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THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS:
HOW AN ANCIENT MESSAGE SUBVERTS CONTEMPORARY
WORLDVIEWS AND LAYS THE FOUNDATION
FOR A CHRIST-CENTERED GOSPEL

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THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS:
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Date _____

For my Proverbs 31 wife,

I love you, Rachel

And for our children, Timothy, Abigail, and Titus

May you know the grace and peace of our Savior, Jesus Christ

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PREFACE

The Reformation creed, *Post Tenebras Lux*—“after darkness light”—is a powerful mantra that I have experienced to be true throughout the short span of my life. When I was seven years old, the darkness of my childish ignorance was powerfully pushed back by the bright light of John’s Gospel, which my father read to me as I sat on his lap, listening intently to the stories and the dialogues of the Messiah. It was as if an invisible hand were opening my eyes to see truth for the very first time, and it was the glorious sight of Christ and him crucified and resurrected that transfixed my heart. From that moment on, the light became brighter and brighter.

Without that light—that is, the working and moving of the gospel—in my life, I am certain that I would have never met my bride, Rachel. Her character, her values, and her whole life in general reminded me of the great women of faith I had read about in the Scriptures. She shines with the beauty of the Shulamite woman, who stands like “a lily among thorns” (Song of Solomon 2:2). She has the radical faith of Ruth, the courage of Deborah, the compassion of Abigail, a heart of hope like Esther, the prayerfulness of Hannah, and the hard-working, love-driven commitment of the Proverbs 31 wife. For the last eight years, my bride has helped me to love Christ and his word even more. Without that support, love, and encouragement, this project would have never been completed. Thank you, princess, for all that you are and do for our family.

God has used countless people in my life who have stirred me up to pursue the light with even greater tenacity and passion. I think of my father-in-law, Darrell Haley,

who pushed me deeper into the Scriptures and to gospel-centered obedience. He has invested hours and hours into encouraging me, challenging me, stretching me to have a firm faith. For his diligent work and Jonathan-like love, I will forever be grateful.

I also think of men like Chris Newkirk, whose teaching and mentorship trained me to have a pastoral heart. His ministry continues to have a lasting impact in my life, and his name belongs on the list of faithful coworkers who have inspired me to minister with greater joy, worship with greater passion, and teach with greater accuracy.

Also, the light of the gospel continues to shine bright in my eyes thanks to the faithful work of my fellow-shepherds at Grace Church of Ovilla. Without their oversight, grace, and support, I would shrink under the weight of ministry and the daily stresses of church life. By the grace of God, these men shoulder the burden with me, and the gospel is proclaimed to the people south of Dallas. May God remember their struggles and their tireless work for his kingdom, and may they receive “the unfading crown of glory” from the chief Shepherd when he returns. I am equally thankful for the church family as a whole. They have graciously allowed a young, “green and ripening” man to be their pastor. It is a joy to serve the amazing people of Grace Church! Without the assistance of people like Iris Harp, who helped edit much of this project, I would have been left scrambling. Without guidance, mentorship, and servant leadership of seasoned ministers like Fred Campbell, I would be at a loss. The whole congregation has proven to be a family who prays together, worships together, plays together, serves together, serves each other, and loves with the love of Christ. I can imagine no other church I would rather call home.

Finally, I am thankful for the hard work, patience, and diligent teaching of Dr. Brian Vickers. His feedback and constructive critiques helped make this project what it is. It was a sincere joy and a rare honor to have this man as my supervising professor. He is a model of faith and biblical precision, and I praise God for his aide.

Having thus testified to the truth of *post tenebras lux* in both my life and this project, I must also say that this project's goal is *Soli Deo gloria*. It is my hope that in reading the following expositions from the first book of the Scriptures, the reader will be stirred to worship Yahweh and seek the face of Christ in Genesis. May this project point its readers to the God who spoke light into the darkness.

Justin Jackson

Ovilla, Texas

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

Why study Genesis? Genesis is in the Old Testament, and we are *New Testament* Christians. Are there not more beneficial and practical books for Christians to be studying? The popular opinion is that Christians need nothing but the New Testament. It would be better for Christians to skip Genesis altogether and go directly to the Gospel of John or to Romans. John takes his audience straight to Jesus, and Paul does not bother with all that narrative; instead, he tells his readers what to do outright. So, what is the point of spending time in the book of Genesis?

Those who think Genesis has nothing to do with New Testament Christians treat the Bible as if it were the Sistine Chapel. Visitors enter the door, and their eyes immediately look upward at the beautiful frescoes on the ceiling and the walls. But how many people walk into the Sistine Chapel complimenting the foundation? Of course, no one does that. The foundation does not catch people's attention as quickly as the beautifully painted frescoes—that is, *if* the foundation catches anyone's attention at all. And so, thousands of people simply walk over the five hundred-year-old foundation with their eyes to the ceiling, failing to realize that without a strong foundation that beautiful ceiling would have come crashing down a long time ago.

In the same way, Christians open their Bibles, and most often their eyes go immediately to the beautiful New Testament to peruse the frescoes of the Gospel accounts and the inspirational epistles of Paul. In doing so, however, they skip over the foundation stones of the Old Testament as if it were some unnecessary feature of God's chapel. Sadly, this approach fails to appreciate how the beauty of the New Testament is built on the strong foundation of the Old, and without its foundation, the New Testament

comes crashing down. Therefore, in our tour of God's word, let faithful readers of the Bible not fail to admire the way Genesis serves as a foundation of the gospel's beauty. The book's concepts and themes lay the foundation for a Christ-centered worldview.

Laying the Foundation for a Christ-Centered Worldview

The Book of Genesis unapologetically lays the foundation for a Christ-centered view of life. However, in the process of laying this foundation, Genesis must also demolish all other opposing worldviews, both ancient and modern. The war of worldviews is ferocious in our day and age; and one of the most aggressive adversaries Christendom currently faces is the problem of secularism. Secularism is not a benign cultural shift, rather it is the reorientation of life and society without God. The general consensus of the culture is that regardless of his existence or nonexistence, God is irrelevant.¹ The arguments are no longer centered on whether God is real, but rather on whether God is even pertinent when considering humanity and its collective will, aims, and actions on earth.

The world views God as one who is distant and disengaged in the affairs of men, and powerless in preventing the will of mankind. Contemporary worldviews proclaim that man is his own autonomous ruler. He is good at heart. He faces no accountability for how he acts out his autonomy, and in his future lies only a blissful utopia built by humanity itself. Humanity serves humanity; and humanity glorifies humanity. With this worldview, mankind sings a doxology to itself:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:

¹David Wells defines secularism as "the values of the modern age, especially where these lead to the restructuring of thought and life to accommodate the absence or irrelevance of God." David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993) 87.

*I am the captain of my soul.*²

Genesis attacks this man-centered autonomy by declaring the sovereignty of the one true God and by displaying man's sinful deficiency and his inability to save himself. In this way, Genesis obliterates any thought of mankind's self-rule. Humans are sinfully fallen creatures who stand under the justice of God's wrath. In this state, humanity is completely helpless. Consequently, man cannot be the master of his fate, nor the captain of his soul, because he cannot be the redeemer of his sinful soul.

After attacking and demolishing the dilapidated shack of man's autonomy, Genesis lays in its place a Christ-centered foundation upon which the gospel will eventually be built. Readers of the Bible need not fast-forward to the New Testament in order to see Christ.³ As a matter of fact, the message of Christ saturates even the first book of the Bible. It would not be an overstatement to say that *the* point of Genesis is to prepare us for his coming. He is the subject, the primary theme, the climax, and the conclusion to the Bible's first narrative.

When the writers of the New Testament read the book of Genesis, they saw Christ in great clarity. For example, the apostle John, having intimate knowledge of Genesis 1 and 2, was speaking of Jesus when he wrote the prologue to his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). As he read the first chapters of the Torah, he found Christ standing with the Father before creation. Even more, nothing would have been created without him. Turning to another example, the apostle Paul expounded on the Christ-centered message of Genesis in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the

²William Ernest Henley, "Invictus", 1888, accessed January 2018, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51642/invictus>.

