of Ham’s descendants (Gen 10:6–14).³⁶²² Finally, a curse does not equal a command.³⁶²³ Modern Old Testament scholars recognize such views as “exegetically ridiculous.” Nevertheless, some reprinted commentaries reflect a pro-slavery position even today.³⁶²⁴

One reprinted book by A. W. Pink claims: “The whole of Africa was peopled by the descendants of Ham, and for many centuries the greater part of that continent lay under the dominion of the Romans, Saracens, and Turks. And, as is well known, the negroes who were for so long the slaves of Europeans and Americans also claim Ham as their progenitor...The fulfillment of this part of the prophecy is well-known to our readers.”³⁶²⁵

³⁶¹¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶¹³Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430>.

³⁶¹⁴H. Ringgren, U. Rüterwörden, and H. Simian-Yofre, “עֶבֶד” (*evedh*) *TDOT* 10:376–405, 387, 390.

³⁶¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶¹⁶Muhammad A. Dandamayev, “Slavery: Ancient Near East,” *ABD* 6:58–62, 58–9.

³⁶¹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 355.

³⁶¹⁸J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (ed. D. A. Carson; New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2003), 51.

³⁶¹⁹K.-M. Beyse, “חָם” (*ham*), *TDOT* 4: 473–7, 473.

³⁶²⁰Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 52.

³⁶²¹Walton, *Genesis*, 355.

³⁶²²Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 52.

³⁶²³Walton, *Genesis*, 355–6.

³⁶²⁴Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 53.

³⁶²⁵Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Seaside, OR: Watchmaker, 2011), 126, <http://www.grace-ebooks.com/library/Arthur%20W.%20Pink/Gleanings%20in%20Genesis%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf>.

By claiming theological justification for a great blot on European and American history, such publications continue to foster racist attitudes in our churches.³⁶²⁶

a) Read Gen 9:24–25. Why did Noah curse Canaan, rather than Ham? Were Noah’s words binding upon God? Why or why not? How did the improper exegesis of these verses impact African, European, and American history? What effect does this passage have upon the way we treat others?

Blessed Be the God of Shem

b) Gen 9:26–27: After Noah cursed Canaan (Gen 9:24–25), he said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and let Canaan be a slave to him. May God make wide for Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be a slave to him.” Surprisingly, Noah blessed God, rather than his son Shem, in response to his sons’ righteous act (Gen 9:20–23).³⁶²⁷

Since Noah did not mention a specific benefit, he seems to have thanked the Lord for being the God of Shem.³⁶²⁸ His godly lineage would proceed through that son (Gen 11:10–11, 31),³⁶²⁹ which explains the omission of Japheth. In this verse, Noah desired the servitude of Canaan; he did not cause it.³⁶³⁰ Repeating the request twice makes it emphatic.³⁶³¹

Regarding Japheth, Noah engaged in wordplay by matching the verb for “make wide” (*pathah*) with the name of his son (*yapheth elohim leyapheth*).³⁶³² He asked the Lord to give Japheth an extensive inheritance of land.³⁶³³ Japheth’s offspring eventually spread through Greece and Turkey, then into Europe (Gen 10:2–5).³⁶³⁴

The identity of “him” in the phrase “let him dwell in the tents of Shem” remains unclear. Ancient literature suggests that Noah referred to God.³⁶³⁵ For example, an Aramaic paraphrase of this verse says, “And he shall make his Shekinah to dwell in the tabernacles of Shem.”³⁶³⁶ According to the *Babylonian Talmud*, “Although God has enlarged Japheth, the Divine Presence rests only in the tents of Shem.”³⁶³⁷ When Moses recorded Noah’s words, Israel was likely

³⁶²⁶Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 54.

³⁶²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325. *Pathah* is the lexical form for *levaptheth*.

³⁶³³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “פָּתַח” (*pathah*), *BDB*, 834,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/834>.

³⁶³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325–6.

³⁶³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶³⁶John Wesley Etheridge, trans., *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, with Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), 54, http://www.pathoftorah.com/pdf/ebooks/targum/targum_genesis_exodus.pdf.

³⁶³⁷*b. Yoma 10a*, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>.

constructing the tent where God took up residence (Exod 25:8–9, 22; Exod 40:17, 33–38).³⁶³⁸

However, several issues persist with the interpretation that “him” refers to the Lord,³⁶³⁹ leading most current scholars to take a different approach.³⁶⁴⁰ In Gen 9:27, Noah blessed Japheth, not Shem.³⁶⁴¹ Therefore, the one who inhabits Shem’s tents is Japheth, rather than God.³⁶⁴² Furthermore, “tents” (*ohel*) occurs in plural form. This indicates that multiple households would reside among Shem’s descendants.³⁶⁴³

Thus, the people descending from Shem and Japheth would coexist in peace.³⁶⁴⁴ Commentators have advanced numerous possibilities regarding such an alliance.³⁶⁴⁵ Yet, none of the suggestions emerge as strong contenders as they typically trace a people-group to the wrong ancestors. The incorporation of gentiles into the people of God has some merit (Eph 2:11–22).³⁶⁴⁶ This section concludes with, “Let Canaan be a slave to him.” Both Shem and Japheth’s progeny would subjugate those of Noah’s youngest son (Cf. Gen 9:22–25).³⁶⁴⁷ The offspring of Moses’s original audience would have recognized that the people of Canaan sinned as their ancestor Ham did (Gen 10:15–19; Exod 3:8; Deut 9:5).³⁶⁴⁸

However, God made exceptions to Noah’s curse and blessing. Rahab the gentile prostitute and her family joined the people of the Lord (Josh 2:8–14; Josh 6:25). Meanwhile, the Israelite Achan broke God’s command regarding taking plunder from Rahab’s city. As a result, his family received the death penalty (Josh 7:1, 15, 22–26). Ultimately, Israel and Judah also followed the way of the Canaanites (2 Ki 17:7–20).³⁶⁴⁹ Even then, God spared a faithful Cushite, a descendant of Ham (Gen 10:6; Jer 38:7–10; Jer 39:15–18).

Read Gen 9:26–27. Who did Noah bless for Shem’s righteous act? Why? How does this text foretell the incorporation of Gentiles into the people of God? Why do we know that the Lord made exceptions to Noah’s blessing and curse?

³⁶³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶⁴²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶⁴⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 203.

³⁶⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁴⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

Chapter 11: The Table of Nations (Genesis 9:28–10:32)

After a considerable time had elapsed since the flood,³⁶⁵⁰ Noah planted a vineyard (Gen 9:20). Rain came in the right amounts for growing crops which were luxuries,³⁶⁵¹ such as grapes.³⁶⁵² No longer did it obliterate life (Gen 7:17–24; Gen 8:11).³⁶⁵³ While the wine which Noah produced brought comfort from his toil, it became a mixed blessing.³⁶⁵⁴ He drank enough to become drunk, strip himself naked, and lie uncovered in his tent (Gen 9:21).³⁶⁵⁵

Ham—the father of Canaan—took a good look at his father before informing his two brothers (Gen 9:22). By telling others of Noah’s disgraceful state, Ham humiliated his father.³⁶⁵⁶ In contrast, Shem and Japheth expended great effort expended to avoid seeing their father’s nudity. Imagine them plotting how to manage to clothe Noah without catching a glimpse of him. Perhaps they walked backwards until Noah’s toes came into view and then dropped the cloak over their father (Gen 9:23).³⁶⁵⁷

After coming out of his stupor, Noah learned what his youngest son had done to him (Gen 9:24). For the first time in the entire flood account, he spoke.³⁶⁵⁸ He said, “Canaan be cursed. A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers” (Gen 9:25). Noah may have singled out Canaan because he was Ham’s youngest son or,³⁶⁵⁹ perhaps, because Canaan adopted the behavior of his father, meriting Noah’s wrath.³⁶⁶⁰

In contrast, Noah blessed the God of Shem,³⁶⁶¹ implying that a godly lineage would issue from that son (Gen 9:26).³⁶⁶² Noah also requested that Japheth’s offspring would populate extensive territory,³⁶⁶³ and that Shem and Japheth would form an alliance.³⁶⁶⁴ The patriarch’s last recorded words emphatically reiterated his desire that Shem and Japheth subjugate Canaan (Gen 9:27).³⁶⁶⁵

The Death of Noah

1) Gen 9:28–29: Moses at last concluded the genealogy of Noah, which he interrupted at the end of Gen 5:32.³⁶⁶⁶ The entire flood account amplifies biographical material concerning a descendant of Seth (Gen 5:3–4).³⁶⁶⁷ Taken together with Gen 5:32, these verses parallel the genealogy structure of Gen 5,³⁶⁶⁸ with one important deviation. The account of Noah’s

³⁶⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁶⁵¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁶⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁶⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁶⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁶⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200.

³⁶⁵⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶⁶⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁶⁶¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶⁶²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*פָּתַח*” (*pathah*) *BDB*, 834,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/834/mode/2up>.

³⁶⁶⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 327.

³⁶⁶⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

descendants forms a segmented genealogy tracing all three of his sons,³⁶⁶⁹ rather than a linear genealogy which mentions only the most prominent son by name.³⁶⁷⁰

The typical format of Gen 5 appears as follows: Person A lived x years and fathered Person B; Person A lived y years after that and had other sons and daughters; Person A lived x plus y years and then he died.³⁶⁷¹ Moses recorded, “And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.”

This period likely began at the onset of the year-long flood (Gen 7:6). Moses omitted the stock phrase “and he had other sons and daughters” because he traced the lineage of all humanity in his known world, which descended from Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 9:18–27; Gen 10).³⁶⁷²

Noah’s fate contrasts with that of Utnapishtim, who recounted this post-flood event in the Epic of Gilgamesh:

“Thereupon Enlil went aboard the ship. Holding me by the hand, he took me aboard. He took my wife aboard and made (her) kneel by my side. Standing between us, he touched our foreheads to bless us, ‘Hitherto Utnapishtim has been but human. Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods. Utnapishtim shall reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers!’ Thus, they took me and made me reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers.”³⁶⁷³

Unlike Utnapishtim—who achieved immortality—Noah suffered the fate of virtually all his ancestors. Only Enoch escaped death (Gen 5:21–24).³⁶⁷⁴

a) Read Gen 9:28–29. Why did Moses deviate from the typical genealogy format of Gen 5? How would you characterize Noah’s life? Which aspects would you like to emulate? How do you seek to be different from him?

The Descendants of Noah

b) Gen 10:1: Genesis 10, which some scholars call the Table of Nations, expands upon Gen 9:19.³⁶⁷⁵ It represents God’s concern for all people-groups.³⁶⁷⁶ Moses introduced the descendants of each of Noah’s sons with a standard formula: “The sons of X were.” He ended each section by writing, “These are the sons of X according to their clans and languages in their countries by their nations.”³⁶⁷⁷

The Table of Nations did not comprise a comprehensive list (Gen 10:5).³⁶⁷⁸ Instead, it functioned as a carefully crafted theological statement.³⁶⁷⁹ In the Bible, the number seven

³⁶⁶⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 248–9.

³⁶⁷⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

³⁶⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

³⁶⁷²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 203–4.

³⁶⁷³Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:189–96, 95.

³⁶⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 204.

³⁶⁷⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁶⁷⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 161.

³⁶⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213.

³⁶⁷⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁶⁷⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 162.

signifies completion or fullness.³⁶⁸⁰ Japheth had seven sons and seven grandsons.³⁶⁸¹ Among the offspring of Ham are seven sons of Cush and seven sons of Mizraim (Egypt). Shem's line down to Eber names fourteen descendants.³⁶⁸² Overall, the Table of Nations contains seventy names, equivalent to ten multiples of seven.³⁶⁸³

Several significant differences exist between this genealogy and the ones in Gen 5 and in Gen 11:10–27.³⁶⁸⁴ In Gen 10, some of the names represent specific men while others signify people-groups or even locations.³⁶⁸⁵ Other ancient genealogies, such as that of Hammurabi (reigned 1792–1750 BC), also feature the names of tribes and geographic regions.³⁶⁸⁶ Thus, no one's age appears in the list,³⁶⁸⁷ as it presents the relationships between various groups rather than focusing upon individuals.³⁶⁸⁸

A “son” (*ben*) typically refers to a direct descendant. However, the Hebrew language also allows the term to indicate a grandson or the distant offspring of a founding father (Gen 31:17–18, 26–28).³⁶⁸⁹ For example, the “sons of Levi” answered Moses's summons. However, many generations had been born and died since the lifetime of that patriarch (Gen 15:13; Exod 1:1–8; Exod 32:26).

Furthermore, in the Ancient Near East (ANE), the term “son” did not necessarily imply kinship. Participants in treaties employed similar language.³⁶⁹⁰ A stela (ca. 1575 BC) discovered at Karnak Temple in Egypt says,³⁶⁹¹ “I captured a message of his...upon a letter of papyrus. I found on it, in written words from the ruler of Avaris, ‘the Son of Re: Apophis, sending greetings to my son, the ruler of Cush.’”³⁶⁹² In Ugaritic, a language related to Hebrew, the same word (*bn*) could also refer to a person who lived in a particular city or country.³⁶⁹³

The peoples in Gen 10 represented the major groups known to Israel (Gen 11:1).³⁶⁹⁴ By citing their common ancestry through Noah, this genealogy emphasizes the fundamental unity of those dwelling in the ANE.³⁶⁹⁵ Yet, it also distinguishes between them in terms of their geographic locations, ethnicities, and political affiliations.³⁶⁹⁶ Similarities of speech occurred across ancestral lines. For example, some of the sons of Ham spoke languages related to those of the sons of Shem.³⁶⁹⁷ No hint of people living outside of the ANE occurs here.³⁶⁹⁸ Moses

³⁶⁸⁰Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁶⁸¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213.

³⁶⁸²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 164–5.

³⁶⁸³Ryken, et. al., “Seventy” in *DBI*, 775.

³⁶⁸⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁸⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 165.

³⁶⁸⁶J. J. Finkelstein, “The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty,” *JCS* 20 (1966): 99, 101,

[Http://www.caeno.org/pdf/Finkelstein_Bala%20era_Hammurabi.pdf](http://www.caeno.org/pdf/Finkelstein_Bala%20era_Hammurabi.pdf).

³⁶⁸⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁸⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 368.

³⁶⁸⁹H. Haag, “בן” (*ben*) *TDOT*, 2:145–59, 150, 152.

³⁶⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁹¹Pritchard, *ANET*, 554.

³⁶⁹²Ka-Mose, “The War Against the Hyksos (Continued),” in *ANET* (trans. John A. Wilson), 555.

³⁶⁹³J. Bergman, H. Ringgren, and H. Haag, “בן” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:145–59, 148.

³⁶⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁶⁹⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁶⁹⁶B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 14,

[Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁶⁹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 243.

³⁶⁹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 368–9.

achieved a two-fold purpose. First, he expressed unity through a common ancestor.³⁶⁹⁹ Then, he described the outcome of the settlement of North Africa, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and coastal areas of the Mediterranean.³⁷⁰⁰

Many commentators concur that the names listed here point to an editor from the first millennium BC, as no extra-biblical record of some of these names appears until that time.³⁷⁰¹ However, it also appears that the author of the Table of Nations used preexisting material. A change in the customary format occurred by the sixth century BC (Cf. 1 Chron 1:5–23).³⁷⁰²

Overall, the list consists of a three-part arrangement in accord with Noah's pronouncement in Gen 9:24–27.³⁷⁰³ Although some exceptions exist, the Shemites were nomadic, Hamites dwelt in cities, and the sons of Japheth were seafarers.³⁷⁰⁴ As often occurs in Genesis, the editor began with the lines which God did not choose before discussing Israel's ancestor (Gen 4:17–5:32; Gen 25:12–19; Gen 36:9–37:2).³⁷⁰⁵

This genealogy begins with, “And this [is] the account of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.” As we have seen elsewhere in Genesis, “This is the account of” opens a major new section of the text (Gen 2:4; Gen 5:1; Gen 6:9).³⁷⁰⁶ By utilizing the passive voice to convey that “sons were born” to Noah's progeny, this verse depicts the fulfillment of God's blessing in Gen 9:1.³⁷⁰⁷

a) Read Gen 10.1. What hints do we have that this list is not a typical biblical genealogy? Why do you think the editor used groups of sevens for a total of seventy names? What is the purpose of the Table of Nations?

The Descendants of Japheth

c) Gen 10:2–5. To preserve our sanity, we'll examine only the nations which had a significant effect upon biblical history or the Ancient Near East (ANE). Since the descendants of Japheth included people-groups who had little contact with Israel, Moses gave them the briefest treatment.³⁷⁰⁸ They lived to the north of Israel, spreading from Asia Minor to the Greek islands.³⁷⁰⁹ None of them bordered upon Israel.³⁷¹⁰

³⁶⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁷⁰⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:1.

³⁷⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰²Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” 30, <http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf>.

³⁷⁰³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 162.

³⁷⁰⁴Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” 22, 30, <http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf>.

³⁷⁰⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 83.

³⁷⁰⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 330.

³⁷⁰⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 334–5.

³⁷¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

The prophet Ezekiel cited Magog as a future enemy of Israel (Ezek 38:2; Ezek 39:6).³⁷¹¹ However, that nation remains one of the few groups in Gen 10 which we cannot precisely identify. Extant cuneiform texts never mention the name.³⁷¹²

On the other hand, the Madai (Medes) played an enormous role in Israel's history. They occupied Northwest Iran,³⁷¹³ beginning around 1000 BC. The Medes repeatedly battled with the Assyrians until they formed an overwhelming army with the addition of the Persians late in the sixth century BC.³⁷¹⁴ This enabled the Medo-Persian Empire to defeat the Babylonians, eventually leading to Judah's return to the promised land (Isa 13:17–22; Jer 51:10–12, 27–28; Dan 5:25–31).³⁷¹⁵ Judah's deliverer, Cyrus the Great (reigned 550–530 BC), eventually ruled over Persia, Medea, Syria, Israel, and parts of modern Turkey (2 Chron 36:20–23).³⁷¹⁶

Despite appearing frequently in the Old Testament, the location of Tarshish remains uncertain.³⁷¹⁷ It could be anywhere in the Mediterranean or Indian Oceans,³⁷¹⁸ ranging from Carthage in North Africa to Tartessus in southwest Spain.³⁷¹⁹ However, the latter option would isolate it from the region of the other peoples named as descendants of Japheth.³⁷²⁰ Solomon developed extensive trading ties with Tarshish, importing a variety of luxury items (1 Ki 10:21–22).³⁷²¹ Jonah intended to flee there when he sought to flee from obeying the Lord's command to preach to the people of Nineveh (Jon 1:1–3).

Moses's closing statement for this section implies that the Table of Nations does not include every descendant of Japheth.³⁷²² He wrote, "From these were separated the nations of the coastlands in their lands, by their languages, by their clans, among their nations." This verse implies that the events of Gen 11:1–9 had already occurred.³⁷²³ Ancient people distinguished themselves from others by geographic regions, languages, and ethnic groups, not by racial divisions.³⁷²⁴

Japheth's offspring were associated with the seas.³⁷²⁵ "These" refers to all his descendants, not only to the sons of Javan (Gen 10:4–5).³⁷²⁶ Clans (*mishpakhah*) in Israel were larger than a household and smaller than a tribe, akin to an extended family (Josh 7:16–17; 1 Sam 10:20–21).³⁷²⁷ A clay map dating to 7th–8th century BC Babylon names many descendants

³⁷¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 332.

³⁷¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 216.

³⁷¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 167.

³⁷¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 332.

³⁷¹⁵British Museum, "The Cyrus Cylinder,"

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1.

³⁷¹⁶T. Cuyler Young, Jr., "Cyrus (Person)," *ABD* 1:1231–2, 1231.

³⁷¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 218.

³⁷¹⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 333.

³⁷¹⁹Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 167.

³⁷²⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 333.

³⁷²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷²⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:1–29.

³⁷²⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷²⁷H.-J. Zobel, "מִשְׁפָּחָה" (*mishpat*), *TDOT* 9:79–86, 80.

of Japheth..³⁷²⁸ It confirms that people in the ANE perceived these groups as living on the far reaches of civilization.³⁷²⁹

Read Gen 10:2–5. How would you classify the descendants of Japheth?

The Descendants of Ham

d) Gen 10:6–14: The names listed here include Israel’s nearest neighbors.³⁷³⁰ Not only did these nations surround Israel,³⁷³¹ conflict often erupted between them.³⁷³² Typically, the peoples named here dwelt in cities, representing the apex of social and political civilization in the Ancient Near East (ANE).³⁷³³ We’ll examine only the people-groups who had a significant effect upon biblical history or that region.

Consistent with Noah’s curse (Gen 9:20–27), the genealogy of Canaan does not feature seven people-groups,³⁷³⁴ the number of fullness or completion.³⁷³⁵ In his introduction, the editor listed Ham’s descendants geographically, from south to north.³⁷³⁶ He wrote, “And the sons of Ham [were] Cush, and Mizraim, and Put, and Canaan.”

Cush lies south of Egypt, in the modern-day territories of Ethiopia and North Sudan. Its rich gold mines led to frequent conflict with Egypt, its neighbor to the north. By the time of Moses, Egypt deployed renowned soldiers from Cush into Canaan.³⁷³⁷ Moses married a woman of Cushite origin (Num 12:1).

Mizraim (*Mitsraim*) is the Hebrew name for Egypt. Since that nation consisted of Upper and Lower Egypt, this proper noun occurs in plural form.³⁷³⁸ Initially, Egypt served as a gracious host to Israel before subjecting Moses’s original audience to cruel slavery (Gen 47:1–6; Exod 1:8–14).³⁷³⁹

Most verses in the Greek Old Testament (OT) translate “Put” as “Libya.” This is the only one of Ham’s sons without any children mentioned in this genealogy. The OT speaks of the men of Put as warriors (Jer 46:9; Ezek 30:5; Nah 3:9).³⁷⁴⁰

³⁷²⁸The British Museum, “The Map of the World,” http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=404485001&objectid=362000.

³⁷²⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷³¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷³³B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)—A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 28, [Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁷³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 165.

³⁷³⁵Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁷³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁷³⁷Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 88.

³⁷³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 336. In Hebrew, one pluralizes a masculine noun by adding “im” at its end.

³⁷³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷⁴⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 336.

The descendants of Cush settled in or near to Arabia. “Havilah” is related to the word “sandy.” Therefore, whether it represents the location mentioned elsewhere in the OT remains uncertain (Gen 2:11; Gen 25:16–18; 1 Sam 15:7).³⁷⁴¹

Moses cited Sheba among the descendants of Abraham and his second wife (Gen 25:1–3; 1 Chron 1:32).³⁷⁴² During Solomon’s reign, Sheba’s queen traveled to Jerusalem bearing costly gifts of gold and spices (1 Ki 10:1–2).³⁷⁴³ According to Ethiopian legend, she gave birth to Solomon’s son after returning to her home. Years later, Menelik visited his father and stole the ark of the covenant before returning to his mother.³⁷⁴⁴

After mentioning five sons and two grandsons of Cush, the editor of the Table of Nations penned an extended section on Cush’s sixth son (Gen 10:8–12).³⁷⁴⁵ Most likely, this was a later insertion, as it concerns the origin of the two empires which exiled Israel and Judah: Assyria and Babylonia.³⁷⁴⁶

He wrote, “And Cush fathered Nimrod. And he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord, and so it is said, ‘like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.’” Many commentators claim that Nimrod means “We shall rebel,”³⁷⁴⁷ foreshadowing the events in Babel (Gen 11:1–9).³⁷⁴⁸ This view indicts him as the supreme example of insurrection against God.³⁷⁴⁹ Yet, nothing in these verses explicitly links Nimrod to the Tower of Babel.³⁷⁵⁰

Some scholars associate him with Babylon’s patron deity Marduk or with Ninurta, the god of war and hunting.³⁷⁵¹ However, this genealogy affirms Nimrod’s humanity. Therefore, several other options are worth exploring.

For example, Sargon the Great ruled over Akkad, the first known ANE empire, close to 2300 BC. However, he did not descend from Cush.³⁷⁵² A powerful pharaoh named Amenhotep (Amenophis) III (1386–1353 BC) was also known as Nimmureya in the Amarna Letters. During his reign, he undertook major building programs.³⁷⁵³ He issued several commemorative scarabs, with one depicting him capturing 102 lions.³⁷⁵⁴

On the other hand, one messianic OT text equates Assyria with the land of Nimrod (Mic 5:5–6).³⁷⁵⁵ The Assyrian ruler Tukulti-Ninurta I (ca. 1246–1206 BC) defeated Babylon and took the statue of Marduk from its temple into captivity.³⁷⁵⁶ By doing this, he asserted the superiority

³⁷⁴¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁷⁴² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

³⁷⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴⁴ E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Kebra Nagast* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1932), xliii–xlv, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/kn/kn000-5.htm>.

³⁷⁴⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷⁴⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁴⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁵⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁵² Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷⁵³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁵⁴ The British Museum, “Collection Online: Commemorative Scarab,”

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=141170&partId=1.

³⁷⁵⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁵⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

of his gods over those of Babylon.³⁷⁵⁷ In order to finance his enormous building projects, he imposed high taxes upon his subjects.³⁷⁵⁸

Since none of these options fits perfectly, “Nimrod” may represent the ANE standard for a nation’s ruler.³⁷⁵⁹ He achieved his power by military invasions, not merely by spreading peacefully into new regions.³⁷⁶⁰ The term used to describe him refers to someone of surpassing might (*gibor*) who accomplishes great deeds (Gen 6:4; Judg 11:1; Prov 30:30).³⁷⁶¹

Within the ANE, kings boasted of their skill in hunting large game.³⁷⁶² In fact, the royal hunt as a symbol of military might took on an aspect of propaganda, especially in Assyria and Egypt.³⁷⁶³ The British Museum contains seventh century BC reliefs from Nineveh depicting a lion hunt which cover an entire room’s walls.³⁷⁶⁴

A stela about the exploits of Thutmose III (1490–1436 BC) says: “I speak...of what he did, without *lying* and without equivocation...without a phrase of boasting therein. If he spent a moment of recreation by hunting in any foreign country, the number of that which he carried off is greater than the bag of the entire army. He killed seven lions by shooting in the completion of a moment. He carried off a herd of twelve wild cattle within an hour...He carried off a rhinoceros by shooting, in the southern country of Nubia, after he proceeded to Miu (Sudan) to seek him who had been rebellious to him in that country.”³⁷⁶⁵

The phrase “before the Lord” does not suggest that God approved of Nimrod’s exploits. Indeed, he may have functioned as a despot, for an Arabic word related to “mighty” connotes tyranny and audacity.³⁷⁶⁶ Most likely, the phrase functions as a superlative, asserting that he exhibited overweening power to evoke great fear.³⁷⁶⁷ As a result, even God acknowledged his abilities.³⁷⁶⁸ This resulted in a proverb citing his prowess (Gen 10:9).³⁷⁶⁹

The editor continued, “The beginning of his kingdom [was] Babel, and Erech, and Akkad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From that land, he went out to Assyria. And he built Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah. It [is] the great city.” “Beginning” (*reshith*) has several nuances, all of which inform our understanding of this verse. It means “chief,” “best,” “first fruits,” and “first in time.”³⁷⁷⁰ In addition to the early dates of the founding of the cities named here, most of them achieved political prominence in the ANE.³⁷⁷¹

³⁷⁵⁷Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 124.

³⁷⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

³⁷⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁶⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶¹H. Kosmala, “גַּבֹּר” (*gabbar*), *TDOT* 2:373–82, 373.

³⁷⁶²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶³Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna): Background Issues and Methods,” *ABD* 6:1109–1119, 1112.

³⁷⁶⁴Osama S. M. Amin, “Assyrian Lion-Hunting at the British Museum,” <http://etc.ancient.eu/photos/assyrian-lion-hunting-british-museum/>.

³⁷⁶⁵M. S. Drower (trans.), “Pharaoh as Sportsman,” in *ANET*, 243–4.

³⁷⁶⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גַּבֹּר” (*gibbor*), *BDB*, 150.

³⁷⁶⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 223.

³⁷⁶⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁷⁰S. Rattray and J. Milgrom, “רֵאשִׁית” (*reshith*), *TDOT* 13:269–72, 269.

³⁷⁷¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

Babylonians understood “*Babel*” to mean “the gate of God.”³⁷⁷² Dating to the third millennium BC,³⁷⁷³ this city became a major world power by the first millennium BC. Eventually it symbolized all Mediterranean civilization,³⁷⁷⁴ much like Rome did in the Middle Ages.³⁷⁷⁵

Unlike Greek writers, who praised the great city, biblical authors condemned Babylon for its wickedness (Isa 14:3–6, 16–21; Isa 47; Jer 50:13–15). Babylon began the first wave of deportations from Judah in 597 BC, and Nebuchadnezzar II installed Zedekiah as his vassal (2 Ki 24:1–4; 2 Ki 24:10–17). His army left only some of the poorest people in the land (Jer 52:12–16). After Zedekiah rebelled, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC (2 Ki 24:18–20; 2 Ki 25:8–12). The people of Judah remained outside of the promised land until 538 BC, seventy years after Babylon exiled Israel’s aristocracy.

Erech (Uruk) served as a Sumerian cultural hub.³⁷⁷⁶ One of the early centers of civilization,³⁷⁷⁷ it reached its height in the fourth and third millennia BC.³⁷⁷⁸ Since Gilgamesh reigned from Erech,³⁷⁷⁹ a few commentators equate Nimrod with him.³⁷⁸⁰ After deporting the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, the Assyrians relocated people from Erech into their land (Ezra 4:8–9).³⁷⁸¹

Sargon the Great founded Akkad on the Euphrates River (ca. 2350 BC).³⁷⁸² However, its precise location remains undiscovered.³⁷⁸³ Like Hebrew, Akkadian falls within the Semitic language group.³⁷⁸⁴

Whether “Ashur” represents all of Assyria or only the capital bearing that name remains unknown.³⁷⁸⁵ Assyria overthrew and exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel, replacing the population with refugees whom they called Samaritans (2 Ki 17:1–6, 24, 41). At that time, Israel ceased to exist as a nation.³⁷⁸⁶ Assyrians practiced exceptional cruelty, even by ancient standards (2 Chron 33:11; Isa 37:21–29).³⁷⁸⁷

Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC) reported:

“Tanis and of all the other towns which had associated with them to plot, they did not spare anybody among (them). They hung their corpses from stakes, flayed their skins and covered (with them) the wall of the town(s). 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.”³⁷⁸⁸

³⁷⁷² Helmer Ringgren, “בָּבֶל” (*babel*), *TDOT* 1:466–6, 466–7.

³⁷⁷³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 223.

³⁷⁷⁴ Jean-Claude Margueron, trans. Paul Sager, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563–5, 563.

³⁷⁷⁵ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁷⁶ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29–31.

³⁷⁷⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁷⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁷⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29–31.

³⁷⁸⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁸¹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁸³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 243.

³⁷⁸⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339–40.

³⁷⁸⁶ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (ed. E. Ray Clendenen, Kenneth A. Mathews, and David S. Dockery; NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 340.

³⁷⁸⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸⁸ Assurbanipal II, “Campaigns Against Egypt, Syria, and Palestine,” in *ANET* (trans. Daniel David Luckenbill), 295.

Aside from the capital, Nineveh was the most prominent of Assyrian cities. Founded in approximately 4500 BC,³⁷⁸⁹ its ruins lie along the Tigris River in Mosul, Iraq.³⁷⁹⁰ Fear that God would forgive Assyrian violence led Jonah to flee in the opposite direction from Nineveh (Jon 3:1–4:2).

Grammatically, “the great city” seems to refer to Calah.³⁷⁹¹ However, that site remained insignificant until it became Assyria’s capital in the ninth century BC.³⁷⁹² Therefore, this phrase likely describes Nineveh (Jon 1:1–2; Jon 4:11).³⁷⁹³

Overall, Nimrod’s empire encompassed all of Mesopotamia, from Babylon to Assyria.³⁷⁹⁴ He descended from Ham. Yet his territory was surrounded by kingdoms ruled by men who claimed Shem as their ancestor (Gen 10:21–31).³⁷⁹⁵ They repeatedly experienced conflict.