³Many great biblical theologies exist to demonstrate how Christ is seen even in the Old Testament. See, for example, Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Clearly, Paul built his theology of sin while reading of Adam’s fall in Genesis 3. However, he built more than just a theology of sin. Paul also used the foundation stones of Genesis 3 to build a theology of redemption. He concluded that if *death* could come from one man’s sin, then *life* must come through one man’s righteousness (Rom 5:18-19).⁴ For one final example, Luke warns us of a future judgment to come by reminding us of the type of judgment that came through the flood. Recording Jesus’ words, he writes, “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Luke 17:26-27, 30). Jesus here uses the flood of Genesis 6 as an illustration of the future judgment to come. People will be eating, drinking, getting married, and will be completely unaware that judgment is nigh. And then suddenly, judgment will come.

In addition to laying a foundation for a Christ-centered worldview, the book of Genesis also prepares us to understand the grand conclusion of the Bible’s metanarrative. Understanding how the story begins (protology) helps Bible readers understand how the story ends (eschatology). For example, when the New Testament writers read of God’s power in creating the heavens and the earth, they were driven to have hope in God’s power to create a new heaven and a new earth. In reading the apostle Peter’s second epistle, there is no doubt he was building upon the message of Genesis. Second Peter 3:13 says, “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.” Peter, in writing this, draws his readers’ minds to the pre-fall creation where man was righteous. But because of Genesis 3, it is evident that the present heavens and earth have become sinfully tainted, condemned. Having come to

⁴Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

know that truth, Peter proclaims hope in God’s promise to make a *new* heaven and a *new* earth. Furthermore, when the apostle John writes of the New Jerusalem he describes the city in such a way that the reader is left thinking of Eden.⁵ John, looking into the future, saw that God would reestablish his Edenic presence with his people—a relationship that will never end. It is no coincidence then that John also reintroduces the Tree of Life that was once lost after man’s fall.⁶ In both cases, Peter and John’s understanding of Genesis 1 and 2 led them to hope in God’s promise to create a new heaven and a new earth in the last days. Hence, the story of the Bible *begins* with creation and it *ends* with a new creation.

In light of what has just been discussed, it becomes obvious that the New Testament authors were not creating *new* and *original* doctrines to stand on their own; rather, they were building their doctrines upon the truths that were already established in the Old Testament, particularly in Genesis. In this way, the New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.⁷

Thesis

The Book of Genesis, then, has a two-fold function. It first demolishes all man-centered worldview while at the same time it lays the foundation for a Christ-centered worldview. This brings us to the thesis of this work: *the book of Genesis subverts man-centered worldviews by presenting to its readers the basic, foundational principles of the Christ-centered Gospel*. These foundational principles are as follows: (1) God is indeed the Sovereign Ruler of all—the unrivaled Lord of the universe. (2) Man is sinful—

⁵G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 313-34.

⁶T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 155-57.

⁷The original adage, “the new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed” is traditionally credited to Augustine.

wicked and corrupt at heart. (3) He judges the sinful thoughts and actions of mankind, and (4) yet in his grace he promises redemption from sin. In this way, Genesis does battle against the ideas of secularism by proclaiming that the Creator God is God, not in theory alone, but he is God in truth. He is not distant or irrelevant, but rather he is very much in sovereign control of all the universe, and he is working both to judge and redeem mankind.⁸ That being so, the solution to the problem of a secular worldview is to build a Christ-centered worldview on the foundation of Scripture—particularly in this series, Genesis. Therefore, Christians must go to Genesis to brighten their candles, so to speak, in order that a truly Christ-centered worldview will shine even brighter in the darkness of our time.

Before tracing the development of these principles as they are presented in Genesis and how they apply to the contemporary reader, it is important to first consider the context in which Genesis was written.

Introductory Matters

Many disputes surround the book of Genesis. Did Moses write Genesis? Or was it the product of several authors? Is Genesis intended to be read as literal or figurative? Even amongst evangelicals, debates proliferate centering on whether the world was made in six days or six ages. The scope of this study, however, is to discuss how a Christ-centered gospel is developed throughout Genesis 1-11. Yet, in order to exegete this section of Scripture rightly, consideration of authorship, audience, and purpose is crucial.

Though Moses' name is not found anywhere in Genesis, it is best to accept Moses as the writer. Some might argue that Moses is never given explicit credit for

⁸James Hamilton's book *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* has proven to be a very helpful schematic in interpreting Genesis. James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

writing the book of Genesis. However, this is to misunderstand Jewish understanding of the Pentateuch. Conceding that the word Pentateuch itself means five *books*, the Jews nevertheless understood the Pentateuch to be a five-volume *singular* work. When reading of the Pentateuch in later Scripture, it is described as “the *Book* (singular) of Moses” (cf. 2 Chr 25:4, 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1; Mark 12:26). Moses does not need *explicit* credit for writing the book of Genesis, because the entire Pentateuch, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, is referred to as “the Book of *Moses*.”⁹

One other substantial reason for accepting Mosaic authorship is that Jesus himself credited Moses as the author. In John 5, Jesus condemned the Pharisees’ unbelief. In verses 45-47 Jesus rebuked them saying, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” Later, during his post-resurrection walk to Emmaus, Jesus explained the Old Testament expectation of his life, death, burial, and resurrection. “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

In the past, some scholars recommended an approach known as the JEDP theory or the Documentary Hypothesis.¹⁰ This theory, explained simply, suggests that there were other authors or redactors. Commentator Derek Kidner explains, “Passages using the term God (Elohim) were ascribed to the ‘Elohists’, abbreviated to E; others which spoke of the Lord (Jahveh, Yahweh) were the work of the ‘Yahwists’, J. It was soon decided that there were more than one Elohist, and the initial P (Priestly source) was

⁹For extra-biblical evidence of the Jewish acceptance of Mosaic authorship, note that Josephus identified Moses as the author of the Pentateuch in *Against Apion*. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works of Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews; The Wars of the Jews Against Apion, Etc., Etc.*, vol. 1 (London: Forgotten Books, 2018).

¹⁰For more, see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 7-31.

eventually added to E and J to distinguish the first Elohist from the second.”¹¹ Source document “D” suggests that the book of Deuteronomy was written by another author. This claim, however, has little to do with the current consideration of who authored the book of Genesis. Kidner goes on to critique the weakness of the JEDP theory, showing that in the end, JEDP is nothing more than speculation.¹² Moreover, it would seem that the JEDP theory harms rather than helps an exegetical interpretation of Genesis. By dissecting the book of Genesis into components written by different authors (redactors), JEDP theorists do damage to the unity of the book as a whole.

Because of these reasons (the designation of the Pentateuch by other biblical authors as the book of Moses, Jesus’ acceptance of Mosaic authorship, and the overall weakness of the JEDP theory), this doctoral project will accept Moses as the writer, and it will assume his message to be the literal account of the beginning.

Supposing Moses was the author, to whom was he writing? In a general sense, the book of Genesis was written for all who are offspring of Abraham. The book serves all who are considered the covenant people of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. However, in this specific context, Genesis was originally read by the Exodus generation—the former slaves of Egypt. God said in Genesis 15:13 that the Israelites would become servants “in a land that is not theirs” and would be afflicted for four hundred years. This affliction came in the form of slavery to the Egyptians. The Egyptians worshipped a pantheon of gods, and the ancient Egyptian creation myth was anything but dignified as it described the universe coming about through sexual perversion and disorder. Egyptian gods looked and acted very similar to men.¹³ Having

¹¹Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 19.

¹²Kidner, *Genesis*, 21-24.

¹³Hamilton, *God’s Glory is Salvation through Judgment*, 70-71.

lived in Egypt for such an extended time, the Israelites had most likely become indoctrinated by the Egyptians. The Exodus generation would have undoubtedly been plagued with a very Egyptian worldview, as evidenced in the making of the golden calf in Exodus 32.

This confusion over gods and the origin of man made it necessary for Israel to be given a new and better worldview—a view of the world and reality given by God himself. That is the immediate purpose of Genesis. Namely, it answers its readers’ questions about life and reality: (1) Who are we—and implicitly, where did we come from? (2) Where are we? (3) What has gone wrong in the world? And finally, (4) what is the solution to what has gone wrong? These four basic questions build a worldview.¹⁴ Therefore, it is by answering these questions that Genesis gave the Exodus generation (and all generations that followed) a lens through which the world is to be viewed.

What was good for the Old Testament Exodus generation is good for the second Exodus generation—that is, Christians. Just as the ancient Israelites were delivered from the Egyptians, New Testament Christians have been set free from slavery to sin and Satan. As slaves, believers were formerly held in the faulty worldviews of this sinful world (Eph 4:17-24). And every once in a while, the old worldview shows its ugly and dark face in our lives. Hence, it is necessary to be reminded of the worldview given to believers in Scripture—or else the church will be in danger of being led back into slavery under the secular worldview of contemporary culture.

Primary Gospel Principles in Genesis

The Book of Genesis protects believers from falling into errant and man-centered worldviews by proclaiming the four primary gospel principles that were outlined above. Again, the four principles are: (1) the sovereignty of God, (2) the sinfulness of

¹⁴N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 132-33.

man, (3) the judgment of sin, and (4) the promise of redemption. These principles may not be *explicit* as much as they are implicit. However, just because these principles are implied in the story of Genesis, they are no less true and absolute. Stories are an important aspect of worldview construction. Through stories, the Bible gives its readers true principles about God. In turn, the principles presented in these stories inform a person's doctrine and praxis.¹⁵ By presenting the story of Creation, Fall, and the acts of God, Genesis instructs readers in what they are to believe about God, and also how they are to respond to God. In this way, the biblical stories in Genesis are the foundation of a Christo-centric worldview. The following principles are seen implicitly in the story of Creation, Fall, and the ensuing promises and work of God in the redemption of mankind, and what powerful principles they are.

The Sovereignty of God

Consider first the sovereignty of God. This is an important and prevalent theme in the book of Genesis. From the first chapter to the last, the book of Genesis presents God as one whose will cannot be thwarted. He is the Creator of all things and that being so, he creates, destroys, gives life, ends life, blesses, and curses according to his sovereign purpose and for his own glory (Deut 32:39-43). When Genesis 1 opens, it does not open with a pantheon of gods at war like the gods of the Babylonians or in promiscuity like the gods of the Egyptians. The God of Genesis is God *alone*. There is no other creator or ruler. He has no rivals or partners. "In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth" (1:1).¹⁶

God's sovereignty also means that whatever he desires to happen will happen. As will be made clear later, Genesis 1 displays God's sovereignty as he speaks and

¹⁵For more on this, see Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 215-43.

¹⁶This translation is important. The past tense translation communicates the definitive and finished work of God in creating all things.

whatever he speaks comes into existence. For example, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (1:3). God’s sovereignty is seen again in the last chapter of Genesis when Joseph speaks to his brothers about the will and purposes of God: “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but God meant it for good*, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (50:20). Quite literally from beginning to end, God’s sovereignty saturates the book.

Consequently, this is the first point of contention between contemporary worldviews and a biblical worldview. Contemporary culture asserts that man is sovereign. Collective humanity’s agenda is primary and unchallenged. Mankind is autonomous—independent and free from God. According to Genesis, however, even the very breath that man breathes comes from God. Man is completely dependent upon God for life.

Moreover, Genesis clarifies that it is not man’s will that prevails but God’s. For example, in Genesis 11, men desired to subvert God’s command to fill the earth and attempted to make a name for themselves by building a tower. Despite their attempts to undermine God’s authority, the tower project failed and the people were dispersed just as God willed. According to Genesis, the will of man is *always* subordinate to God’s will. God ordains, and whatever he ordains to happen happens, whether it be creating the sun, moon, and stars, judging the earth in a flood, or causing a barren, ninety-year-old woman to have a baby.

And thus, in reading Genesis, *Yahweh Elohim* is proclaimed to be God alone—incomparable, matchless, and supreme. He sits on the throne of the cosmos, man does not. He is Lord of life, man is not. In fact, when man attempts to be his own sovereign god, sin abounds.

The Sinfulness of Man

The second gospel principle found in Genesis is that man is sinful. When God

created man, his intention was for mankind to be an image of his glory and greatness. But by Genesis 3, the first humans rebelled against God, and in doing so, were separated from their Creator. Because life came from God, separation from God brought death. Sin and its consequent death are the ominous drumbeat in the background of Genesis.

As readers get deeper into the book of Genesis it becomes clear that sin gets worse. It never stays stagnant, but instead it progresses like a disease through humanity. In Genesis 3, sin was defined as eating the fruit that God said not to eat. In Genesis 4, sin grew worse as Cain murdered his brother; and by the end of chapter 4, Lamech is found bragging that his sin is worse than Cain's. In chapter 6, sin reaches its peak: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5). This describes total depravity. Even after the flood, through which God judged all mankind excepting only Noah's family, sin remained. Noah fell into sin, and his descendants followed suit. Sin reaches another peak in Genesis 11, when the people of the world build the tower of Babel in rebellion against God.

According to the biblical worldview, the problem of the world is not failing governments, or bad economies, or a declining currency. The problem of the world is not disease, discomfort, or disabilities. The problem is that man's heart is set in opposition against his Creator. Moreover, that opposition comes not only by man's willing action, but also by the very nature of sinful man. Every single person is a sinner—an enemy of God from their very first breath. Men and women are born rebels—if you doubt this, just go take a visit to see any one-year-old. Man's every intention, every thought, every desire is bent on doing evil as an attempt to overthrow God's authority. However, man's rebellion *cannot* go unpunished. If God is truly God, and a just God at that, he must punish sin.

The Judgment of Sin

The third gospel principle found in Genesis is the judgment of sin. Contemporary culture craves for autonomy without accountability. The book of Genesis tells the exact opposite: mankind is not autonomous, but it is accountable to God. Sin must not go unpunished. If God is good, sovereign, and just, then not judging sin would be a contradiction of his very nature. The justice of God demands that sin be punished.

To give a quick overview of the first eleven chapters, some of the ways God's judgment is seen in the book are: In Genesis 3, God cursed Adam and Eve and exiled them from the garden; in Genesis 4, God exiled Cain from his presence; in Genesis 5, the phrase "and he died" is repeated over and over again calling to mind God's judgment; in Genesis 6 and 7, God flooded the earth for its corruption saving only one man and his family; in Genesis 9, God pronounced judgment on anyone who takes the life of another; and in Genesis 11, God judged the builders of the tower and confuses their language. Time after time, sin brought the judgment of God.

It would be prudent for readers to stop for just a moment and feel the weight of that burden. People are sinners both by nature and by choice. Jesus said in John 8:34, "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." In Ephesians 2:1, Paul said that Christians were once "dead in the trespasses and sins." Being slaves to sin and dead in sin does not give mankind much hope of escaping the judgment of God. Because of sin, all sinners stand under the wrath of God. Mankind—though deluded by dreams of freedom from God—is held accountable by God, and not one sin will go unpunished, as is made evident by the pattern set forth in Genesis.

Yet even in judgment, God pours out grace and love. In Genesis, God gives hope even while exacting justice. Thus, justice is beautifully wrapped in grace. It is just as commentator Derek Kidner writes, "His judgments are sweetened with mercy."¹⁷

¹⁷Kidner, *Genesis*, 35.

The Promise of Redemption

A final gospel principle found in Genesis is the promise of redemption. The book of Genesis echoes a rhythm of mercy, and it is from this theme that a “Christ connection” is found—that is a reference, that either implicitly or explicitly, foreshadows the saving work of Christ. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, God declared his intent to save mankind. He promised that an offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, and that is why Genesis 3:15 has been aptly designated as the “proto-evangel” (or the “first gospel”). It is the first place the good news is proclaimed to mankind and it comes immediately after man’s fall. Before any curse was pronounced upon Adam or Eve, God promised salvation.

Later in chapter 3, God illustrates his heart for salvation by covering Adam and Eve’s nakedness with skins of an animal. As will be seen later, God covering the nakedness of man was a symbol of redemption. Adam and Eve had tried to cover their own shameful nakedness with fig leaves, but the man-made covering was not sufficient. Rather than covering their nakedness themselves, Adam and Eve had to rely on God to cover their nakedness for them by taking the life of another.¹⁸ God killed an animal so that Adam and Eve might have a covering. Do you see the hint of Christ? By implicit connection, Genesis foreshadows how mankind’s spiritual shame and nakedness would have to be clothed by God through the death of an innocent sacrifice.

Many other foretastes of redemption are found in the pages of Genesis. For example, in Genesis 6, when God pronounced his intent to judge the world through a flood, he also announced Noah’s salvation. The ark is a preview of what God would do through Christ, as is God’s provision in giving a substitute for Abraham’s son, Isaac, in Genesis 22, Jacob’s dream of a stairway leading to heaven in Genesis 28, and Joseph’s humility into slavery in Genesis 37 and his exaltation to power in Genesis 41.