The Casluhim remain unidentified.³⁷⁹⁶ Their significance arises from the editor’s note which says, “...and Casluhim (from which came out the Philistines).” Philistines entered Canaan over land from modern day Turkey and by ships which sailed from Crete and Cyprus.³⁷⁹⁷ Since Amos 9:7 asserts that the Philistines came from Crete (Caphtor) even as Israel came from Egypt, they may not have originated there (Jer 47:4).³⁷⁹⁸

The presence of Philistines in Canaan during the lifetimes of Abraham and Isaac may indicate that a small group of Philistines settled there before 1200 BC (Gen 21:32–34; Gen 26:1). After the Sea Peoples ended Egyptian control over Palestine, many Philistines entered the region.³⁷⁹⁹ Beginning with the years when judges ruled over Israel until early in David’s reign, warfare against the Philistines occurred often (Judg 13:1–5; 1 Sam 4:10–11; 1 Sam 17:50–54; 2 Sam 5:17–25).

In 589 BC, a coalition of Egyptian and Philistine soldiers drew Nebuchadnezzar’s forces from Jerusalem. At that time, Assyria deported the Philistines from their cities (Jer 37:5–10; Jer 47:1–7).³⁸⁰⁰ Three years later Jerusalem also fell (2 Ki 25:1–12).

Read Gen 10:6–14. How would you characterize the descendants of Ham? What does the omission of sets of seven tell us about these people-groups? Why did the editor focus upon Nimrod? What impact did these nations have upon Israel and Judah?

³⁷⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 224.

³⁷⁹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 340.

³⁷⁹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 224.

³⁷⁹²A. Kirk Grayson, “Calah (Place),” *ABD* 1:807–8, 808.

³⁷⁹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 340.

³⁷⁹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁹⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 369.

³⁷⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁷⁹⁷H. J. Katzenstein, “Philistines: History,” *ABD* 5:326–8, 326.

³⁷⁹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 170.

³⁷⁹⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 26:6.

³⁸⁰⁰H. J. Katzenstein, “Philistines: History” in *ABD*, 5:326–328, 328.

The Descendants of Canaan

e) **Gen 10:15–20:** Although Noah cursed Canaan (Gen 9:20–27), his fertility remained unaffected. This list names eleven of his descendants, second in number only to Joktan.³⁸⁰¹ We'll examine only the people-groups which significantly affected biblical or Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) history. The amount of detail in this genealogy corresponds with the importance of these nations in relationship to Israel (Gen 15:17–21; Exod 3:7–8).³⁸⁰² Canaanites inhabited portions of the eastern Mediterranean.³⁸⁰³ Today this area lies within Israel, part of Syria, and Lebanon.³⁸⁰⁴

“Heth” refers to the Hittites.³⁸⁰⁵ Two different groups of people bore this name, creating much confusion.³⁸⁰⁶ Kings who settled in Syria and Turkey ruled over the Hittite Empire.³⁸⁰⁷ It reached its apex during ca. 1650–1200 BC.³⁸⁰⁸ However, the Semitic names of the Hittites mentioned in the Old Testament point to a different origin, consistent with Canaan.³⁸⁰⁹ Heth's descendants lived in what became Judah (Gen 23:1–6).³⁸¹⁰ Esau grieved his parents by marrying a Hittite woman (Gen 26:34–35; Gen 27:46).³⁸¹¹

Jebusites lived in the area which includes Jerusalem (Judg 19:10–12; Josh 15:63).³⁸¹² Eventually, David captured the city and made it his capital (2 Sam 5:4–9).³⁸¹³ Most likely, Jebusites appear in this list of Canaan's progeny because they resided in his territory.³⁸¹⁴ They did not descend from him.³⁸¹⁵

Amorites (“of the West”) entered Northwest Mesopotamia in the mid-third millennium BC.³⁸¹⁶ They invaded Mari and made it one of their capitals.³⁸¹⁷ In approximately 1960 BC, an alliance of Amorites and Elamites destroyed Ur, the city of Abraham's birth (Gen 11:27–31). Thus, Hammurabi (reigned 1792–1750 BC), the most famous Amorite king,³⁸¹⁸ ruled over the Babylonian Empire.³⁸¹⁹

Amorites had a huge influence on the language, religion, and laws of Canaan. Among extant ANE law codes, the 18th century BC Code of Hammurabi first established the law of retribution (e.g. “An eye for an eye”). However—unlike in Israel (Cf. Exod 21:18–26)—social class determined the penalty.³⁸²⁰

“If a seignior (free man) held (a debt of) grain or money against a(nother) seignior and distrained (someone as) his pledge and the pledge has then died a natural death in the house of his

³⁸⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 330–1.

³⁸⁰²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸⁰³Walton, *Genesis*, 368.

³⁸⁰⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁸⁰⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸⁰⁶Gregory McMahon, “Hittites in the OT,” *ABD* 3:231–3, 232.

³⁸⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸⁰⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸¹¹McMahon, “Hittites in the OT,” 231.

³⁸¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸¹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸¹⁴Stephen A. Reed, “Jebus (Place),” *ABD* 3:652–3, 652.

³⁸¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸¹⁶George E. Mendenhall, “Amorites,” *ABD* 1:199–202, 199.

³⁸¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸¹⁸Mendenhall, “Amorites,” 201.

³⁸¹⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 370.

³⁸²⁰Huffman, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321.

distrainer, that case is not subject to claim. If the pledge has died from beating or abuse in the house of his distrainer, the owner of the pledge shall prove it against his merchant, and if it was the seignior's son, they shall put his son to death; if it was the seignior's slave, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver and also forfeit everything else that he lent.

“If a seignior struck a(nother) seignior's daughter and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If that woman has died, they shall put his daughter to death. If by a blow he has caused a commoner's daughter to have a miscarriage, he shall pay five shekels of silver. If that woman has died, he shall pay one-half mina [twenty-five shekels] of silver. If he struck a seignior's female slave and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay two shekels of silver. If that female slave has died, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver.”³⁸²¹

Another Amorite settlement began in Palestine in the second millennium BC. Abraham and Jacob lived near there.³⁸²² These Amorites scattered throughout the region of the Jordan River and Judah (Gen 14:13; Gen 48:21–22).³⁸²³ Moses defeated some of them on Israel's way to the promised land (Deut 3:8; Num 21:25–26). The prophet Ezekiel accused Jerusalem's inhabitants of behaving like the progeny of Amorites and Hittites (Ezek 16:1–3).³⁸²⁴

Canaanites (Phoenicians) lived along the highway which connected Egypt to Mesopotamia.³⁸²⁵ They spread from Gerar (Gen 20:1), north of Sidon,³⁸²⁶ down to Gaza.³⁸²⁷ Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim comprised four municipalities in southeast Canaan, near the Dead Sea.³⁸²⁸ The Lord destroyed those cities during Abraham's lifetime (Gen 19:24–25; Deut 29:23).³⁸²⁹

Read Gen 10:15–20. Why do you think Canaan's genealogy included such detailed information? How would you characterize these nations?

The Descendants of Shem

f) Gen 10:21–31: As often occurs in the genealogies of Genesis, the final line of descent in Gen 10 includes the people whom God chose as his own (Cf. Gen 25:12, 19–26; Gen 36:1; Gen 37:1–2).³⁸³⁰ We will address only those nations which impacted biblical or Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) history.

³⁸²¹Hammurabi, “Code of Hammurabi,” in *ANET*, 209–14, 175. A mina was worth 50 shekels.

³⁸²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²⁴Mendenhall, “Amorites,” 201–2.

³⁸²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 172.

³⁸³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 343.

Elam, a non-Semitic nation east of the Tigris River in modern-day Iran,³⁸³¹ dates to the third millennium BC.³⁸³² Its inclusion here appears to relate to geography, rather than to ethnicity.³⁸³³ At its height, this confederation of peoples stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf.³⁸³⁴ In 722 BC, Assyria exiled Israelites to Elam (Isa 11:11) and transferred Elamites to Israel (Ezra 4:9).³⁸³⁵

Arameans reached the height of their power near the end of the second millennium BC, dominating Mesopotamia.³⁸³⁶ They enjoyed a close relationship with Israel’s patriarchs. Isaac married a descendant of Aram, and Jacob lived among his in-laws after fleeing from Esau (Gen 25:20; Gen 31:20; Deut 26:1–5).³⁸³⁷

One ancestral line receives considerable attention here and in Gen 11:10–26.³⁸³⁸ Although Eber lived at least three generations after Shem, his name occurs in this introduction.³⁸³⁹ His prominence likely derives from the link with the name “Hebrew” (Gen 14:13).³⁸⁴⁰ Moses wrote, “And to Eber were born two sons. The name of the one [was] Peleg because in his days the earth was divided, and the name of the other [was] Joktan.”

“Peleg” as both a noun and a verb occurs in at least fifteen ANE languages. Twelve of them connote similar meanings: “half” or “divide.”³⁸⁴¹ As with many names in the Bible, this moniker portended the future. However, the exact nature of this division has several contenders.³⁸⁴²

In Akkadian and in Hebrew, the noun can mean “channel” or “ditch” (Ps 1:3; Isa 30:25; Isa 32:2).³⁸⁴³ Therefore, “in his days” could refer to when people dug irrigation canals,³⁸⁴⁴ enabling sedentary agriculture as a way of life differing from a pastoral existence.³⁸⁴⁵ Genesis 11:2 describes a mass migration of people to the southeast which may have resulted from agricultural advancements.³⁸⁴⁶ However, most commentators link this event with the scattering of the nations at Babel (Gen 11:1–9).³⁸⁴⁷ The verb form of *peleg* can depict the confounding of speech (Ps 55:9).³⁸⁴⁸

Moses’s original audience likely knew exactly what the word *palag* represented, although time has obscured it for us. We cannot even determine whether this division portrays a positive or a negative event.³⁸⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the division separated the blessed progeny of Peleg from

³⁸³¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸³²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 228.

³⁸³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 344.

³⁸³⁴François Vallat, “Elam (Place),” *ABD* 2:424–9, 424.

³⁸³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 228.

³⁸³⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230.

³⁸³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 343.

³⁸⁴⁰Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, “עֵבֶר” (*ēber*), *BDB*, 720, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/720>.

³⁸⁴¹K.-D. Schunck, “פֶּלֶג” (*palag*), *TDOT* 11:54–8, 546–7.

³⁸⁴²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230–1.

³⁸⁴³Schunck, “פֶּלֶג” (*palag*), *TDOT*, 11:547.

³⁸⁴⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 345.

³⁸⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230–1.

³⁸⁴⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁴⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 173.

³⁸⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 371.

the line of Joktan.³⁸⁵⁰ Peleg’s genealogy continues in Gen 11:18–26.³⁸⁵¹ His descendants include Abraham, the one through whom God would bring salvation to the world (Gen 3:14–15; Gen 12:1–3; Matt 1:1–2).³⁸⁵²

The next few verses focus upon the thirteen sons of Joktan. Although we cannot determine the precise range of the settlements of the sons of Joktan,³⁸⁵³ their names testify to their Arabian origin.³⁸⁵⁴ Some commentators emphasize the polytheistic nature of these nations. For example, Hazarmaveth means “oasis of Mot,” the god of death.³⁸⁵⁵ This association may have developed because people harvested frankincense—a resin used for embalming corpses and covering the odor of death—from tree sap in this region of Oman.³⁸⁵⁶

Moses closed this section of the genealogy of Shem by writing, “These [are] the sons of Shem according to their clans, and their languages, in their lands, by their people-groups.”

Read Gen 10:21–31. Why would Moses mention Eber in the introduction of this genealogy when he had to be at least Shem’s great-grandson? How would you characterize the sons of Joktan? What do you think caused the division of the world during Peleg’s lifetime? Do you consider yourself to be more like Peleg’s or Joktan’s descendants? Why?

Seventy Nations

g) Gen 10:32: The Table of Nations in Gen 10 concludes by saying, “These are the clans of the sons of Noah according to their genealogies, by their nations. And from these were divided the nations in the land after the flood.” This verse forms a Hebrew literary device called an *inclusio* by repeating the information from Gen 10:1.³⁸⁵⁷ Together they form a frame around the genealogy enclosed within them.³⁸⁵⁸ However, Gen 10:32 replaces “sons were born” with “the nations were divided.”³⁸⁵⁹

The number of descendants attributed to the progeny of Noah points to a larger theological reality.³⁸⁶⁰ Ranging from Iran to Ethiopia and from Turkey to Libya,³⁸⁶¹ this list

³⁸⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 172.

³⁸⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁵²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁸⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231–2.

³⁸⁵⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 345.

³⁸⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁵⁶W. W. Müller, “Hazarmaveth (Person),” *ABD* 3:85–6, 85.

³⁸⁵⁷Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, 2nd Ed.*, 54.

³⁸⁵⁸Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 2nd Ed.*, 303.

³⁸⁵⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁶⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁸⁶¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

mentions seventy people, places, and nations.³⁸⁶² Seventy consists of ten sevens, the number of perfection. Throughout the Old Testament, some fascinating usages of this number occur.³⁸⁶³

First, seventy represents a great number of descendants (Gen 46:27; Judg 8:30; 2 Ki 10:1).³⁸⁶⁴ For example, the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah reportedly bore seventy children.³⁸⁶⁵ Within Israel, seventy elders represented the nation as they ate in God’s presence on Mount Sinai, assisted Moses, and participated in idolatry within the temple (Exod 24:9–11; Num 11:16; Ezek 8:10–12).³⁸⁶⁶ Whether positive or negative, the number “seventy” indicates fullness or completion.³⁸⁶⁷

God chose Israel as one nation among seventy to represent all humanity (Deut 32:8).³⁸⁶⁸ The Lord ordered Jacob’s descendants to share their knowledge of him throughout the earth (Deut 4:5–8; Ps 102:12–22; Isa 66:18–21).³⁸⁶⁹ Moses commanded Israel to inscribe the words of God’s law onto an altar covered with plaster (Deut 27:1–8). According to the *Mishnah*, they wrote all the words of the law “in seventy languages” (*m. Sotah* 7.5).³⁸⁷⁰

This implies that God holds all people-groups accountable, whether they view him as their Lord or not (Amos 9:7).³⁸⁷¹ All humans share a common origin, lending inherent dignity and value to everyone. We all bear God’s image, even after the fall (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 5:1–4).³⁸⁷²

Read Gen 10:32. Why is the number seventy so important in understanding the genealogy in Gen 10? How does this reminder of our common origin and accountability impact the way you view and treat other people?

Jesus Sends Seventy

2) Luke 10:1–2: These verses follow the missionary journey of the twelve disciples and Christ’s call to assist him by ushering in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1–6, 57–62).³⁸⁷³ Luke 10:1–20 continues the theme of outreach,³⁸⁷⁴ with an interesting twist. Although Luke provided no location for this enterprise, he included some intriguing hints regarding the identity of those who would hear the gospel.³⁸⁷⁵

³⁸⁶²Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁸⁶³Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” *DBI*, 775–6, 775.

³⁸⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213–4.

³⁸⁶⁵Ginsberg, trans., “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, II AB 6:46, 134.

³⁸⁶⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁸⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 164.

³⁸⁶⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁸⁶⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

³⁸⁷⁰Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁸⁷¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁷²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

³⁸⁷³Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 410, 412.

³⁸⁷⁴John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993), 549.

³⁸⁷⁵Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 410–11.