¹⁸Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 207.

The message of Genesis is replete with the hope of redemption from sin. By God's grace, man's exile from Eden will be overturned by the snake-crushing, wrath-saving, self-sacrifice of a Savior. Genesis announces the good news that the Lord would provide a substitute-sacrifice. Therefore, though this book is in the Old Testament, it is no less rich with Christ-centered theology than any New Testament Gospel or letter. Christ is the hope of redemption! Only he can end the exile from God's presence and bring mankind back into a relationship with the Sovereign Creator.

The Building Blocks of the Gospel

These four themes of Genesis serve as the building blocks of our New Testament worldview.¹⁹ For example, because God was sovereign in creation, Bible readers should not be surprised that he was also sovereign over the crucifixion. Listen to Peter's words in Acts 2 as he explains the sovereignty of God in the death of Christ: "This Jesus, delivered up *according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (verses 23 and 24). Students of the Bible are prepared to accept God's sovereignty at the cross, because his sovereignty in creating the world is so evident.

Similarly, the teaching of man's sinfulness in Genesis 3 prepares readers to see their own need for a Savior. An echo of Genesis is clearly heard in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." Death comes because of sin just as God promised in Genesis 2:17 and 3:19. However, Romans also gives the good news that death has been defeated because "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this way, Genesis identifies the problem, and simultaneously gives the hope of a solution—a

¹⁹Kent Hughes observes, "What we know about God, about creation, about ourselves, and about salvation begins in Genesis. It provides the theological pillars on which the rest of the Bible stands." R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 15.

solution found only in Christ.

Furthermore, God's pattern of judging sin and redeeming the sinner through a sacrifice in Genesis is proclaimed in the New Testament as well. The snake-crusher spoken of in the book of Genesis is named in the New Testament—he is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Goals of this Project

Seeing that Genesis seeks to lay a foundation for a Christo-centric gospel, it is important that the reader allow Genesis to be transformational. Reading Genesis as a mere academic exercise will not render the fruit God desires to be produced in his people's lives. That being so, goals for this project must be established. This project seeks to (1) provide a clear, exegetical explanation of Genesis 1-11; (2) provide thorough and meaningful applications from each section; (3) connect the narrative of Genesis with the metanarrative of all Scripture; and (4) clearly identify "Christ-connections" as they are seen in the book of Genesis.

The overarching goal, of course, is to glorify God for his manifold wisdom. Even from the very beginning, God was enacting a plan that had been determined before the creation of the world; namely, a plan to fill the earth with his glory (Hab 2:14). There has never been a "plan B" in God's redemptive work; instead, God's plan was fulfilled perfectly, exactly as he intended. The book of Genesis is the staging of his plan leading up to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Literature and Resources

Existing literature that expounds the message of Genesis is vast and diverse. However, several standards must be considered when selecting which resources to use. There are a number of ways commentators become distracted with tertiary issues, such as the unending debates over six-day creation versus six-age creation. I am by no means suggesting that these debates are useless and unimportant, but it does not seem that the

author of Genesis was too concerned with convincing his reader the age of the earth or even whether *yôm* means a literal 24-hour period. The author of Genesis is more interested in building a worldview for his readers. As suggested in the thesis of this project, the book of Genesis concerns itself with challenging and replacing man-made worldviews with a worldview that is centered on God. With that in mind, this current project leans heavily on the commentaries and biblical theologies that “make the main thing the main thing.” That is, commentaries and theologies that do not easily become side-tracked by the tertiary issues (though most commentaries deal with these issues at least briefly), but will remain dedicated to the primary message of Genesis and its contribution to the whole canon.

With that standard in view (dedication to the main message of Genesis and its contribution to the canon of Scripture), there are five main commentaries used in this project. The first commentary, and by far the most helpful, is Victor P. Hamilton’s *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. Hamilton provides a very detailed discussion on the variety of interpretations and makes a convincing proposal for his own interpretation while also including a deep-level explanation of the language used in Genesis. Next is Kenneth A. Mathews’ commentary on Genesis 1-11:26, followed by Gordon J. Wenham’s volume on Genesis 1-15 in the Word Biblical Commentary series. Bruce K. Waltke is also referenced throughout the project as is Derek Kidner from his Tynale Old Testament Commentary on Genesis.

However, commentaries themselves can only go so far. Biblical theologies must also be referenced. This is because this project is concerned not only with the language of Genesis 1-11, but also with how the concepts are developed throughout the Bible. Some helpful theologies used are James M. Hamilton Jr.’s *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, Thomas R. Schreiner’s *The King in His Beauty*, Stephen G. Dempster’s *Dominion and Dynasty*, G. K. Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, as well as Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*, which has been particularly

useful in explaining the Noahic covenant. Each of these theologies provided helpful thoughts on how the message of Genesis is developed throughout the metanarrative of Scripture.

Finally, other resources are often referenced. For example, Jonathan Edwards' *A History of the Work of Redemption* has been at various points helpful.²⁰ Also, Martyn Lloyd-Jones' recorded sermons in *The Gospel in Genesis: From Fig Leaves to Faith* was thought provoking as far as exposition of the text at hand.²¹

Each of these resources has been helpful and contributed in their own unique way. Of course, there are a number of other good and helpful works on Genesis and its contribution to the greater story. However, because of the limitations of this project those other works have scarcely been used and referenced.

Biblical Theology and Its Use in Studying Genesis

The tour of Genesis 1-11 cannot begin without a clear and concise definition of biblical theology. And since this project seeks to expose a Christ-centered gospel as it is announced in Genesis, it would be helpful to first consider the practice of biblical theology and its place in expositing the message of Genesis. What is biblical theology and why is it important? How does this theological practice help readers better understand the message of Genesis?

Many definitions for biblical theology have already been written. Defining biblical theology has to do with identifying a methodology or a hermeneutic for studying the Bible. Ultimately, how one *does* biblical theology determines how he defines biblical theology. The reason there are so many proposed definitions for biblical theologies is

²⁰Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003).

²¹Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Gospel in Genesis: From Fig Leaves to Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009).

because there are so many proposed methodologies for practicing biblical theology. If it were possible for one methodology to rise above all the rest and to become the universally accepted practice, then it would also be possible to have *one* universally accepted definition. For example, Graeme Goldsworthy had his own methodology as well, as his own definition; Edmund Clowney had his own methodology, and therefore his own definition; furthermore, Geerhardus Vos recommended his own methodology and offered a different definition. Interestingly enough, Goldsworthy critiques Clowney's methodology by suggesting that it does not "go far enough." The point is, one's definition of biblical theology is most likely contingent on whose methodology he has adopted.

It would here be beneficial to briefly survey a few existing definitions given for biblical theology.²² First is Geerhardus Vos' definition. In his inaugural address as the Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, Vos defined biblical theology as "nothing else than *the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity.*"²³ To make just a few notes about this definition, notice that Vos is concerned with "the organic progress of supernatural revelation" meaning that the supernatural revelation of God contains within it a coherent advancement of the overall message of the Bible. The various "parts" of the Bible's metanarrative naturally fit together, implicitly proving the unity of Scripture, and *together* these various stories propel the metanarrative further. Thus, according to Vos, biblical theology showcases the progression of God's grand story throughout redemptive history. Summarizing Vos' definition of the field, the study of the "process" or

²²This is by no means a comprehensive survey of the suggested definitions of biblical theology. For other suggested definitions and methodologies, see James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

²³Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 15.

“progression” of revelation surfaces to the top.²⁴

Next is Graeme Goldsworthy’s definition. There are several similarities between Vos’ and Goldsworthy’s understanding of biblical theology. For example, in Vos’ definition, the progress of Scripture is studied both in its “historic continuity” and its “multiformity.” Goldsworthy agrees as he seeks to define biblical theology in a way that “emphasizes this unity” (or “historic continuity” in Vos’ terms) “while not overlooking the diversity” (or historic “multiformity”).²⁵ Goldsworthy also seems to agree with Vos’ idea of “*organic* progress”. Goldsworthy, in seeming agreement with Vos, submits, “Biblical theology is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible. It is the study of the matrix of divine revelation in the Bible as a whole.”²⁶ In other words, both Vos and Goldsworthy are both concerned with studying how the parts of the Bible fit together “organically” (borrowing Vos’ term) to make a whole.