Luke wrote, “After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy[-two] others, and he sent them two by two before him into every city and place where he himself was about to come.” Manuscript evidence between “seventy” and “seventy-two” is evenly divided.³⁸⁷⁶ However, one document attesting to “seventy” (*P*⁷⁵) dates to the third century. Those citing “seventy-two” begin in the fourth century.³⁸⁷⁷

While the standard Hebrew (Masoretic) text of the Table of Nations lists seventy nations (Gen 10), the Greek translation of that chapter names seventy-two.³⁸⁷⁸ This may have occurred because Jewish scholars regarded those two numbers as interchangeable.³⁸⁷⁹ In Num 11:24–26, the Holy Spirit fell upon seventy elders around the tabernacle and two who remained in the camp. Whether to include the two in the camp among the seventy leaders might account for this uncertainty.³⁸⁸⁰

The disciples’ mission foreshadows the Spirit falling upon gentiles (Acts 2:1–5, 17–21; Acts 10:44–48).³⁸⁸¹ By sending out seventy (or seventy-two) missionaries, Jesus expressed his concern for every people-group in the world.³⁸⁸²

Third Enoch, a fifth–sixth century AD Jewish apocryphal book, asserts, “[There] are seventy-two princes of kingdoms on high corresponding to the 72 tongues of the world.”³⁸⁸³

We also have the *Letter of Aristeas*, a second century BC legend surrounding the Greek Old Testament (OT). It claims that seventy-two scholars traveled to Alexandria. They translated the Hebrew Scriptures into a language which people of many nations could understand.³⁸⁸⁴

Regarding the number seventy, Moses commanded Israel to inscribe the words of God’s onto an altar covered with plaster (Deut 27:1–8). According to the *Mishnah*, they wrote all the words of the law “in seventy languages” (*m. Sotah* 7.5).³⁸⁸⁵ This implies that God holds all people-groups accountable, whether they view him as their Lord or not (Amos 9:7).³⁸⁸⁶

Jesus sent (*apostellō*) these apostles out in pairs. This enabled them to give credible witness concerning the reception they received (Deut 19:15; Luke 10:3–17).³⁸⁸⁷ It also provided camaraderie, accountability, and increased security (Ecc 4:9–12; 2 Cor 8:18–22). Dispatching people on a mission to proclaim the kingdom of God was unparalleled at that point in Jewish history.³⁸⁸⁸

As Christ prepared to send them, he said, “The harvest is great, but the ones working are few. Pray, then, of the Lord of the harvest that he might send out workers into his harvest.” In the agrarian milieu of the Bible, the imagery of a harvest connoted God’s blessing, abundance, and

³⁸⁷⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 348.

³⁸⁷⁷Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, Luke 10:1, 224.

³⁸⁷⁸Garland, *Luke*, 425.

³⁸⁷⁹Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 549.

³⁸⁸⁰Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 316–7.

³⁸⁸¹Garland, *Luke*, 425.

³⁸⁸²Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411.

³⁸⁸³R. Ishmael Ben Elisha, *Hebrew Book of Enoch (Enoch 3)* (trans. Hugo Odeburg; London: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 17:8, https://archive.org/stream/HebrewBookOfEnoch3/BookOfEnoch3_djvu.txt.

³⁸⁸⁴H. St. J. Thackeray, trans., *The Letter of Aristeas, Translated with an Appendix of Ancient Evidence on the Origin of the Septuagint* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), 33–4, https://archive.org/stream/theletterofarist00unknuoft/theletterofarist00unknuoft_djvu.txt.

³⁸⁸⁵Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” 775.

³⁸⁸⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁸⁷Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 550.

³⁸⁸⁸Garland, *Luke*, 425.

reward for hard work (Exod 23:16; Deut 28:1–6; Prov 20:4).³⁸⁸⁹ Usually when the metaphor of the Lord reaping appears in the OT, the focus falls upon impending judgment (Isa 17:10–12; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13).³⁸⁹⁰ Yet, it does occasionally connote salvation (Jer 2:3; Hos 6:11).³⁸⁹¹

As Christ’s parable of the vineyard workers implies, vintners could easily find day laborers for harvests (Matt 20:1–7). Locating people to do the strenuous work of missions for little earthly reward proves more difficult.³⁸⁹² Therefore, Christ implored his followers to pray for God to direct people to engage in evangelism and discipleship in order to expand his kingdom (Luke 24:46–49; Matt 28:16–20).³⁸⁹³ In reality, the harvest comes from and belongs to the Lord.³⁸⁹⁴ We have the privilege of participating in God’s great plan for humanity.

For those working in agriculture, the concept of a harvest of grain or produce promotes an impression of urgency.³⁸⁹⁵ Peak reaping conditions often remain quite short.³⁸⁹⁶ This may result in seasonal workers employed to assist those who labor year-round.³⁸⁹⁷ Notably, Jesus expanded ministry responsibilities beyond the twelve disciples and even beyond the seventy (two) (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:7–8; Acts 8:1–12).³⁸⁹⁸

Although Christ had resolutely begun traveling toward his death in Jerusalem, he remained concerned for people of every nation (Luke 9:51–56).³⁸⁹⁹ Choosing seventy (two) missionaries to go ahead of him symbolized sharing the gospel with the whole known world.³⁹⁰⁰ This task soon grew exponentially (Acts 17:6; Acts 24:5; Rom 1:8; Rom 15:20–26).³⁹⁰¹

God continues to use his people to reach the nations, often in ways we don’t expect. We sow the seed of God’s Word, but the Lord makes it grow (1 Cor 3:5–9). When the end of this age arrives, those who do evil shall be destroyed, while God’s people shall enjoy his presence forever (Matt 13:36–43).³⁹⁰² Participating in the advance of the gospel remains a difficult task. Yet, it brings tremendous joy (Phil 1:3–18).³⁹⁰³

Read Luke 10:1–2. Why is the number of apostles Jesus sent on this mission significant? How do you help with the task of reaping God’s harvest? Discuss some creative ways to reach those in our generation.

³⁸⁸⁹Ryken, et. al., “Harvest,” *DBI* 365–7, 365.

³⁸⁹⁰Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 550.

³⁸⁹¹Bock, *Luke*, 291.

³⁸⁹²Garland, *Luke*, 425–6.

³⁸⁹³Bock, *Luke*, 291.

³⁸⁹⁴Garland, *Luke*, 426.

³⁸⁹⁵Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 413.

³⁸⁹⁶Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 551.

³⁸⁹⁷Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 413.

³⁸⁹⁸Bock, *Luke*, 297.

³⁸⁹⁹Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 549.

³⁹⁰⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 348.

³⁹⁰¹Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 168.

³⁹⁰²Ryken, et. al., “Harvest,” 367.

³⁹⁰³Bock, *Luke*, 296.

Chapter 12: Scattered to the Ends of the Earth (Genesis 11:1–9)

Three hundred and fifty years after the flood began, Noah died (Gen 9:28–29). Then, the scene shifted to seventy descendants of his three sons (Gen 10:1). The Table of Nations consists of a carefully crafted theological assertion,³⁹⁰⁴ rather than a comprehensive list.³⁹⁰⁵ Signifying completeness,³⁹⁰⁶ Japheth had seven sons and seven grandsons (Gen 10:2–5).³⁹⁰⁷ Among the offspring of Ham are seven sons of Cush and seven sons of Mizraim (Egypt) (Gen 10:6–7, 13–14). Fourteen peoples are listed in Shem’s line down to the sons of Eber (Gen 10:21–25).³⁹⁰⁸

A “son” (*ben*) can refer to a direct descendant, to distant offspring in a family lineage, or even to a person who signed a treaty.³⁹⁰⁹ Some of the names in the Table of Nations represent specific men, while others signify people-groups or even locations.³⁹¹⁰ These peoples represented the major nations known to Israel which scattered across coastal areas, North Africa, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine.³⁹¹¹

By citing their linkage through Noah, this genealogy emphasizes the fundamental unity of those dwelling in the Ancient Near East (ANE).³⁹¹² Yet, it also distinguishes between them in terms of their geographic locations, ethnicities, and political affiliations.³⁹¹³ Similarities of speech occurred across ancestral lines.³⁹¹⁴ Although some exceptions exist, the Shemites lived as nomads, Hamites dwelt in cities, and the sons of Japheth lived along the distant coasts of the Mediterranean.³⁹¹⁵

Japheth’s sons included people-groups who had little contact with Israel (Gen 10:2–5).³⁹¹⁶ They lived to the north, spreading from Asia Minor to the Greek islands.³⁹¹⁷

Ham’s descendants included Israel’s nearest neighbors (Gen 10:6–21).³⁹¹⁸ Not only did they surround Israel,³⁹¹⁹ conflict often erupted between them.³⁹²⁰ Typically, their cities represented the apex of social and political civilization in the ANE.³⁹²¹ These peoples lived in Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.

The name “Nimrod” means “We shall rebel.”³⁹²² His empire encompassed all of Mesopotamia, from Babylon to Assyria. He achieved his power by military invasions, not merely

³⁹⁰⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 162.

³⁹⁰⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁹⁰⁶Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁹⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213.

³⁹⁰⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 164–5.

³⁹⁰⁹H. Haag, “בֶּן” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:145–59, 150, 152.

³⁹¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 165.

³⁹¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁹¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁹¹³B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 14, [Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁹¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 243.

³⁹¹⁵Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)–A Socio-Cultural Approach,” 22, 30, [Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁹¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁹¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 334–5.

³⁹¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁹¹⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁹²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁹²¹B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)–A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 28, [Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁹²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

by spreading peacefully into new regions.³⁹²³ The term used to describe him (*gibor*) refers to someone of surpassing might who has accomplished great deeds,³⁹²⁴ to the point that even God acknowledged his abilities (Gen 10:8–12).³⁹²⁵

Consistent with Noah’s curse, the genealogy of Canaan does not feature seven descendants. However, this did not affect his fertility.³⁹²⁶ Canaanites inhabited portions of the eastern Mediterranean (Gen 10:15–19).³⁹²⁷ Today this area lies within Israel, part of Syria, and Lebanon.³⁹²⁸

One line of descent receives considerable attention.³⁹²⁹ Although Eber lived at least three generations after Shem, his name occurs in the introduction.³⁹³⁰ His prominence likely derives from the link with the designation “Hebrew.”³⁹³¹ The division which occurred in his son’s lifetime appears to refer to what occurred at Babel (Gen 10:25; Gen 11:1–9).³⁹³² Peleg’s descendants include the line of Abraham, through whom God would bring salvation to the world (Gen 3:14–15; Gen 11:18–26; Gen 12:1–3; Matt 1:1).³⁹³³

Thus, the Lord chose Israel as one nation among seventy to represent all humanity.³⁹³⁴ Seventy contains ten sevens, the number signifying perfection.³⁹³⁵ According to the *Mishnah*, the Israelites wrote all the words of the Mosaic law on an altar “in seventy languages” (*m. Sotah* 7.5). This implies that God holds all people-groups accountable, whether they view him as their Lord or not (Cf. Amos 9:7).³⁹³⁶

By sending out seventy missionaries years later, Jesus expressed his concern for every people-group in the world (Luke 10:1–2).³⁹³⁷ We all share a common origin, lending inherent dignity and value to everyone, for we all bear God’s image, even after the fall (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 5:1–4).³⁹³⁸

A Plain in Shinar

1) Gen 11:1–2: The account of the city and tower in Babel brilliantly employs several literary devices, such as alliteration and double meanings. Just as with Noah’s flood (Gen 6:10–9:19), this story appears as a chiasm, with the emphasis falling upon “The Lord came down” (F).³⁹³⁹

³⁹²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁹²⁴H. Kosmala, “גַּבֹּר” (*gabar*), *TDOT* 2:373–82, 373.

³⁹²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁹²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 330–1.

³⁹²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 368.

³⁹²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁹²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁹³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 343.

³⁹³¹Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, “עֵבֶר” (*ēber*), *BDB*, 720, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/720>.

³⁹³²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁹³³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁹³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁹³⁵Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” *DBI*, 775–6, 775.

³⁹³⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁹³⁷Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411.

³⁹³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

³⁹³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 234.

- A All the earth had one language (Gen 11:1)
 B They settled there (Gen 11:2)
 C They said to each other (Gen 11:3)
 D Come, let us make bricks (Gen 11:3)
 E A city and a tower (Gen 11:4)
 F The Lord came down (Gen 11:5)
 É The city and the tower (Gen 11:5)
 Ð Come...let us confuse (Gen 11:7)
 Ć They don't understand each other (Gen 11:7)
 Ḃ They dispersed from there (Gen 11:8)
 Á The language of the whole earth (Gen 11:9)³⁹⁴⁰

This last biblical narrative of primeval history parallels the account of the fall (Gen 3:1–13, 22–24) and the Lord's judgment upon humanity due to the violence of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–7).³⁹⁴¹ Moses began by stating, "And it happened that all the earth [had] one language and one [set of] words. And they journeyed on the side of the East, and they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they remained there."

"The whole earth" could depict this as the universal experience of humanity.³⁹⁴² However, several other possibilities exist.³⁹⁴³ In Hebrew, the same word denotes "earth" and "land" (*erets*). We cannot ascertain which meaning the author intended apart from the context of the passage.³⁹⁴⁴ This event may include only the people of that region.

Except for Gen 10:32, the genealogy of Shem's descendants occurred just prior to this verse (Gen 10:21–31). Possibly, some of them settled in Sumer, where this narrative took place.³⁹⁴⁵ On the other hand, people throughout the region may have utilized a trade language to facilitate communication, much like English serves people in disparate countries today.³⁹⁴⁶ In these cases, Gen 11 would follow the Table of Nations (Gen 10) in chronological order.

However, this account may indicate that Noah's sons had not yet separated into their people-groups.³⁹⁴⁷ In this view, Moses returned to a time before the Table of Nations existed.³⁹⁴⁸ After all, Gen 10 does speak of people-groups divided by clans and languages.³⁹⁴⁹ Many commentators view this passage as a flashback depicting the division of the world during Peleg's lifetime (Gen 10:25). Even after the flood cleansed the land of injustice, the earth's inhabitants remained tainted by sin (Gen 6:11–14; Gen 7:19–22; Gen 9:20–22).³⁹⁵⁰

By traveling "on the side of the East,"³⁹⁵¹ these people moved far away from the

³⁹⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 176.

³⁹⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 242.

³⁹⁴²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 178.

³⁹⁴³Walton, *Genesis*, 371–2.

³⁹⁴⁴J. Bergman and M. Ottosson, "עֶרֶץ" (*erets*) *TDOT* 1:388–405, 393.

³⁹⁴⁵John H. Walton, "The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications," *BBR* 5, no. 1 (1 September 1991):155–75, 173, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁴⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 350.

³⁹⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240.

³⁹⁴⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 350.

³⁹⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 371.

³⁹⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 175, 177.

³⁹⁵¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "מִן" (*min*), *BDB*, 577–83, 578, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/578>.

promised land of Moses’s era.³⁹⁵² Similarly, God cast Adam and Eve out of Eden to the east (Gen 3:22–24).³⁹⁵³ After Cain murdered his brother, the Lord banished him to a land east of Eden (Gen 4:8–16).³⁹⁵⁴ The Table of Nations depicts some of Shem’s descendants as living in the east (Gen 10:30).³⁹⁵⁵ However, that appears to be in Arabia.³⁹⁵⁶ In general, living in the east connotes that one does not experience God’s blessing (Gen 13:10–13; Gen 25:5–6; Gen 29:1).³⁹⁵⁷

That the wanderers “found” (*matsa*) a place to settle implies they had sought a suitable place to live.³⁹⁵⁸ In the middle of the fourth millennium BC, flood waters drained from southern Mesopotamia into the river system over the course of several hundred years.³⁹⁵⁹ This resulted in a broad, flat plain,³⁹⁶⁰ making the land desirable for new habitations.³⁹⁶¹

Over the course of time, the name of this region changed from Sumer to Akkad to Babylonia.³⁹⁶² Today, it lies near Baghdad in Iraq.³⁹⁶³ Understanding the culture and history of southern Mesopotamia sheds crucial light upon the events in this chapter.³⁹⁶⁴ A Neolithic society called the “Ubaid culture” was the first to dwell in this area (6th–4th millennium BC).³⁹⁶⁵

Sumerian literature cites Eridu as the oldest city. It dates to the late 6th millennium BC.³⁹⁶⁶ According to a 6th century BC Babylonian creation account, “All the lands were sea...Then Eridu was made.”³⁹⁶⁷ Close to 3700 BC, the Ubaid culture disappeared, replaced by an urban civilization.³⁹⁶⁸ By 3000 BC, a plethora of small villages, towns, and cities loomed over these plains.³⁹⁶⁹

a) Read Gen 11:1–2. Who do you think was involved in this migration? Why was dwelling in the East significant? How does the archaeological record reflect the biblical account?

³⁹⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 238.

³⁹⁵³ Walton, *Genesis*, 372.

³⁹⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 238–9.

³⁹⁵⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 352.

³⁹⁵⁶ Gary H. Oller, “Mesha (Place),” *ABD* 4:708.

³⁹⁵⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 178.

³⁹⁵⁸ S. Wagner and H.-J. Fabry, “מַצָּא” (*matsa*), *TDOT* 8:465–83, 467.

³⁹⁵⁹ Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 172, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁶⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 239.

³⁹⁶¹ Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 172, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁶² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 351.

³⁹⁶³ James R. Davila, “Shinar (Place),” *ABD* 5:1220.

³⁹⁶⁴ Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 155, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁶⁵ Jean-Claude Margueron, “Al Ubaid,” Paul Sager (Trans.), *ABD* 1: 141–2.

³⁹⁶⁶ Jean-Claude Margueron, “Eridu (Place),” *ABD* 2:573.

³⁹⁶⁷ Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation, 2nd Ed.* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:10–12, 62,

https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/misc_genesis.pdf.

³⁹⁶⁸ Margueron, “Al Ubaid,” 1:142.

³⁹⁶⁹ A. Kirk Grayson, “Mesopotamia, History of: History and Culture of Babylonia,” *ABD* 4:755–77, 757.

Let Us Bake Bricks

b) Gen 11:3: The people who moved to Shinar (Gen 11:1–2) devised a plan. Moses reported, “They said to one another, ‘Come now, let us make bricks and let us burn them thoroughly.’ And they had for themselves brick for stone, and bitumen they had for mortar.”

Construction materials in Mesopotamia differed greatly from those available in Egypt and in areas close to Israel. By the end of the fourth millennium BC, Mesopotamians produced kiln-fired bricks for erecting temples, palaces, and other important buildings.³⁹⁷⁰ Kiln-fired brick readily absorbs water. Therefore, the masons used bitumen, a natural asphalt, to penetrate the adjacent surfaces.³⁹⁷¹ This made a building stronger than stone.³⁹⁷²

Bitumen was a costly mortar, and kiln-firing took much longer than sun drying blocks of mud.³⁹⁷³ The scarcity of fuel added to the expense of this method.³⁹⁷⁴ Therefore, even the grandest buildings used sun-dried brick for the interior walls.³⁹⁷⁵ Ancient people often reused brick from abandoned structures. Consequently, most monumental architecture from this period no longer exists, apart from the rectangular foundations.³⁹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the expensive materials which the immigrants to Shinar used hint at what they constructed.³⁹⁷⁷ Enuma Elish depicts Babylon as a place of rest and for Marduk’s glory as a reward for defeating Tiamat, the cosmic water monster. After the battle, Marduk’s fellow gods said:

“Now, O lord, thou who hast caused our deliverance, what shall be our homage to thee? 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 Anunnaki [gods] applied the implement. For one whole year they molded bricks. When the second year arrived, they raised high the head of [the tower] Esagila equaling Apsu [, the depth of the primordial waters]. Having built a stage-tower *as high as Apsu*, they set up *in it* an abode for Marduk, Enlil, (and) Ea. In their presence he was seated in grandeur...

“After they had achieved the building of [the tower] Esagila, all the Anunnaki [gods] erected their shrines. The three hundred Igigi) (heavenly spirits)...all of them gathered, the lord being on the lofty dais which they had built as his abode. The gods, his fathers, at his banquet he seated, ‘This is Babylon, the place that is your home!’”³⁹⁷⁸

³⁹⁷⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 372.

³⁹⁷¹J. Connan, “Use and Trade of Bitumen in Antiquity and Prehistory: Molecular Archaeology Reveals Secrets of Past Civilizations,” *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci*, no. 354 (29 January 1999): 33–50, 33, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1692448/>.

³⁹⁷²Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 164, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁷³Walton, *Genesis*, 372.

³⁹⁷⁴Paul H. Seely, “The Date of the Tower of Babel and Some Theological Implications,” *WTJ* 63, no. 1 (1 September 2001): 15–38, 17, https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/seely_babel_wtj.htm.

³⁹⁷⁵John F. Robertson, “Temples and Sanctuaries: Mesopotamia,” *ABD* 6:372–76, 372–3.

³⁹⁷⁶Jean-Claude Margueron, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563–5, 565.

³⁹⁷⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 372.

³⁹⁷⁸Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 6:49–72, 68–9. Italics original.

People in the Ancient Near East (ANE) believed that the god who owned a temple inhabited it through the presence of an idol made in the god’s likeness. If the god approved of the craftsman’s work, he entered the statue.³⁹⁷⁹

After constructing a throne for the moon god Nanna in Ur, the king wrote this (ca. 1828 BC):³⁹⁸⁰

“I, Kudur-mabuk, humble shepherd, who stands in supplication for the shrine Ebabbar, when the gods...had given to me, on account of my order by the supreme decree of the gods Nanna and Utu, the true scepter suitable to lead the people...On account of this, as I made an ardent prayer...shining star(s) radiance...a...awe-inspiring...throne [was inlaid] with red gold...a statue of the god Nanna [whose] fo[rm] was fashioned correctly...A pair of protective genii...[giving] good omens[...], being there daily...I set up on either side of it. I fixed them there here at the perimeter of that throne (area with their...stretched out towards the statue of me praying, as if (making) new *šuilā* prayers and entreaties.”³⁹⁸¹

Inhabitants of the ANE considered worshiping an idol equivalent to adoration of the god whom the image portrayed. While it might not have looked exactly like the god, it could accomplish the deity’s work, including the protection of the city (Cf. Gen 1:26–28).³⁹⁸²

Read Gen 11:3. How does the brick-making technique used by those who moved to Shinar help us date this event? What do the types of construction materials imply regarding what they were building? Why would people in the Ancient Near East want a temple in their midst?

A Stairway to Heaven

c) Gen 11:4: The immigrants to Shinar (Gen 11:1–3) said, “Behold, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top into the heavens. And let us make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered on the surface of all the earth.” God took pleasure in Jerusalem. Therefore, he does not view constructing a city as inherently evil (Ps 48:1–3; Ps 69:34–36; 1 Ki 11:13).³⁹⁸³

However, the Lord hates human arrogance (Prov 8:13; 2 Ki 19:28).³⁹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he did not destroy Cain’s creation even though he named it after his son in an act of hubris (Gen 4:16–17). Consequently, understanding urbanization in Mesopotamia helps us to determine the nature of God’s concern with this endeavor.³⁹⁸⁵ Early Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cities were

³⁹⁷⁹Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 109.

³⁹⁸⁰William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World (COS2)*. (Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 2000), 251.

³⁹⁸¹Kudur-Mabuk, “Warad Sin (2.101B),” in *COS2*. ed. William W. Hallo; trans. I. Kärki and D. R. Frayne, 251–2.

³⁹⁸²Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

³⁹⁸³Walton, *Genesis*, 376.

³⁹⁸⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 183.

³⁹⁸⁵Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 167, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

not primarily residential areas.³⁹⁸⁶ Instead, they functioned as public facilities for religious and economic development.³⁹⁸⁷ In some cases, the entire city consisted of a temple complex.³⁹⁸⁸

For example, the goddess Gula, also known as Baba, owned 11,000 acres in the city of Girsu. Her estate produced barley, wheat, vegetables, dates, dairy products, oil, fish, wool, hides, and reeds. This necessitated employing agricultural workers, bricklayers, carpenters, smiths, spinners and weavers, bakers, butchers, and those who worked with animals.³⁹⁸⁹ As a result, temples also operated as storage and distribution facilities (1 Chron 28:11–12; Neh 10:34–39).³⁹⁹⁰

People built Eridu for this reason:³⁹⁹¹

“[The goddess of birth] Nintur was paying attention, ‘Let me bethink myself of my humankind, (all) forgotten as they are; and mindful of mine, Nintur's, creatures let me bring them back, let me lead the people back from their trails. May they come and build cities and cult-places, that I may cool myself in their shade; may they lay the bricks for the cult-cities in pure spots, and may they found places for divination in pure spots!’”³⁹⁹² The goddess ordered the construction of a city for her benefit.

General assemblies administrated early ANE cities.³⁹⁹³ Their members viewed what happened on earth as a reflection of the activities of the gods. This form of collaborative government affected religious beliefs.³⁹⁹⁴ Therefore, people believed a divine assembly ruled over the universe.³⁹⁹⁵ Mesopotamian divine councils included at least fifty-seven major gods and goddesses.³⁹⁹⁶

According to Enuma Elish, the gods responded to the rebellion of the water goddess in this way:

“They made ready to leave on their journey, all the great gods who decree the fates. They entered before Anshar [the god of heaven], filling [Ushshukinna, the Chamber of Destiny]. They kissed one another in the Assembly. They held converse as they [sat down] to the banquet. They ate festive bread, poured [the wine], they wetted their drinking-tubes with sweet intoxicant. As they drank the strong drink, [their] bodies swelled. They became very languid as their spirits rose. For Marduk, their avenger, they fixed the decrees.”³⁹⁹⁷

This divine council determined the fate of the gods and of everyone on earth.³⁹⁹⁸ Yet, these gods operated as even the worst of people do, reflecting humanity's image (Cf. Gen 1:26).³⁹⁹⁹

³⁹⁸⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

³⁹⁸⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 372.

³⁹⁸⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

³⁹⁸⁹Robertson, “Temples and Sanctuaries: Mesopotamia,” *ABD* 6:374.

³⁹⁹⁰William A. Ward, “Temples and Sanctuaries: Egypt,” *ABD* 6:369–72, 371.

³⁹⁹¹Jean-Claude Margueron, trans. by Paul Sager, “Eridu (Place),” *ABD* 2:573.

³⁹⁹²Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” *JBL* 100, no. 4 (1 December 1981): 513–29, 515.

³⁹⁹³Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 168, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁹⁴E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., “Divine Assembly,” *ABD* 2:213–7, 213.

³⁹⁹⁵Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 168, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

³⁹⁹⁶Mullen, “Divine Assembly,” *ABD* 2:215.

³⁹⁹⁷Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 3:129–38, 65–6.

³⁹⁹⁸Mullen, “Divine Assembly,” *ABD* 2:213.

³⁹⁹⁹Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 169, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

Typically, “towers” (*migdal*) in the Old Testament refer to defensive battlements or watchtowers (Judg 9:50–53; 2 Sam 22:47–51; 2 Ki 9:17–18).⁴⁰⁰⁰ However, we have scant evidence for such architecture in Mesopotamia.⁴⁰⁰¹ Equally imposing edifices in that region consisted of specialized temple structures.⁴⁰⁰² “Ziggurat” appears to be an Akkadian term related to the verb “to be high.” No comparable buildings existed in Canaan.⁴⁰⁰³

Within a Mesopotamian temple complex, the ziggurat featured prominently.⁴⁰⁰⁴ The earliest examples date to the late fifth millennium BC.⁴⁰⁰⁵ These structures narrowed as they rose into the sky,⁴⁰⁰⁶ lending a sense of infinite height as one stood at the base.⁴⁰⁰⁷ The dimensions of their bases ranged from twenty to ninety meters per side.⁴⁰⁰⁸ A letter from a visitor to the twenty-first century BC ziggurat in Ur depicts the wonder elicited by these monumental sites.⁴⁰⁰⁹

Ziggurats depict a clear relationship between ancient structures, urban planning, and religious beliefs.⁴⁰¹⁰ Often, their builders erected them over earlier shrines while leaving some rooms available for temple functions.⁴⁰¹¹ A small chamber at the apex included a bed and a table.⁴⁰¹² People often painted the exterior of those small shrines with blue enamel to blend them with the heavenly dwellings of the gods.⁴⁰¹³

The cult celebrating the erotic relationship between Dumuzi and Inanna gained prominence in the city of Uruk.⁴⁰¹⁴ Sumerians believed the continued fertility of their land depended upon the ritual reenactment of the marriage, death, and resurrection of Dumuzi. However, the rite centered upon cultic prostitution, rather than human sacrifice.⁴⁰¹⁵ Inanna’s ziggurat included a bridal chamber where a priestess engaged in mystical marriage with the king to renew the land’s fertility. Only then could the soil produce abundant crops and the king renew his military strength.⁴⁰¹⁶

Surprisingly, those who constructed ziggurats filled the core of the main structure with dirt, rendering it unusable.⁴⁰¹⁷ Critically important, a staircase ran from the top to the bottom.⁴⁰¹⁸

⁴⁰⁰⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 372–3.

⁴⁰⁰¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

⁴⁰⁰²Paul Zimansky, “Art and Architecture: Ancient Near Eastern Architecture,” *ABD* 1:408–19, 411.

⁴⁰⁰³Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 156, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁰⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 373.

⁴⁰⁰⁵Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 157, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁰⁶D. Kellermann, “מִגְדָּל” (*migdal*) *TDOT* 8:69–73, 72.

⁴⁰⁰⁷Cheryl A. Thurlby, “File: Great Ziggurat of Ur.JPG,” Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Ziggurat_of_Ur.JPG.

⁴⁰⁰⁸Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 157, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁰⁹Michael Taylor, “Letter from Iraq: The Ziggurat Endures,” http://archive.archaeology.org/1103/letter/american_soldier_ur_iraq.html.

⁴⁰¹⁰Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 157, 165, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰¹¹Paul Zimansky, “Art and Architecture: Ancient Near Eastern Architecture,” *ABD* 1: 408–19, 411.

⁴⁰¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 373.

⁴⁰¹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

⁴⁰¹⁴Pritchard, *ANET*, 638.

⁴⁰¹⁵Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:792.

⁴⁰¹⁶Healey, “Fertility Cults,” *ABD* 2:792.

⁴⁰¹⁷Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 164, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰¹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

Notably, the people building the tower in Shinar sought to make a tower with its top reaching into the heavens.⁴⁰¹⁹ While their desire to make a name for themselves reflects some hubris,⁴⁰²⁰ this reflects standard terminology for ziggurat builders.⁴⁰²¹ Large platforms raised the bases of these temples high into the sky.⁴⁰²²

Babylonian theology accounts for this architectural trend.⁴⁰²³ People constructed ziggurats to represent sacred mountains which connected heaven, the earth, and the underworld.⁴⁰²⁴ The staircases permitted the gods to descend into the realm of humanity.⁴⁰²⁵ Therefore, these temple towers enabled people to contact the gods.⁴⁰²⁶

According to the Eridu Genesis, “When the royal scepter was coming down from heaven, the august crown and the royal throne being already down from heaven, he (the king) regularly performed to perfection the august divine services and offices, laid the bricks of those cities in pure spots.”⁴⁰²⁷

Since ziggurats were usually built for one specific god, important cities might contain several of these structures. However, the patron deity of each municipality received the most prominent tower.⁴⁰²⁸ By looming over the surrounding buildings, a ziggurat assured the inhabitants of the god’s ability to enter their presence.⁴⁰²⁹ Usually, people built a temple next door as a place for worship, indicating that a ziggurat was intended only for the use of the god.⁴⁰³⁰

Some of the names of ziggurats emphasize their intended purpose. For example, the one later erected in Babylon was called, “The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth.” One in Larsa was named, “The House of the Link between Heaven and Earth.”⁴⁰³¹

An Akkadian myth recounts the journey of the goddess of death’s deputy from the underworld. It says: “Namtar ascended the long staircase of the heave[ns]. When he reached the gate of [the gods] Anu, Enlil, and Ea, [An]u, Enlil, and Ea looked at him and (said), ‘[Wh]y dost thou come, Namtar?’ [He replied,] ‘Your daughter has sent m[e] with these words, “Seize that god and bring (him) to me!”’⁴⁰³²

The stairs of a ziggurat—in this case, one called, “Temple of the Stairway to Pure Heaven” in Sippar—enabled the goddess’s emissary to travel from the place of the dead to earth and then to the heavenly realm before making the return trip.⁴⁰³³ Priests provided food at the top of the ziggurat to refresh the traveling god.⁴⁰³⁴ They hoped that the deity would then stop by the

⁴⁰¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 353.