As much as Vos’ and Goldsworthy’s understandings seem to agree, there is one significant distinction. Goldsworthy takes his definition of biblical theology further than Vos’ definition. Goldsworthy submits that biblical theology “is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel.”²⁷ He continues, “Biblical theology is Christological, for its subject matter is the whole Bible as God’s testimony to Christ.”²⁸ Thus for Goldsworthy, the progression of revelation is important, but it is specifically important in how it relates to Christ.

²⁴Vos writes elsewhere, “Biblical Theology deals with revelation as a divine activity, *not as the finished product of that activity*” (emphasis added). Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 13.

²⁵Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 40.

²⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 40.

²⁷Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 40.

²⁸Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 40.

Finally, James Hamilton offers another definition of biblical theology. Though he would agree with Vos' emphasis on progression and Goldsworthy's emphasis on fulfillment in Christ, Hamilton's definition has some nuances from the previous definitions. Hamilton defines biblical theology as "the interpretive perspective reflected in the way biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses."²⁹ The value in Hamilton's definition, as compared to the others, is his emphasis on "the interpretive perspective" of the biblical authors. Yes, the progression of revelation is important; and yes, how that progression connects to Christ is important. But yet, biblical theology must not overlook the author's own intent and understanding of previous acts of redemption in writing his portion of Scripture.

The definition that follows has been built by utilizing each of the nuances found in these three definitions (Vos' priority on the progression of revelation, Goldsworthy's commitment to emphasize Scripture's connection to Christ, and Hamilton's faithfulness to the original author's interpretation of previous redemptive acts). In order to build a definition that is compatible with the purpose of this project, the following definition for biblical theology is submitted: Biblical theology is a hermeneutic that seeks to discover the biblical author's original meaning while at the same time considering how the biblical author's text (1) builds upon preceding redemptive history, (2) further clarifies and interprets redemptive history, and (3) consequently how it propels redemptive history forward toward its telos (new creation under the reign of Jesus Christ).

In the case of Genesis, Moses is writing the *beginning* of redemptive history.

²⁹James M. Hamilton Jr., *What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16.

In fact, the Hebrew word *bereshit*, suggests that this book is only the introduction to the rest of the story. From its inception, the author never intended Genesis to be read in isolation, but rather to be read with eyes forward-looking to the rest of God's revealed word. In other words, Moses never suggested in his writings that Genesis is the comprehensive story of God's work in the world. Instead, it is the foundation. As an analogy, a building is not complete with a foundation alone. After the foundation is built, walls must be erected, a roof must be constructed, the exterior must be bricked, and the interior must be decorated. The foundation alone does not make an adequate habitation.

Biblical theology, as it is applied in the study of Genesis, seeks to discover Moses' original meaning while at the same time considering how his writing (1) built a foundation for redemptive history, (2) clarified and interpreted redemptive history throughout the rest of Genesis, and (3) how his text propelled redemptive history forward toward its telos (the new creation under the reign of Jesus Christ).

In light of this definition, the expositor must continually help his listeners understand how Genesis contributes to the metanarrative of Scripture. Even more specifically, he must show how the concepts and principles of Genesis propel the story forward, as has already been demonstrated in this introductory chapter. A successful teacher or preacher of Genesis will leave his hearers longing for the rest of the story. Genesis provides the beginning of the story, but what about the conflict? How does the story climax? And, just as important, how does the story end?

Selection of Passages

The chapters of this project are comprised of expositions from Genesis chapters 1 through 11. The division of the chapters is based on the logical units of the text. The next three chapters of this project (chaps. 2 through 4) deal with God's work of creation (Gen 1 and 2). Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the fall of Adam and the subsequent consequences (Gen 3). Chapter 7 exposit man's cycle of sin and death (Gen 4 and 5).

Chapter 8 studies the events leading up to the flood and God’s redemption of Noah through the ark (Gen 6 and 7). Chapter 9 deals with the post-flood world and Noah’s life and sin after the flood (Gen 8 and 9). Chapter 10 presents the sin of man and the glory of God in expositing Genesis 10 and 11. Concluding the project is a brief meditation on the majesty of Christ in Genesis.”

Conclusion

With the important introductory matters in place, the tour of Genesis 1-11 is ready to commence, pointing out to the tourists not only the beautiful frescoes of the New Testament, but also the beautiful foundation of the gospel upon which they walk—that is, the foundation that is laid in the book of Genesis. May God be glorified as his people read his word—admiring the entire building and, even more importantly, admiring the One who dwells within this magnificent Sistine Chapel called the Word of God.

CHAPTER 2

GOD ALONE (GENESIS 1)

The Creator described in the book of Genesis was quite the unusual character when compared with the gods of ancient religions. He no doubt stood out among the gods of men. The Babylonians had their Marduk and the pantheon of gods who ruled with him. The Egyptians worshipped Ptah, Ra, Osiris, and the thousands of other deities who reigned over various realms of nature. The Canaanites bowed before Ba'al, Asherah, Dagon, and Molech. Towering above them all, however, was *Elohim* of Genesis, the supreme Maker of all the universe. Not only did this God differ from other gods in his attributes and works, he was also different by nature of his exclusivity. The claim of Genesis 1:1 that “in the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth” flew in the face of the ancient views of creation. Whereas Genesis presents *Elohim* as the exclusive and singularly sovereign Creator of all things, contemporary religions of the day held to very different views of origin.

For example, the ancient Babylonians believed that the universe was created through a battle between the gods. The goddess of the sea, Tiamat (whose name meant “chaos”), and the god, Kingu, created an army of monsters and overpowered the other gods. In their desperation, the gods pleaded with Marduk to kill their enemies, but before agreeing to fight Marduk demanded that the gods first pledge their allegiance to him. Once they had given their homage, Marduk killed Tiamat and Kingu and, with the spilt blood of dead gods, mankind was created.¹ Imagine the tension that existed between the

¹From *The Enûma Eliš*, accessed January 2018, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/>.

Babylonian understanding of creation and the creation account that is pronounced in Genesis 1. According to the Babylonians, the world came about, not through a god's sovereign and intentional will, but rather as a result of the war between rival gods. According to Genesis, to the contrary, no other gods were involved in the creation of the world. There was only *Elohim*, eternal and sovereign Creator who made all things according to his will. Clearly, the God of Genesis was very much unlike the gods of Babylon.

However, the story of *Elohim's* work in creation challenged not only Babylonian beliefs. His supremacy also challenged every other Near Eastern Ancient religion. *Elohim's* sovereign creativity stood in opposition against the beliefs of the Egyptians who were convinced that the world came about through a partnership of coexisting gods; the Canaanites who believed that their god, Baal, became a ruling deity by defeating his rivals, and yet who himself was forced to submit to more powerful gods; and the Greeks who imagined that the Olympians took control when Zeus defeated and subdued his father, Cronos—who had also defeated his father, Ouranos. Clearly, the God of Genesis 1 was offensive and quite peculiar to the most prominent ancient worldviews of the time. The idea that *one* sovereign God created the entire universe by his word, and that he did so without battling monsters, titans, or rival gods was extraordinary—even laughable—in the eyes of the ancient world.

Elohim of Genesis and his creative work are no less offensive today. The God of Genesis *still* confronts and challenges the gods of men and the beliefs of the contemporary world. He does not share his glory with another, and he continues to reign as the exclusively supreme Lord of all. He is God alone. As much as the world would like for the various belief systems and worldviews to get along, the book of Genesis proclaims the Creator as one who is unrivaled, unequalled, unlimited, and majestic. He cannot be likened to Allah, Krishna, Buddha, or any other gods whom men tragically follow. According to Genesis 1, there is no room for any other gods. There is *one* God

who created all things—no one helped him and no one opposed him.² He is the one absolute King who rules over creation.