⁴⁰²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 177.

⁴⁰²¹Walton, *Genesis*, 373.

⁴⁰²²Zimansky, “Art and Architecture: Ancient Near Eastern Architecture,” 1:411.

⁴⁰²³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 239.

⁴⁰²⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 273.

⁴⁰²⁵Robertson, “Temples and Sanctuaries: Mesopotamia,” 6:375.

⁴⁰²⁶Robert P. Gordon, “Babel: Tower of,” *NIDOTTE* 4:428–30, 428.

⁴⁰²⁷Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 518.

⁴⁰²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 373.

⁴⁰²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

⁴⁰³⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 373.

⁴⁰³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 179.

⁴⁰³²O. R. Gurney, trans., “Nergal and Ereshkigal,” in *ANET*, 5:14–17, 511.

⁴⁰³³Walton, *Genesis*, 374.

⁴⁰³⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 11:4.

temple next door to receive the adoration of his people and give them his blessing.⁴⁰³⁵ Such practices reflect the weaknesses of the Babylonian concept of gods.⁴⁰³⁶ In contrast, the Lord has no needs (Ps 50:7–15; Amos 5:21–24; Acts 17:22–26).

Understanding this cultural information helps us to comprehend the nature of the offense committed by those who migrated to Shinar. Simply building a monumental edifice did not trigger God’s wrath. What they constructed implied that the creator of the universe cannot survive without the assistance of humanity.⁴⁰³⁷ They reduced the Lord to their likeness.⁴⁰³⁸

Some commentators hold that the immigrants’ desire to avoid scattering contradicts God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28–30; Gen 9:1).⁴⁰³⁹ Yet, the Lord spoke those words in blessing, not as a command. Furthermore, that mandate involved reproduction, not merely spreading apart. According to Gen 10, they succeeded in that regard.⁴⁰⁴⁰ People belonging to nomadic and semi-nomadic societies tended to scatter by necessity.⁴⁰⁴¹ For example, the sizes of Abraham’s and Lot’s flocks forced them to separate to find enough resources (Gen 13:5–7).⁴⁰⁴²

Urbanization permitted people to specialize into different trades, enabling them to pool resources and increase productivity.⁴⁰⁴³ By erecting fortified cities, they could also resist attacks.⁴⁰⁴⁴ Therefore, the immigrants to Shinar sought to avoid dispersing by building a metropolis.⁴⁰⁴⁵

Read Gen 11:4. Why did people living in the ANE build cities? How do the architectural specifications of ziggurats fit with Babylonian theology? Do you make a similar error by molding God into your image when thinking about him? How can you combat that tendency?

⁴⁰³⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 374.

⁴⁰³⁶Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 169, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰³⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 377.

⁴⁰³⁸Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 169, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 178.

⁴⁰⁴⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 375.

⁴⁰⁴¹Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 167, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁴²Walton, *Genesis*, 375.

⁴⁰⁴³Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 167, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁴⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 353.

⁴⁰⁴⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 375.

A Deity Descends

d) Gen 11:5–7: Verse five comprises the center of the chiasm in Gen 11:1–9.⁴⁰⁴⁶ Thus, this sentence forms the hinge of this account which altered human history.⁴⁰⁴⁷ This scene involves God’s heavenly council (Cf. Gen 1:26).⁴⁰⁴⁸ In keeping with the rest of Genesis, the Lord inspected human activity. Then he rendered judgment (Gen 3:8–19; Gen 4:9–16; Gen 18:20–21; Gen 19:24–25).⁴⁰⁴⁹

Moses reported, “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of humanity (*adam*) had built. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, [there is] one people and one language for all of them, and this they began to do, and now nothing will be unattainable for them, all of which they purpose to do.’”

The ziggurat accomplished what the builders intended (Gen 11:4). A deity did indeed descend to them, even though he did not require the staircase.⁴⁰⁵⁰ However, their activity achieved much different results than they anticipated.⁴⁰⁵¹ Just as in Gen 3:8–9, God already knew what the inhabitants of Shinar had done.⁴⁰⁵² This passage highlights the Lord’s omnipotence and his sovereignty, in contrast to the vulnerability of the descendants of Noah (Gen 10:32).⁴⁰⁵³

By using the word *am* for “people,” Moses emphasized their common descent from one male ancestor.⁴⁰⁵⁴ They were indeed “sons of Adam.”⁴⁰⁵⁵ Utilizing a single language increased their unity and effectiveness, enabling them to work together to build the city and a ziggurat.⁴⁰⁵⁶ Their attempt to make a stairway for a god to descend denigrated God’s capability.⁴⁰⁵⁷ The Lord recognized that these settlers crossed a firm boundary,⁴⁰⁵⁸ degrading his divine name.⁴⁰⁵⁹

Permitting this project to continue would produce dire consequences.⁴⁰⁶⁰ Humans would persist in infringing upon divine prerogatives.⁴⁰⁶¹ Therefore, the Lord revealed himself in all his glory and holiness, far above all mortal attributes.⁴⁰⁶²

The builders had exhorted each other, saying, “Come, let us make bricks (*nilbenah*)” (Gen 11:3). In contrast, God employed word play with mocking irony.⁴⁰⁶³ He said, “Come now, let us go down and let us confuse (*nabelah*) there their language so they cannot understand a

⁴⁰⁴⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 354.

⁴⁰⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 236.

⁴⁰⁴⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240.

⁴⁰⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 180.

⁴⁰⁵⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 377–8.

⁴⁰⁵¹Walton, *Genesis*, 377–8.

⁴⁰⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240.

⁴⁰⁵³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 180.

⁴⁰⁵⁴W. Von Soden and E. Lipiński, “עַם” (*am*) *TDOT* 11:163–77, 165. Moses used the term *leom* (<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/522>) (people) to emphasize the divergence between Jacob and Esau in Gen 25:23.

⁴⁰⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240.

⁴⁰⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 180.

⁴⁰⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240.

⁴⁰⁵⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 377–8.

⁴⁰⁵⁹Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 170, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 354.

⁴⁰⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 177.

⁴⁰⁶²Walton, *Genesis*, 377–8.

⁴⁰⁶³Robert P. Gordon, “Babel, Tower of, Theology,” *NIDOTTE* 4:428–30, 428.

man’s language [from] his companion.” Concerning the identity of “us” in this verse,⁴⁰⁶⁴ God was speaking to his heavenly court of angels (1 Ki 22:19–20; Job 2:1; Ps 89:5–7).⁴⁰⁶⁵ This also aligns with the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) concept of a group of deities who confer to make decisions.

Enuma Elish describes a heavenly council in this way):

“They made ready to leave on their journey, all the great gods who decree the fates. They entered before Anshar [the god of heaven], filling [Ushshukinna, the Chamber of Destiny]. They kissed one another in the Assembly. They held converse as they [sat down] to the banquet...For Marduk, their avenger, they fixed the decrees.”⁴⁰⁶⁶ This divine council determined the fate of the gods and of everyone on earth.⁴⁰⁶⁷

Some scholars object that it debases God to have him consult with created beings like angels (Isa 40:13–14). Yet, this is not something he must do, but rather how he chooses to operate (Gen 3:22–24; Gen 18:16–19; Gen 19:1).⁴⁰⁶⁸ Inviting the angelic court to assist him in confusing the tongues of the people-groups meshes well with the responsibilities of these heavenly beings.⁴⁰⁶⁹ According to other Old Testament texts, the Lord entrusted them with the care of the nations apart from Israel (Deut 32:8–9; Dan 10:13, 20–21; Dan 12:1).⁴⁰⁷⁰

On the surface, the method God chose to disrupt their plans seems surprising.⁴⁰⁷¹ However, destroying the ziggurat would have failed to correct the root of the problem.⁴⁰⁷² The builders could have simply constructed another tower for the gods to reach down to them.⁴⁰⁷³ By demolishing their ability to communicate, the people could not continue to live in unity.⁴⁰⁷⁴ In the ANE, people correlated the failure of a city with abandonment by its patron god.⁴⁰⁷⁵

According to the Lament for Sumer and Urim:

“[The god] An frightened the very dwellings of Sumer, the people were afraid. Enlil blew an evil storm; silence lay upon the city. Nintur bolted the door of the storehouses of the Land. Enki blocked the water in the Tigris and the Euphrates. Utu took away the pronouncement of equity and justice. Inana handed over victory in strife and battle to a rebellious land. Ninĝirsu poured Sumer away like milk to the dogs. Turmoil descended upon the Land, something that no one had ever known, something unseen, which had no name, something that could not be fathomed. The lands were confused in their fear. *The god of the city turned away, its shepherd vanished.*”⁴⁰⁷⁶

The concept of a language which encompassed the known world occurs in a twenty-first century BC Sumerian Epic.⁴⁰⁷⁷ According to Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta:

⁴⁰⁶⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 180. The first volume of this series explores this issue at length in the exegesis of Gen 1:26.

⁴⁰⁶⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

⁴⁰⁶⁶Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 3:129–38, 65–6.

⁴⁰⁶⁷Mullen, “Divine Assembly,” *ABD* 2:213.

⁴⁰⁶⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 129.

⁴⁰⁶⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 241.

⁴⁰⁷⁰Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 796.

⁴⁰⁷¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 355.

⁴⁰⁷²Walton, *Genesis*, 378.

⁴⁰⁷³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 355.

⁴⁰⁷⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 378.

⁴⁰⁷⁵Mark A. Awabdy, “Babel, Suspense, and the Terah-Abram Narrative,” *JSOT* 35, no. 1 (1 September 2010):3–29, 25, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0309089210365960>.

⁴⁰⁷⁶Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, “The Lament for Sumer and Urim,” lines 58–68, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.2.3#>. Italics mine.

⁴⁰⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 236.

“In those days, there being no snakes, there being no scorpions, there being no hyenas, there being no lions, there being no dogs or wolves, there being no (thing) fearful or hair-raising, mankind had no opponents—in those days...(in) the (whole) compass of heaven and earth the people entrusted (to him) could address [the god] Enlil, verily, in but a single tongue.”⁴⁰⁷⁸

This work also addresses the confusion of languages.⁴⁰⁷⁹ It continues:

“In those days...having lordly bouts fought, having princely bouts fought, and having royal bouts fought, did Enki, lord of abundance, lord of effective command, did the lord of intelligence, the country’s clever one, did the leader of the gods, did the sagacious omen-revealed lord of Eridu, estrange the tongues in their mouths as many as were put there. The tongues of men which were one.”⁴⁰⁸⁰ This myth from Uruk appears to reflect an event from late in the fourth millennium BC.⁴⁰⁸¹

Read Gen 11:5–7. Why didn’t the ziggurat work in the way that its builders intended? Who carried out this judgment? How do ANE texts reflect what happened in Babel? How do you picture the outcome of this event?

Dispersed over the Face of the Earth

e) Gen 11:8–9: In this final scene on the Plains of Shinar, the people experienced what they had worked so hard to avoid (Gen 11:1–7).⁴⁰⁸² Moses reported, “Then the Lord caused them to be dispersed from there over the face of all the earth. And they ceased building the city.” This passage skips directly from God’s plan to the outcome of the cataclysm.⁴⁰⁸³ No longer able to communicate clearly with each other, the people naturally scattered.⁴⁰⁸⁴

Then, Moses added a final comment. He wrote, “Therefore, its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused (*balal*) the speech of all the earth, and from there Yahweh caused them to be dispersed over the face of all the earth.” Those who intended to make a name for themselves succeeded, but not as they had hoped.⁴⁰⁸⁵

It appears that the oldest form of the name of the city was Babila. The Babylonians shifted the name slightly to *Bab-ili*, a meaning equivalent to “Gate of God.”⁴⁰⁸⁶ The identity of

⁴⁰⁷⁸Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta” in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World (COS)* (ed. William W. Hallo ed.; Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997) lines 135–40, 1:547.

⁴⁰⁷⁹Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 174, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁸⁰Jacobsen, trans., “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,” in *COS*, lines 141–55, 1:547–8.

⁴⁰⁸¹Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 175, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁸²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 241.

⁴⁰⁸³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 356.

⁴⁰⁸⁴Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 170, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁸⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 357.

⁴⁰⁸⁶Helmer Ringgren, “בָּבֶל” (*babel*), *TDOT* 1:466–9, 466–7.

the one who gave the city a name similar in sound for the verb *balal* remains unclear.⁴⁰⁸⁷ Perhaps Nimrod founded it (Gen 10:8–12).⁴⁰⁸⁸ The best evidence places the date for Babel’s construction sometime in the fourth millennium BC.⁴⁰⁸⁹ However, since the original city failed, the confusion of tongues may have occurred centuries earlier.⁴⁰⁹⁰ Shifting water tables in the Euphrates River destroyed the archaeological strata, making a precise date based upon artifacts impossible. If this was indeed where the events of Gen 11 occurred, the city likely remained uninhabited for over a millennium.⁴⁰⁹¹

According to tradition, Sargon I erected the city of Akkad over the ruins of Babel (ca. 2400 BC).⁴⁰⁹² The earliest written documentation citing the city of Babylon consists of an inscription from the Akkadian ruler Shar-kali-sharri (ca. 2250 BC).⁴⁰⁹³ It says, “In the year in which Szarkaliszarri laid the foundations of the temples of the goddess Annunitum and of the god Aba in Babylon.”⁴⁰⁹⁴

During the second and first millennia BC, Babylon reigned as the most famous metropolis in the Ancient Near East (ANE).⁴⁰⁹⁵ Rome during the Middle Ages provides a good parallel in terms of Babylon’s importance.⁴⁰⁹⁶ In effect, Babylon signified the ANE culture of that era.⁴⁰⁹⁷ Nebuchadnezzar II (634–532 BC) rebuilt the temple tower in Babylon.⁴⁰⁹⁸ His military success and wealth enabled him to pursue grand construction projects (Dan 4:28–30).⁴⁰⁹⁹ He called the ziggurat he built Etemenanki (“The House that is the Foundation of Heaven and Earth”).⁴¹⁰⁰ This structure formed the landing site for the god Marduk.⁴¹⁰¹ Vegetation growing at the top of the ziggurat may have constituted the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.⁴¹⁰²

Genesis 11:1–9 ridicules Babylon’s origin,⁴¹⁰³ making it synonymous with wickedness.⁴¹⁰⁴ Hebrew prophets alluded to Babylon’s history when speaking against her kings. These rulers exalted themselves as gods (Isa 14:3–6, 12–17; Jer 51:53).⁴¹⁰⁵ This stigma continued in the New Testament era, although by that time Babylon no longer functioned as a world power. Instead, the city name appears to cryptically refer to the dominant force of that age:

⁴⁰⁸⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 357.

⁴⁰⁸⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 181.

⁴⁰⁸⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 11:3.

⁴⁰⁹⁰Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 171, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴⁰⁹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 378.

⁴⁰⁹²D. J. Wiseman, “Babylon in the Old Testament,” *NBD* 110–2, 110.

⁴⁰⁹³Paul Delnero, “Babylon: Myth and Truth, an Exhibit at the Pergamon Museum,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 71, no. 3 (1 September 2008): 181–4, 182.

⁴⁰⁹⁴University of California at Los Angeles, “Agade Szarkaliszarri,” <http://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/HTML/T2K4.htm>.

⁴⁰⁹⁵Margueron, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563.

⁴⁰⁹⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 178.

⁴⁰⁹⁷Margueron, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563.

⁴⁰⁹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 237–8.

⁴⁰⁹⁹Grayson, “Mesopotamia, History of: History and Culture of Babylonia,” *ABD* 4:765.

⁴¹⁰⁰Robertson, “Temples and Sanctuaries: Mesopotamia,” *ABD* 6:375.

⁴¹⁰¹Kellermann, “מִגְדָּל” (*migdal*), *TDOT* 8:72.

⁴¹⁰²Grayson, “Mesopotamia, History of: History and Culture of Babylonia,” *ABD* 4:765.

⁴¹⁰³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 178.

⁴¹⁰⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 245.

⁴¹⁰⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 353.

Rome (1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:6–8; Rev 17:1–6, 9).⁴¹⁰⁶

Here the primeval history of Genesis reaches its end.⁴¹⁰⁷ With the exception of a few individuals, Gen 4–11 reveals the deep corruption of humanity. Not until the call of Abraham several millennia later would the world obtain hope for redemption (Gen 12:1–3).⁴¹⁰⁸

Read Gen 11:8–9. In what sense was “Gate of God” an accurate name for Babylon? Why did the people of Babel scatter? How far did their migration extend? Why was this necessary? What does this text teach us about God’s purposes?

The Spirit Descends

2) Acts 2:1–3: This chapter inaugurates what Jesus promised the apostles after his resurrection (Luke 24:45–49; Acts 1:4–11; Luke 24:50–53).⁴¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Christ continued to orchestrate events on earth even after his ascension into heaven (Acts 2:22–36).⁴¹¹⁰ Luke’s account begins by reporting on the activity of the disciples, stating, “And when the day of Pentecost had arrived, all of them were together in one place.”

The word translated as “had arrived” (*symplēroō*) also means “was fulfilled.”⁴¹¹¹ By employing this verb, Luke hinted at the importance of what occurred on that day (Cf. Luke 9:51).⁴¹¹² At last the true purpose of the Feast of Pentecost came to fruition: the reaping of the first fruits of the new age in salvation history (Acts 2:41–47; Rom 8:23).⁴¹¹³ From this time forward, the Holy Spirit marked God’s people with his intimate presence (John 14:16–27; Rom 8:9–11; 2 Cor 1:21–22).⁴¹¹⁴

Pentecost (*pentēkostē*) means “fiftieth.”⁴¹¹⁵ On the fiftieth day after the early harvest festival—which had coincided with Passover (<http://www.jewfaq.org/holidaya.htm>)—Israelites presented the first fruits of the barley harvest to the Lord (Lev 23:15–21).⁴¹¹⁶ The Old Testament (OT) calls this celebration “the feast of weeks” or “the day of the first fruits” (Exod 23:14–17;

⁴¹⁰⁶Duane F. Watson, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563–6, 565.

⁴¹⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 245.

⁴¹⁰⁸Walton, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Babel Account and Its Implications,” 170, https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1995_09_Walton_TowerBabel.pdf.

⁴¹⁰⁹Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 164.

⁴¹¹⁰Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan* (ed. D. A. Carson; NSBT; Nottingham, Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2011), 50.

⁴¹¹¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “σμπληρώω” (*symplēroō*), *BDAG*, 959.

⁴¹¹²William J. Larkin Jr, *Acts* (IVPNTCS; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), Acts 2:1, electronic ed.

⁴¹¹³Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 131, note 7.

⁴¹¹⁴Ajith Fernando, *Acts* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 90.

⁴¹¹⁵Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “πεντηκοστή” (*pentēkostē*), *BDAG*, 795.

⁴¹¹⁶Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 130–1.

Exod 34:22; Deut 16:1, 9–12).⁴¹¹⁷ Just as Passover foreshadowed the redemption to come by Christ’s death and resurrection, so the Feast of Weeks preceded the first fruits of the salvation we enjoy (Rom 8:16–17; 2 Cor 1:21–22).⁴¹¹⁸

By the time of Christ, many Jewish people associated this festival with a commemoration of Moses receiving the law at Mount Sinai. This was due to the close dates on their calendar (Exod 12:17–18; Exod 19:1).⁴¹¹⁹ Thus, the timing of this event implies that life in the Spirit supersedes living according to the Mosaic law (Rom 7:4–6; Rom 8:1–4; Gal 5:18).⁴¹²⁰ The Essenes of Qumran performed the rites of a Feast of the Renewal of the Covenant on the same day as Pentecost (1 QS 1:16–2:25).⁴¹²¹

On that Pentecost, Jesus began a new covenant for the last days (Acts 2:14–21).⁴¹²² Many Israelites viewed the age to come this way:⁴¹²³

“[The hea]vens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, and none therein will stray from the commandments of the holy ones. Seekers of the Lord, strengthen yourselves in His service! All you hopeful in (your) heart, will you not find the Lord in this? For the Lord will consider the pious and call the righteous by name. Over the poor his spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with his power. And he will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal Kingdom, he who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent]” (Ps 146:7–8).⁴¹²⁴

Likewise, when the apostles asked Jesus about restoring the kingdom to Israel, he had responded by saying, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:6–8).⁴¹²⁵ Christ linked the arrival of the kingdom of God with the coming of the Spirit.

As Jesus instructed them before his ascension, his followers—both male and female—were meeting together regularly in Jerusalem.⁴¹²⁶ Most likely, this occurred in the upper room where they had celebrated the Last Supper (Luke 22:7–22; Acts 1:12–15).⁴¹²⁷ Luke wrote, “And it happened suddenly: from heaven a noise like a rushing, violent wind. And it filled the whole house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them divided tongues, just like fire. And it settled on every one of them.”

Visual and auditory signs accompanied this supernatural event.⁴¹²⁸ Typically, the same Greek word (*pneuma*) denotes wind, breath, spirit, and the Spirit.⁴¹²⁹ The relatively rare word Luke used here (*pnoē*) refers strictly to wind or breath. However, it can have the nuance of the “breath of life,” as in the Greek translation of Gen 2:7 and in Acts 17:25.⁴¹³⁰ Even so, this

⁴¹¹⁷F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 49–50.

⁴¹¹⁸Larkin, *Acts*, Ac 2:1.

⁴¹¹⁹Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Expanded Digital Edition* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), Acts 2:1.

⁴¹²⁰Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 131.

⁴¹²¹Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 54, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n109.

⁴¹²²Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴¹²³Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:1–4.

⁴¹²⁴Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4Q521, Frag. 2, 244–5, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n469.

⁴¹²⁵Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:1–4.

⁴¹²⁶Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:1. The verb “were meeting” occurs in the imperfect tense, which refers to a continuous or repetitive action in the past.

⁴¹²⁷Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴¹²⁸Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴¹²⁹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “πνεῦμα” (*pneuma*), *BDAG*, 832–6, 832.

⁴¹³⁰Eduard Schweizer, “πνοή” (*pnoē*), *TDNT*, 6:453.

rushing wind arrived with, and symbolized, the Holy Spirit.⁴¹³¹ The noise was “like” (*hōsper*) a rushing, violent wind, not an actual gale.⁴¹³²

Jesus used a similar analogy in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1–8). When the Spirit came, he arrived with power.⁴¹³³ Sound filled a dwelling large enough to seat 120 people.⁴¹³⁴ In the OT, the Lord usually arrived with a wind (2 Sam 22:7–11; Ps 104:1–4; Ezek 1:4).⁴¹³⁵ The phrase commonly translated “cool of the day” (*leruakh hayom*) in Gen 3:8 also means “wind of the storm.”⁴¹³⁶

Concerning Babel (Gen 11:1–9), Josephus (37–100 AD) reported, “The Sibyl also makes mention of this tower, and of the confusion of the language, when she says thus, ‘When all men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven, but *the gods sent storms of wind* and overthrew the tower.’”⁴¹³⁷

During Israel’s exile, Ezekiel received a vision foretelling God’s restoration of his people.⁴¹³⁸ When Ezekiel prophesied to the wind, it entered the dry bones covered with flesh, reviving them with new life from the Spirit (Ezek 37:1–14).⁴¹³⁹

Like Luke’s description of the wind, he called the divided tongues (*diamerizō glōssa*) “like” fire.⁴¹⁴⁰ The imagery connotes flickering flames.⁴¹⁴¹ God’s presence often resembled fire (Exod 3:1–4; Exod 40:33–38; Dan 7:9–10). When the Lord delivered the law to Moses, the entire mountaintop blazed (Exod 19:16–19; Exod 24:17–18).⁴¹⁴² Such fire could portend judgment (Lev 10:1–2; Num 16:1–2, 35; Isa 66:15–16; 1 Cor 3:10–15). Yet, flames also effected purification (Num 31:21–23).⁴¹⁴³

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) wrote this regarding Moses’s reception of the law:

“And a voice sounded forth from out of the midst of the fire which had flowed from heaven, a most marvelous and awful voice, *the flame being endowed with articulate speech in a language familiar to the hearers*, which expressed its words with such clearness and distinctness that the people seemed rather to be seeing than hearing it. And the law testifies to the accuracy of my statement, where it is written, ‘And all the people beheld the voice most evidently’ [Exod 20:18]. For the truth is that the voice of men is calculated to be heard; but that of God to be really and truly seen.

“Why is this? Because all that God says are not words, but actions which the eyes determine on before the ears. It is, therefore, with great beauty, and also with a proper sense of what is consistent with the dignity of God, that the voice is said to have come forth out of the fire; for the oracles of God are accurately understood and tested like gold by the fire.

⁴¹³¹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 50.

⁴¹³²Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132.

⁴¹³³Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 50.

⁴¹³⁴Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:2.

⁴¹³⁵Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴¹³⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

⁴¹³⁷Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.118,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D4>. Italics mine.

⁴¹³⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:2.

⁴¹³⁹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 50.

⁴¹⁴⁰Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132.

⁴¹⁴¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “διαμερίζω” (*diamerizō*), *BDAG*, 233–4, 233.

⁴¹⁴²Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:3.

⁴¹⁴³Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:3.

“And God also intimates to us something of this kind by a figure. Since the property of fire is partly to give light, and partly to burn, those who think fit to show themselves obedient to the sacred commands shall live for ever and ever as in a light which is never darkened, having his laws themselves as stars giving light in their soul. But all those who are stubborn and disobedient are forever inflamed, and burnt, and consumed by their internal appetites, which, like flame, will destroy all the life of those who possess them.”⁴¹⁴⁴

Israel’s prophets proclaimed that their messiah would come with fire. He would purge all unrighteousness and purify his people (Isa 4:2–6; Isa 9:1–7; Mal 3:1–6).⁴¹⁴⁵ John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one they sought (Matt 3:11–14).⁴¹⁴⁶

Luke engaged in word play by calling the flames “tongues of fire.” Their appearance coincided with the disciples’ ability to communicate in languages unknown to them.⁴¹⁴⁷ Likewise, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Israel’s camp, seventy elders began prophesying (Num 11:23–29). Later in this chapter, Peter cited the fulfillment of Joel’s prediction as evidence of the arrival of the last days (Joel 2:26–32; Acts 2:17–18).⁴¹⁴⁸

This visual manifestation of the Spirit rested upon each one of the believers in that area.⁴¹⁴⁹ All God’s people, ranging from the eleven apostles to the lowest slave, received the presence of the Spirit.⁴¹⁵⁰ Unlike the arrival of God at Sinai, neither fear nor trembling ensued (Exod 20:18–21). Instead, the recipients declared the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:5–11).⁴¹⁵¹ By his Spirit, God transformed Peter from a man who denied knowing Jesus to an orator who spoke powerfully in Christ’s name (Luke 22:54–62; Acts 2:22–36).⁴¹⁵²

a) Read Acts 2:1–3. Why did all the believers gather in Jerusalem? What made the feast of Pentecost the appropriate time for the Holy Spirit to arrive? How did this event fulfill OT expectations? What change did the arrival of the Spirit make in the disciples? How does the presence of the Spirit affect your life?

Speaking Other Tongues

b) Acts 2:4: Luke continued his report on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–3). He wrote, “And all were filled of the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak other tongues even as the Spirit was

⁴¹⁴⁴Philo, *On the Decalogue*, in *The Works of Philo*, 3:11.46–9, 146–7, <https://archive.org/stream/theworksofphiloj03yonguoft#page/146>. Italics mine.

⁴¹⁴⁵Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:3.

⁴¹⁴⁶I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids; Nottingham: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 531.

⁴¹⁴⁷Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:3.

⁴¹⁴⁸Marshall, “Acts,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 531.

⁴¹⁴⁹Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:3.

⁴¹⁵⁰Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132.

⁴¹⁵¹Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:3.

⁴¹⁵²Fernando, *Acts*, 90.

giving them [the ability] to speak.” Being filled with the Spirit empowers us for the Lord’s use. He enables us to bear witness via acts of service or speaking (Luke 1:13–17; Acts 4:5–13, 29–30; Acts 9:17–22; Acts 13:8–12).⁴¹⁵³

The verb which Luke used here (*pimplēmi*) conveys greater intensity than another word which also means “be filled” (*plēroō*).⁴¹⁵⁴ Elsewhere in Acts, Luke employed the phrases “receiving the Spirit” and “being baptized by the Spirit” as synonyms for “being filled” (*pimplēmi*) (Acts 1:4–5; Acts 10:44–48; Acts 11:15–18).⁴¹⁵⁵

Paul used the verb *plēroō* when he admonished believers to be continually filled with the Spirit,⁴¹⁵⁶ resulting in giving thanks and mutual submission (Eph 5:18–21).⁴¹⁵⁷ Thus, someone already filled with the Spirit (*pimplēmi*) can receive renewed or added filling (*plēroō*) for a special task, for harmony with people, and for communion with God (Luke 4:1–14; Acts 6:1–8; Acts 7:55–60).⁴¹⁵⁸

In Greek, a “tongue” (*glōssa*) can refer to the physical organ, an established language, or an ecstatic religious utterance.⁴¹⁵⁹ Paul commanded that those in congregations who “speak in tongues not of humanity” should do so only in the presence of an interpreter (1 Cor 14:1–19).⁴¹⁶⁰ The adjective “other” (*heteros*) tongues confirms that Luke referred to existing languages.⁴¹⁶¹

During the Feast of Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the believers to speak in human languages unknown to them.⁴¹⁶² Aside from that day, the Lord has not granted speaking in tongues as a universal spiritual gift (Cf. 1 Cor 12:4–11, 27–31).⁴¹⁶³ This event began a new era in God’s kingdom,⁴¹⁶⁴ a reversal of what transpired in Babel (Gen 11:1–9).

Read Acts 2:4. In what way did the experience of believers on the day of Pentecost differ from what happens today? What effect does being filled with the Holy Spirit have upon a person? How did you initially experience being filled by the Spirit? When are you especially aware of the Spirit’s presence?

A Bewildered Crowd

c) Acts 2:5–8: Here the scene shifts to those outside the building where the disciples gathered (Acts 1:12–14; Acts 2:1–4).⁴¹⁶⁵ Luke reported, “And there were in Jerusalem Jewish people

⁴¹⁵³Gerhard Delling, “πίμπλημι” (*pimplēmi*), *TDNT* 6:128–34, 130.

⁴¹⁵⁴Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:4.

⁴¹⁵⁵Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 133.

⁴¹⁵⁶Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 94.

⁴¹⁵⁷Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 133.

⁴¹⁵⁸Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 133.

⁴¹⁵⁹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “γλῶσσα” (*glōssa*), *BDAG*, 201–2.

⁴¹⁶⁰Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 52.

⁴¹⁶¹Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132–3.

⁴¹⁶²Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴¹⁶³Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132–3.

⁴¹⁶⁴Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132–3.

⁴¹⁶⁵Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

residing, devout men (*aner*) from all the nations under heaven. When this sound occurred, the crowd gathered, and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speaking in his own language.”