The Distinctiveness of the Creator God

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is the leading statement—the header—of the entire chapter.³ This statement declares that God is not a creature who is born or created by another, but rather he is himself the source of all things. He is the necessary being. He is the divine mover of that which is moved. He is the fountainhead of life. Before the heavens and the earth were created, there was God and nothing else. No other gods existed. Contrary to ancient beliefs of its day, Genesis claimed that the world was not created by a plurality of gods; and contrary to modern beliefs, Genesis claims that the world was not the byproduct of any natural process. *Elohim* alone *created* the heavens and the earth. In English, the word “create” can refer to human action as well as Divine action. “Dan *created* a new system of operations.” “Michelangelo’s *creations* are masterpieces.” “Steve is a wiz at *creating* iPhone apps.” “God *created* the Himalayas.” In Hebrew, however, this form of the word “create” (*bara*’) is *never* used in reference to anyone except God. Only God can create (*bara*’) anything.⁴

Genesis claims that God created “the heavens and earth,” meaning that God

²Paul House states, “God has no rivals, God has jurisdiction over all created persons and things.” Paul House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 60. Commentator Cassuto rightly says, “Not many gods but One God; not theogony, for a god has no family tree; nor wars nor strife nor the clash of wills, but only One Will, which rules over everything, without the slightest let or hindrance.” U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: Varda Books, 1989), 8.

³Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 103-6.

⁴When used in the Qal form, *bara*’ speaks only of God. See בָּרָא in William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 47. Also see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 36, and Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 59.

created all things. “Heavens and earth” is a figure of speech emphasizing that *everything* was made by God. In this very first verse, the readers of Genesis are told that *one* God created the whole universe by his own divine will. He asked no one for permission to create the heavens and the earth. He did not need to destroy any rivals, and neither did he engage the help of other gods to create the cosmos. He is God—the only God—and he created all things.⁵

Verse 2 states, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.” The world was shapeless and empty much like a lump of clay that lies formless on the potter’s wheel waiting for his artistic hands to create a masterpiece or much like an empty canvas that welcomes the painter to fill its emptiness with beautiful colors and images. God’s Spirit hovered over the face of the deep, and the rest of the chapter is devoted to show how his actions brought form to the formless and how his words filled the void.

The work of *bara’* is described in greater clarity in subsequent verses as God speaks, sees, calls, makes, separates, sets, and blesses. No one else does this work. It was God’s divine prerogative, and these actions (speaking, seeing, calling, making, separating, setting, and blessing) were expressions of his divine and sovereign authority over all things. “God said” shows the power of his word. “God saw that it was good” shows him to be the Divine Evaluator. “God called” expresses divine ownership. “God made” and “God separated” are sovereign actions of God delineating him as the architect of the expanse called Heaven. “God blessed” insinuates his royal favor bestowed upon his creatures. Each of these statements describe a majestically sovereign Maker who is to be worshipped because of his creative power.

⁵Kidner points out, “It is no accident that God is the subject of the first sentence of the Bible, for this word dominates the whole chapter and catches the eye at every point of the page: it is used some thirty-five times in as many verses of the story.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 47. See also, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 56.

By implication, what was mankind's role in all of this? The startling reality is that people did not even exist yet. In fact, man did not arrive on the stage of creation until day six, the last day of creation. While God was creating galaxies, oceans, and mountains, mankind was yet to be made. That man shared no part in creation is eternally humbling. Ultimately, this is why men and women are not fit to be God. Men and women cannot match God's wisdom precisely because God alone is the one who made all things. For example, when Job in his confusion and doubt desired to interrogate Yahweh about the wisdom of his actions, God silenced Job's questions with a question of his own, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). Reading of the God's creative power and witnessing that power in nature should humble a person's heart as he or she considers the glory of God in creation. The Psalmist models this well, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, *what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that care for him?*" Whenever a person sees the breath-taking beauty of the night sky, hears the glory of God in a thunderstorm, tastes the sweetness of honey, smells the fresh scent of a field blooming with flowers, or feels the cool waves of the ocean washing over one's feet, the only appropriate response is to worship, admiring the God whose wisdom made all these things.

From the very first chapter of the Bible, the sobering truth is proclaimed, "You, oh man, are not God!" Mankind's propensity to act as its own sovereign lord is so terribly wicked because no man is his own creator, and therefore he could never be his own god. All men and women must come to terms with the truth that they are ultimately unqualified to be divine. Unless a person can *speak* universes into existence, then he must acknowledge his proper place as a creature who lives under the reign of Creator God.

This attacks the ideology of secularists. Though most secular cultures deny the existence of a divine Creator, secularists tend to argue that even if God *does* exist, then he is completely inconsequential. "Regardless of his existence or nonexistence," goes the

claim, “he exercises no power or authority over the world of men. Humans themselves determine the course of man’s destiny.” Thus, secular man reveres himself as the god of this world, and if by chance there is a Creator God, then he is irrelevant.⁶ Such is the foolishly wishful thinking of people who have forgotten their place as creatures made by God. In reality, humans have as much chance to be God as an infant has a chance to be his or her own father. It is impossible.

Genesis unashamedly announces that the one God did something only *he* could do; that is, he created all things. In verse after verse, the author of Genesis lays before his readers the glorious action of God, and in doing so denies the power of any other god(s). So, in the case that anyone might be tempted to think that the God of the Bible can happily coexist with the other gods of men, let Genesis 1 set the record straight. *Elohim* of Genesis is distinct, and he is God *alone*. But just how does Genesis 1 display the distinctiveness and exclusiveness of God? Before considering the answer to this question, it must be stated that Genesis 1 is rich in theological truth and there is no end to the meditations of God that come from this one chapter, but for now I will highlight two primary truths that serve in displaying his unique sovereignty.

All Things Were Created by God’s Word

When The first truth is simply this: *all things were created by God’s word*. In Genesis, God speaks and whatever he says happens.⁷ Throughout the entire chapter, a pattern is evident. First comes the causal clause, “And God said,” which is followed by a result clause, “and there was/it was so.” For example:

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (1:3).

⁶David Wells rightly defines secularism as “the values of the modern age, especially where these lead to the restructuring of thought and life to accommodate the absence or irrelevance of God.” David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 87.

⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; also, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 56.

And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And it was so (1:6-7b).

And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so (1:9).

It was the powerful spoken word of God that brought everything into existence. All things came about by his word, not by some pre-existent primordial substance, neither by some spontaneous or random act of chance. By his word all things were made out of nothing.⁸ In the rest of Scripture, God’s power in speaking all things into being fuels his people’s worship and adoration. For example, the Psalmist calls all creation to worship as he sings, “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD! *For he commanded and they were created*” (Ps 148:1-5). The primary motivation for this exhortation to worship is that God commanded (or, as in Genesis 1, he “said”) and as a result of his command all things were created.

In proclaiming a Creator whose word brings about solar systems, the Bible inspires an awe of God within its readers. The God of the Bible needs not battle with titans, evil gods, nor enlist the help of a partner god. He did not need to use any pre-existent matter—indeed there was *nothing* before God spoke the universe into existence. *Elohim* merely spoke, and his word was sufficient to create all things. Many people have difficulty imagining that such a God exists. However, consider the truth that humans do not even know what lies on the depths of the ocean floor. Humans are endlessly discovering new things never before imagined to have existed. It should not be surprising, then, that people have trouble comprehending such a powerful Creator. What people often fail to see is that a Creator who is beyond imagination or comprehension

⁸Wenham writes, “Although the Hebrew verb ‘create’ does not necessarily connote *creatio ex nihilo*, the overall thrust of the narrative implies that God had this ability: the idea of a demiurge modeling pre-existing matter is far removed from this account.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 38.

makes for a *worthy* God. A god who must conform to the laws of human rationale should hardly be considered a god at all. Supposing that the God of Genesis does exist, one should expect that he would transcend all human understanding. The truth that the God of the Bible cannot be contained within the boundaries of human understanding is one evidence that he is truly God, and the truth that he created all things by his word shows him to be a God worthy of worship.

In his creative work he is matchless. What other god can compete with *Elohim*? What other god can speak and effectually accomplish that which has been spoken? There are none. As he creates, *Elohim* neither combats nor cooperates with other gods. He spoke and all that is came into being *ex-nihilo*. His very word created the cosmos, proving that he alone is worthy to be the King over creation.”

All Things Were Created for God’s Pleasure

A second primary truth that comes from reading Genesis 1 is that *all things were made for God’s pleasure*. God did not make the world because he was lonely, and neither did he make mankind because he needed servants.⁹ God made all things because it was his good pleasure to do so. The pleasure of God in his creation is seen primarily in the phrase, “And God saw it was good.” In fact, the Hebrew word טוב can also mean “pleasant” or “delightful”. Commentator Bruce Waltke points out that “Creation is imbued with God’s goodness and *joie de vivre*”—meaning that creation was instilled with the “exuberant enjoyment of life.”¹⁰ It seems clear from the text, that this “enjoyment of life” includes God’s enjoyment. Much like a painter or sculptor takes a step back to evaluate the value his work, God was *delighted* in his own brilliant craftsmanship.