The verb which Luke employed (*katoikeō*) can mean “to live in a locality for any length of time.”⁴¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the people mentioned here could fall into several categories.⁴¹⁶⁷ Some resided there permanently after returning from the nations where their ancestors had been exiled (Cf. Acts 6:9).⁴¹⁶⁸ Pious retirees often wished to live their last days in Jerusalem and be buried there.⁴¹⁶⁹ Supporting this, Greek inscriptions appear on one-third of the burial boxes found in that city.⁴¹⁷⁰

As one of the three required feasts (Exod 23:14–17), a significant number of visitors celebrated Pentecost in Jerusalem.⁴¹⁷¹ Some scholars estimate that approximately a million pilgrims attended that festival each year.⁴¹⁷² Only in Jerusalem could they participate in the rites which God commanded (Num 28:26–31; Deut 12:10–14).⁴¹⁷³

Among New Testament authors, only Luke used the word translated as “devout” (*eulabēs*) (Luke 2:25–32; Acts 8:1–2; Acts 22:12).⁴¹⁷⁴ It seems to refer to those who kept the Mosaic law.⁴¹⁷⁵ Although the widespread inclusion of gentiles did not occur until later (Acts 10), these pious Jewish men in Jerusalem represented the known world (Acts 2:9–11).⁴¹⁷⁶ A crowd gathered when the people heard Christ’s disciples speaking their local languages.⁴¹⁷⁷

According to Luke, “They were amazed and astonished (*syncheō*), saying, ‘Behold, are not all these speaking Galileans? How are we hearing each one his own language in which we were born?’” Luke used the same word (*syncheō*) to describe the reaction at Pentecost which appears in the Greek translation of Gen 11:7).⁴¹⁷⁸ This allusion—coupled with the abundance of people-groups with various languages and dialects—points to an intentional linkage with Gen 10–11:9.⁴¹⁷⁹

Israelites easily recognized a Galilean accent (Luke 22:59).⁴¹⁸⁰ People from Galilee tended to drop certain letters, which could lead to difficult communication.⁴¹⁸¹ That contributed to the perception of that region as a backwater.⁴¹⁸² Yet, the disciples expressed themselves clearly in tongues known only in far-off parts of the world.⁴¹⁸³ Even today, God continues to use those whom society devalues to accomplish great things by his Spirit (1 Cor 1:26–31).⁴¹⁸⁴

⁴¹⁶⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “κατοικέω” (*katoikeō*), *BDAG*, 534.

⁴¹⁶⁷Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

⁴¹⁶⁸Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 135.

⁴¹⁶⁹Fernando, *Acts*, 88–9.

⁴¹⁷⁰James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 246, note 21.

⁴¹⁷¹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 53.

⁴¹⁷²Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

⁴¹⁷³Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 54.

⁴¹⁷⁴Result of Logos 7 word study on “εὐλαβής” (*eulabēs*).

⁴¹⁷⁵Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

⁴¹⁷⁶Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 55.

⁴¹⁷⁷Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 54.

⁴¹⁷⁸Result of Logos 7 word study on συγγέω (*syncheō*).

⁴¹⁷⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 202.

⁴¹⁸⁰Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 54.

⁴¹⁸¹Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

⁴¹⁸²Fernando, *Acts*, 89.

⁴¹⁸³Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 54.

⁴¹⁸⁴Fernando, *Acts*, 97.

During the seventh century BC, Aramaic became the language of Israel, Syria, and Mesopotamia. It remained the primary spoken tongue of Israel through the period of the early church.⁴¹⁸⁵ Alexander the Great's army introduced Koine Greek throughout the Ancient Near East as far as the Indus River in the latter half of the fourth century BC.⁴¹⁸⁶ Those living closer to Rome, from Spain to France, spoke Latin.⁴¹⁸⁷

Except for merchants and international traders, people expected those native to Jerusalem to understand only Hebrew, Aramaic, and perhaps Greek (Acts 21:37–40).⁴¹⁸⁸ At Pentecost, worshipers from far-flung parts of the world heard relatively uneducated people proclaim God's great deeds in their local tongues (Cf. Acts 4:13).⁴¹⁸⁹ Peter declared that this miraculous speech resulted from the Lord granting the gift of prophecy to his disciples (Acts 2:16–18).⁴¹⁹⁰

The Lord suddenly removed the communication barriers which he erected in Babel (Gen 11:1–9).⁴¹⁹¹ In Shinar, confusion reigned because the speech of others became indecipherable. At Pentecost, bewilderment arose due to a clear transmission of information.⁴¹⁹² This event led to the formation of a new segment of humanity, the church of God.⁴¹⁹³ The Lord had begun to fulfill his promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3).⁴¹⁹⁴

Read Acts 2:5–8. Who was in Jerusalem? Why were people shocked by this event? How does it relate to what happened in Babel?

Babel Reversed

c) Acts 2:9–12: After recounting the event at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–8), Luke listed three people-groups followed by nine regions of the world and then another two people-groups. He reported the crowd's words as, "[We are] Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and those residing [in] Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and those visiting from Rome—Jewish people and proselytes—Cretans and Nabataeans. We hear them speaking in our tongues of the greatness of God." Overall, this series of locations begins in the east and moves counterclockwise,⁴¹⁹⁵ with Judea appearing in the middle (Cf. Ezek 5:5).⁴¹⁹⁶

⁴¹⁸⁵Stephen A. Kaufman, "Languages: Aramaic," *ABD* 4:173–8, 173.

⁴¹⁸⁶Gerald Mussies, "Languages: Greek," *ABD* 4:195–203, 197.

⁴¹⁸⁷F. F. Bruce, "Languages: Latin," *ABD* 4:220–2, 220.

⁴¹⁸⁸Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:7–8.

⁴¹⁸⁹Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:7–8.

⁴¹⁹⁰Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Acts 2:4–13.

⁴¹⁹¹Fernando, *Acts*, 90.

⁴¹⁹²Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 136.

⁴¹⁹³Fernando, *Acts*, 90.

⁴¹⁹⁴Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 164.

⁴¹⁹⁵Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:5.

⁴¹⁹⁶Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:8.

When the Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote his Table of Nations based upon Gen 10, he gave Judea a similar placement.⁴¹⁹⁷ A German map from 1581 illustrates this concept of Jerusalem as the center of the world.⁴¹⁹⁸ Luke mentioned Rome far to the west before returning close to the point of origin in Jordan.⁴¹⁹⁹ All these nations contained significant Jewish populations.⁴²⁰⁰

In the eighth and seventh centuries BC, Assyria exiled Israelis across the Euphrates River to Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia (2 Ki 17:6, 22–23).⁴²⁰¹ Babylon added to their numbers in the sixth century BC (2 Ki 24:10–16). Although Cyrus of Persia authorized the exiles' return to Judah in 539 BC, many Jewish people remained in their new lands (Ezra 1:1–6; Ezra 2:64–65; Esth 3:6).⁴²⁰² Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, and Pamphylia all fall within modern Turkey. Paul covered much of this territory during his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14).⁴²⁰³

In ca. 213 BC, the Seleucid king Antiochus III wrote this letter:⁴²⁰⁴
 “Having been informed that a sedition is arisen in *Lydia and Phrygia*, I thought that matter required great care; and upon advising with my friends what was fit to be done, it hath been thought proper to remove two thousand families of Jews, with their effects, out of Mesopotamia and Babylon, unto the castles and places that lie most convenient; for I am persuaded that they will be well-disposed guardians of our possessions, because of their piety towards God, and because I know that my predecessors have borne witness to them, that they are faithful, and with alacrity do what they are desired to do.

“I will, therefore, though it be a laborious work, that thou remove these Jews, under a promise, that they shall be permitted to use their own laws. And when thou shalt have brought them to the places forementioned, thou shalt give everyone of their families a place for building their houses, and a portion of the land for their husbandry, and for the plantation of their vines; and thou shalt discharge them from paying taxes of the fruits of the earth for ten years; and let them have a proper quantity of wheat for the maintenance of their servants, until they receive bread corn out of the earth; also let a sufficient share be given to such as minister to them in the necessaries of life, that by enjoying the effects of our humanity, they may show themselves the more willing and ready about our affairs. Take care likewise of that nation, as far as thou art able, that they may not have any disturbance given them by anyone.”⁴²⁰⁵

Egypt had hosted a Jewish population since the early sixth century BC (Jer 44:1). Their numbers swelled after Alexander the Great conquered that country and founded Alexandria in 331 BC.⁴²⁰⁶ Philo (20 BC–40 AD), a native of Alexandria, reported, “Jews who inhabited

⁴¹⁹⁷Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.122–39.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D1%3Awhiston+chapter%3D6>.

⁴¹⁹⁸University of Southern Maine, “Die Ganze Welt in ein Kleberblat Welches in der Stadt Hannover Meines Lieben Vaterlandes Wapen,” <http://www.oshermaps.org/search/zoom.php?no=315#img0>.

⁴¹⁹⁹Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:8.

⁴²⁰⁰Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 136.

⁴²⁰¹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 55–6.

⁴²⁰²Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 55–6.

⁴²⁰³John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 100.

⁴²⁰⁴Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 57.

⁴²⁰⁵Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.3.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D12%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D3%3Awhiston%20section%3D4>.

⁴²⁰⁶Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 57.

Alexandria and the rest of the country from the Catabathmos on the side of Libya to the boundaries of Ethiopia were not less than a million of men.”⁴²⁰⁷

Cyrene served as the capital of a Roman province in modern Libya.⁴²⁰⁸ Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote this about Ptolemy I (ca. 367–282 BC), “When he was desirous to secure the government of Cyrene, and the other cities of Libya, to himself, he sent a party of Jews to inhabit in them.”⁴²⁰⁹ Luke mentioned Jewish people from Cyrene fairly often (Luke 23:26; Acts 6:9; Acts 11:19–20; Acts 13:1).⁴²¹⁰

The visitors from Rome likely consisted of Jews born in there.⁴²¹¹ A Jewish colony began in the empire’s capital in the second century BC.⁴²¹² By the time of Christ, 10,000–60,000 Jews resided in Rome.⁴²¹³ They worshiped in at least eleven synagogues.⁴²¹⁴ At the end of Luke’s report in Acts, Paul reached the capital (Acts 28:16, 30–31).⁴²¹⁵ Some of these visitors at Pentecost may have returned to Rome testifying to Christ’s resurrection, as the Jews there heard the news prior to Paul’s arrival (Acts 28:17–22).⁴²¹⁶

Suetonius (ca. 69–130/140), a Roman historian, noted that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 AD because they “were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.”⁴²¹⁷ Most likely, this refers to the preaching of the gospel by Christians from a Jewish background.⁴²¹⁸ The emperor’s death five years later automatically repealed the edict (Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3).⁴²¹⁹

Luke added a note that these Romans included “both Jews and proselytes.” Proselytes (*proselytos*) consisted of gentiles who fully converted to Judaism.⁴²²⁰ The final steps to become a proselyte included circumcision for men, ritual purification in a bath, and the offering of a sacrifice at the temple.⁴²²¹ Not surprisingly, more women chose to join the Jewish faith. Men tended to remain at the lesser rank of “God-fearers.”⁴²²² Jews in Rome seem to have sought converts more fervently than those living elsewhere.⁴²²³

Concerning adult converts, the satirist Juvenal (ca. 55–127 AD) complained: “Then there are those that, blessed with a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship only the clouds in the sky and its spirit, who draw no distinction between the pork from which their father

⁴²⁰⁷ Philo, “Against Flaccus,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–90), 6.43, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda04phil#page/60/mode/2up>.

⁴²⁰⁸ W. Ward Gasque, “Cyrene (Place),” *ABD* 1:1230–1, 1230.

⁴²⁰⁹ Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.44,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0216%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

⁴²¹⁰ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 57.

⁴²¹¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:9–10.

⁴²¹² Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 57.

⁴²¹³ Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:9–10.

⁴²¹⁴ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58.

⁴²¹⁵ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 136–7.

⁴²¹⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:9–10.

⁴²¹⁷ Suetonius, “Divus Claudius,” 25.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dcl.%3Achapter%3D25>.

⁴²¹⁸ Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” *DPL*, 852–3.

⁴²¹⁹ Keener, “Romans Situation,” *IVPBBCNT*, Rom.

⁴²²⁰ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58.

⁴²²¹ Paul F. Stuehnenberg, “Proselyte,” *ABD* 5:503–5, 504.

⁴²²² Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58.

⁴²²³ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58.

had to abstain, and human flesh, and *who swiftly rid themselves of even their foreskins*. It's their custom to ignore the laws of Rome, the Judaic Code being that which they study, adhere to, and revere; the Pentateuch, the mystic scroll handed down by Moses."⁴²²⁴

The rationale behind Luke's pairing of Cretans (Capthorim) and Nabataeans, a subset of Arabs, appears to come from the Greek translation of the name of Ishmael's oldest son Nabaioth (Gen 25:12–13).⁴²²⁵ That would make both nations descendants of *Mitsraim* (Egypt) (Gen 10:13–14). Consequently, people regarded them as related nations in Jesus's day,⁴²²⁶ although current linguistic evidence indicates otherwise.⁴²²⁷

Nabataeans lived in an area from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River, with Petra as their capital.⁴²²⁸ They played an enormous role in the intertestamental history of Palestine by supporting the Maccabean Revolt.⁴²²⁹ In Jesus's era, Herod Antipas divorced the daughter of a powerful Nabataean king to marry Herodias (Mark 6:17–18).⁴²³⁰

By the time of Christ, Jewish people had spread throughout the known world. According to Philo, Herod Agrippa I (41–44 AD) wrote this:

“Concerning the holy city...[it] is my native country, and the metropolis, not only of the one country of Judaea, but also of many, by reason of the colonies which it has sent out from time to time into the bordering districts of Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria in general, and especially that part of it which is called Coelo-Syria, and also with those more distant regions of Pamphylia, Cilicia, the greater part of Asia Minor as far as Bithynia, and the furthestmost corners of Pontus. And in the same manner into Europe, into Thessaly, and Boeotia, and Macedonia, and Aetolia, and Attica, and Argos, and Corinth and all the most fertile and wealthiest districts of Peloponnesus. “And not only are the continents full of Jewish colonies, but also all the most celebrated islands are so too; such as Euboea, and Cyprus, and Crete. I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates, for all of them except a very small portion, and Babylon, and all the satrapies around, which have any advantages whatever of soil or climate, have Jews settled in them.”⁴²³¹

When considering Luke's rationale for including these names, some scholars point solely to the return of Jews to Israel (Cf. Isa 11:11).⁴²³² Many experts note the similarity between this list in Acts 2 and the Table of Nations (Gen 10).⁴²³³ The Lord gathered individuals from the scattered nations of Gen 10–11:9 and enabled them to hear the gospel in their own languages.⁴²³⁴ In a sense, God fulfilled Acts 1:8 at Pentecost.⁴²³⁵ Soon the good news would spread even further, reaching even the gentiles (Acts 10).⁴²³⁶ They, too, received the message of Christ's

⁴²²⁴Juvenal, *The Satires* (trans. A. S. Kline; 2011), 14:96–103, http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/JuvenalSatires14.htm#anchor_Toc285119331.

⁴²²⁵Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Gen 25:13.

⁴²²⁶Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:11.

⁴²²⁷David F. Graf, “Nabateans,” *ABD* 4:970–3, 970.

⁴²²⁸Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58.

⁴²²⁹Graf, “Nabateans,” *ABD* 4:970.

⁴²³⁰Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 58–9.

⁴²³¹Philo, “On the Embassy to Gaius,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–90), 36.281–2, <https://archive.org/details/worksofphilojuda04phil/page/160>.

⁴²³²Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:8.

⁴²³³Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:8.

⁴²³⁴Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 202.

⁴²³⁵Larkin, *Acts*, Acts 2:1.

⁴²³⁶Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 164.

sinless life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 13:44–49; Acts 15:12–18; Phil 2:5–11).⁴²³⁷

Given the close literary connection between the Table of Nations, the events of Babel, and God’s promise to bless all people-groups through Abraham (Gen 10:1–12:3), Luke’s incorporation of all three themes in Acts 2:1–11 seems deliberate.⁴²³⁸ On that day in 30 AD, the Lord reversed his act of judgment which fell upon Noah’s descendants in Babel.⁴²³⁹ Through the Spirit’s power, the language barrier dividing humanity fell (Acts 2:37–47).⁴²⁴⁰ God began to assemble one body of people from a multiplicity of nations, races, and tongues: the church of God (Eph 3:1–11; Rev 5:6–10; Rev 7:9–12).⁴²⁴¹

Read Acts 2:9–11. Who was in Jerusalem during Pentecost? Why were these people astonished to hear people from Galilee speaking in their languages? How did Luke incorporate the themes of Gen 10–12:3 into his account? Why do you think he did this? What does Acts 2 teach us about relationships among those who are living by the Spirit?

3) As we have reached the end of Moses’s account of primeval history, discuss some of the insights you have gained from Gen 4–11. How has this study affected your life?

⁴²³⁷Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 2:11.

⁴²³⁸Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 165.

⁴²³⁹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 59.

⁴²⁴⁰Fernando, *Acts*, 91.

⁴²⁴¹Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 165.