⁹Compare this with *The Enûma Eliš*, accessed January 2018, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/>.

¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis 1-15*, 61.

After the creation of light, “And God saw that *the light was good*” (1:4).
After the creation of dry land and seas, “And God saw that *it was good*” (1:10).
After the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, “And God saw that *it was good*” (1:18).

In the final survey of God’s creation, we see, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*” (1:31).

According to whose standards was God declaring his creations as good? What made creation good? The goodness of creation was not determined by some outside criteria detached from God. Strictly speaking, the statement “and it was good” was God’s own personal evaluation of good. It expressed his approval of the object that was declared to be “good.”¹¹ God’s declaration of creation as good was a declaration of his own delight and pleasure in all that he had made.¹²

This is the key to understanding the purpose of life. That is to say, creation was made to be good, bringing God delight and pleasure. Another way to say this is that creation—being good and delightful—brought God glory. In this, Genesis 1 describes a God who rejoices over his creative works because those works are a display of his glorious power.¹³ God, quite unlike any other gods both ancient and modern, took pleasure in the world and creatures he made. The Psalmist praises, “May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD *rejoice* [or, be glad] (רָגַעַ) in his works” (Ps 104:31). In its original state, creation was *good*, and that goodness made God’s heart glad. When creation was good and God rejoiced over its goodness, he was glorified.

This challenges humanity’s tragic propensity to think that life is ultimately

¹¹Wenham adds, “God is preeminently the one who is good, and his goodness is reflected in his works.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18.

¹²Grudem writes, “God delighted in the creation that he had made, just as he had purposed to do.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 272. Also John Piper’s sermon, “The Pleasure of God in His Creation,” accessed January 2018, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-pleasure-of-god-in-his-creation>.

¹³Wenham comments, “The harmony and perfection of the completed heavens and earth express more adequately the character of their creator than any of the separate components can.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34

about self. A concern and devotion for others is a dying virtue in modern cultures, as is devotion to God. Post-modern people are more concerned with *self*-image, *self*-confidence, *self*-sufficiency, *self*-actualization, *self*-admiration, *self*-fulfillment. Self tends to be at the center of the sinful human heart, not God. Genesis confronts idolization of the self and proclaims the one true God who made all people. This happens as Genesis shows that all things were made *primarily* for God's glory and pleasure. Man's pleasure in this world is secondary, meaning that the world was not primarily made for man. Consider the order of the accounts in the first two chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1 expresses God's pleasure in creation as he saw all that he made was good. Later, Genesis 2 describes both God and man's pleasure together in the goodness of creation. In this, the truth is made clear: God's delight in creation is ultimate, while man's delight in creation is subordinate to his Creator's pleasure. Creation has only ever been good when it meets God's standard of what is delightful.

Genesis chapter 1 exalts God by proclaiming that creation exists for God's delight and glory and is evaluated by his own standard of good. It is as Paul announces, "For from him and through him and *to him* are all things. *To him be glory forever. Amen*" (Rom 11:36). Thus, we see that while many other worldviews place man's pleasure and delight on a pedestal, the worldview of the Bible proclaims God's pleasure and delight to be the reason for all creation.

A Creator Worthy of Worship

In consideration of these two primary truths—the truths that all things were created by God's word and for his glory, what can be learned from the message of Genesis chapter 1? First and foremost, these truths teach that God is a God worthy of worship. Readers of Genesis are invited to join the song of heaven, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, *for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created*" (Rev 4:11). Praising the God who made all

things is the only appropriate response after reading the biblical account of creation.

Every day the sun's light breaks out over the horizon sending out the bright red glow of a new day. Nocturnal creatures make their way to their daytime dens and nests. Birds sing welcoming the morning. The wind blows through the trees making sweet ambience for those who care to listen. When the day is done, the sun sinks beneath the opposite horizon and the sky fills with hues of violet blue. The stars begin to shine in the twilight sky. For those who are careful to hear the message of creation, the world proclaims its Creator's glory (Ps 19:1). The transcendently powerful God is worthy of worship, and no other god, gods, or self should steal away the worship that belongs to him alone.

Every person has the tendency to exchange the glory of his or her Creator for the glory of the creature (Rom 1:22-23). For example, greed is the exaltation of money over God; lust is the exaltation of a creature's beauty over the Creator; covetousness and the pride of life is the exaltation of the material things over the one who spoke all matter into existence. Day after day, people are faced with the temptation to confuse the worship of God with the worship of created things. This is ultimately the temptation Adam and Eve failed to overcome, but more on that later. Genesis 1 beckons its readers to see the God who is above all creation and compels them to give their adoration solely to their Creator. It is as if Genesis 1 says, "Here is your God—sovereign, powerful, and perfect. Worship him!" The only appropriate response is to cast aside all other pseudo gods and to pursue the one true God and Creator.

How Genesis 1 Presents a Christocentric Gospel

From the very first chapter, Genesis prepares its readers for a Christ-centered gospel. First, Genesis tells of the God *by whom* and *for whom* all things were made. As redemptive history progressed, the transcendent Creator took on flesh and dwelt among men—to the great surprise and astonishment of those who recognized him. The very God

by whom all things were created walked among men as a man. This man was Jesus Christ, of whom John states, “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). While Genesis 1 hints at the creative work of a triune God through statements like, “Let *us* make man in *our* image” (Gen 1:26), the New Testament is explicit. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, is the one to whom all creation owes its existence. Nothing would have been made without his creative work. Thus, the Gospel writers unapologetically attribute to Jesus the same divine prerogatives as *Elohim* in Genesis 1.

The same is true for the apostle Paul. Speaking of Jesus, he writes, “For *by him all things were created*, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—*all things were created through him and for him*. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17). In other words, Paul proclaims Jesus as the *means* by which all things were made. Further still, Paul proclaims Jesus as the *goal* or the *telos* of all creation—this is expressed by Paul’s statement “all things were created *for* him.” Just as creation was declared “good” by God’s own standard and for his own delight, so also creation was made *for* Jesus Christ. Thus, when Genesis 1 puts forward the truth that all things were created *by* and *for* God, it prepares its readers for the truth that all things were created *by* and *for* Christ. All things were made for God’s good pleasure, and thus they were made for Christ’s pleasure. In this way, the glory of the Creator in Genesis 1 shines brightly in the person of Jesus Christ through whom and for whom all things were made.

Second, this first chapter of Genesis prepares us for the last chapter of history. The Bible maintains that the work of creation is a prerogative that belongs to God alone. This is an important point that will be unpacked more later in Genesis. For now, it helps to see that if only God can create a good world, then only God can create a *new* good world. Looking forward to man’s fall in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve’s sin would cause the world to become desperately tainted. The original goodness of creation was lost because

of man's sin and the entire world was subjected to futility (Rom 8:20). Throughout Genesis, mankind tried by their own efforts to regain the good Eden that was lost (e.g., the builders of Babel in Gen 11 and Lot in Gen 13:10, 11). Needless to say, their efforts failed.

Knowing that he alone could renew Edenic goodness in the world, God promised, "For behold, I create (*bara*) new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind" (Isa 65:17). In other words, God will create the new heavens and the new earth in the same way he created the original heavens and earth—that is, *by his own creative power*. In this new creation the goodness of the world will be restored. That being so, God's power in the creation narrative in Genesis 1 instills within its readers an anticipation of a new heaven and new earth, in which creation's original goodness will be repaired. Amazingly, God's creation of the new heavens and earth has *already* been inaugurated. The new heavens and new earth begins with the creation of a new people. Ultimately, this is why Jesus died. That is, he died so that those who believe in him would become, as Paul so profoundly proclaims, "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17).

This means that every believer is living proof that God is indeed creating a new, sin-free world. In fact, God's power over regeneration parallels his power over creation. This truth comes from 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The power and majesty that was put on display when God said, "Let there be light" is the same power and majesty that is displayed when God causes a sinner to know his Son.¹⁴ By causing some to know and believe in Jesus Christ, God's new creation has already begun. Once again, his glory will be displayed in his

¹⁴Thomas Schreiner writes, "The salvation of believers is analogous to the first day of creation." Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 563.

good creation—beginning with his creation of a new humanity who worships the one and only Son of God through whom and for whom all things were made. In this way, Genesis 1 prepares its readers for faith in Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, Genesis 1 speaks of God’s creative power and at the same time lays a foundation for a Christ-centered gospel. By reading of *Elohim*’s creative power, readers of Genesis are led also to worship our Savior Jesus Christ, of whom it is said, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands” (Hebrews 1:10).¹⁵ Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is to be worshipped because he is the one *through whom* all things were made, the one *for whom* all things were made, and the one *from whom* God’s new creation light shine.

¹⁵Notice that these are God’s words to his Son.

CHAPTER 3
MAN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD
(GENESIS 1:26-30)

An artist may create a number of beautifully splendid works of art, but nothing displays the artist's creativity, character, and skill more than his *magnum opus*. It is this great masterpiece that brings the artist renown and glory. Thinking of God as an artist, what should be considered his *magnum opus*? Some might think of the giant redwood trees in California, which tower more than three-hundred and fifty feet over head. Others might think of the majestic Himalayan mountains which stretch more than fifteen hundred miles from east to west. Still others might think of the brilliant constellations in the night sky, or perhaps the beautiful oceans of the world that are filled with gargantuan sea creatures, or perhaps the vibrant sunrises and sunsets that begin and end the day.

As beautiful and wondrous as these things are, none of them are worthy to be declared God's *magnum opus*. To be sure, these beautiful things come from his creative handiwork, but they are not his *chef-d'œuvre*—his chief work of art. What is then? What part of creation holds the distinction and glory of being God's primary masterpiece? Though it may be difficult to believe, it is men and women who hold the title as the crown of creation.¹ In God's estimation, nothing in creation compares to the creature known as *man*.

The list of God's created work is concluded by the final day-creation of '*adam*'. To borrow from a modern catchphrase, God saved the best for last.² His creation was not

¹Gordon Wenham writes, "He is the apex of the created order." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 38.

²Stephen Dempster argues that "the goal of creation is anthropological." Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Grand

complete until man was made. This tells us that from the beginning humanity held a special place in the creative mind of God. All other aspects of creation—including day and night, sun, moon, and stars, seas, land, plants and animals—paved the way for this final creature. In Genesis 1, the creation of humans is described in five brief but potent verses. From these five verses, we are told the essential truth of mankind’s origin, dignity, and purpose. Genesis 1:26-30 recounts,

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Given its proper value and authority, Genesis 1:26-30 will shape our thoughts about God, fellow humans, and the intention of humanity’s existence. These verses teach its readers what it means to be truly human, and they show us how to live as creatures made in God’s image.

Man Was Made by God

Contrary to many contemporary origin stories, the Bible proclaims that God made man purposefully. Just as a painting does not paint itself, or a sculpture sculpt itself, so also man did not make himself. The glory for his existence does not go to him, but to his God. Man’s being came about by God’s intentional initiative: “*Let us make man.*” This may seem elementary, but in actuality it is fundament. Man is a creature, and God is his Creator. As simple of a truth it may seem, it is a truth that post-fall humanity forgets all the time.

Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 57.

Furthermore, the little phrase “Let us make man” reveals an important insight into the Creator’s nature. That is, he spoke in plurality but acted in singularity. In verse 26, the verbal declaration, “let us make” (נַעֲשֶׂה) is plural. And yet, verse 27 recounts God’s creation using a singular verb, “God created man” (וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים). Also, in the same verse, the pronoun “his” is in the singular form. The question begs to be asked, how is it that God can speak in plurality (“let *us* make”) and yet still act in singularity (“so God created man in *his* own image”)? This consideration is the seedling of Trinitarian doctrine—the belief that the Divine Creator is three persons in one God.

It is unlikely that the author of Genesis would have attained a fully developed theology of the trinity. Nevertheless, it is not necessary for the author to fully understand the doctrine for it to be true.³ The New Testament sheds greater light on the thought of God creating in both plurality and singularity.⁴ What is concealed in Genesis 1:26-27 is uncovered in John 1 when John writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (vv. 1, 3). That which Genesis hints at, the New Testament will later state explicitly—namely, creation is the work of a triune God.

It is to this triune God that all humanity owes its existence. And because he is the Creator of humanity, it makes sense to say that humanity is his. To say it another way, whoever owns the patent owns the invention. God owns the patent of humanity, and therefore he owns humanity. Humans are *his* creatures; they belong to him.

³Victor Hamilton writes, “It is one thing to say that the author of Gen. 1 was not schooled in the intricacies of Christian dogma. It is another thing to say he was theologically too primitive or naïve to handle such ideas as plurality within unity. What we often so blithely dismiss as ‘foreign to the thought of the OT’ may be nothing of the sort. Hints and clues are dropped enticingly here and there, and such hints await their full understanding ‘at the correct time’ (Gal. 4:4).” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 134.

⁴Thomas Schreiner rightly comments concerning this passage, “A canonical approach supports a Trinitarian reading, which is suggested by the actual words of the text and confirmed by the entire canon.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 5.

What right, then, does God have to instruct his creatures how to live, think and act? Very simply, he has every right. To live in a way that is contrary to the commands of God, is to live in active rebellion against the One who owns us. To decry the existence and authority of God is to denounce our own existence, for without his willing initiative humanity would be nothing. And so, the very first chapter of Genesis tells us with great potency, “You, O Man, are not God; but you were made by God.”

Man Was Made in God’s Image

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Having seen that man was the creative work of a triune God, what does it mean for man to be made in God’s own image? Many theories have been proposed. Some theories suggest that the ‘image of God’ is the ability to reason and develop logic, while others argue that it means to have a conscience or to have a soul.⁵ Ask any six year old what “man made in the image of God” means and he or she might answer that it is to physically look like God—just as God has eyes, arms, legs, and hands, we also have eyes, arms, legs, and hands.⁶ When considering the meaning of “image” and “likeness,” however, these theories fall far short from what it truly means to be made in the image of God.

That man was made in the image and likeness of God is yet another evidence of man’s distinct uniqueness from the other creatures.⁷ Because of “God’s image” mankind enjoys a special status with God.⁸ More precisely, “image of God” refers to mankind’s unique ability to both *relate to* God and *reflect* God. Both relationship and

⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 137.

⁶For a survey of views concerning “image of God,” see Gentry and Wellum’s section in *Kingdom through Covenant*. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 185-86.

⁷It is most likely that “likeness” strengthens “image.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 136.

⁸T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 16.

reflection are in view in Genesis 1:26. As the bearer of God’s image, humanity *relates to* God and *reflects* his glorious reign to the rest of creation. In a sense, man was made to mediate “God to the world and the world to God.”⁹

As for relationship, it was designated for man to be made very particularly in *God’s* image. Just an image must have some sort of connection with the object it images, so also those who bear the image of God are relationally connected with the God they image. As the image of God, *’adam* is uniquely connected to God.

As for reflection, images must perform a very particular task. That is, images must *image* whatever object or person they were made to reflect. An image is not an end to itself. The image’s task is to call to mind the object it images. By being made in God’s “image” and “likeness,” man was made to *picture* God—or, in other words, man was made to *reflect* God to the world. Stephen Dempster puts it well, “Humans are referential creatures; their being automatically signifies God.”¹⁰ To be made in God’s image and likeness is to be made for the purpose of reflecting God’s nature to the rest of creation. As one who bore the image of God, man was to be the visible representative of the invisible God.

Relationship and reflection summarize well what is meant by “image of God.”¹¹ Thus, “image” implies both a *vertical* relationship with the Creator and a *horizontal* reflection among creation.¹² Man’s position, as the image bearer, is *under* the

⁹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62.

¹⁰Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58.

¹¹Gentry and Wellum rightly note, “In the ancient Near East, since the king is the living statue of the god, he represents the god on earth. He makes the power of the god a present reality. To sum up, the term ‘image of god’ in the culture and language of the ancient Near East in the fifteenth century B.C. would have communicated two main ideas: (1) rulership and (2) sonship. The king is the image of god because he has a relationship to the deity as the son of god and a relationship to the world as ruler for the god.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192. Note how Gentry and Wellum affirm both *relationship* and *reflection* in their comment concerning the image of God.

¹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

reign of God, but *over* the created world. The Westminster divines recognized this important aspect of man's created purpose. To the question, "What is the purpose of life?" the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* answers, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."¹³ "Glorifying God" can be taken as "reflecting God," for man was made to reflect God's glory to the world. Additionally, "enjoying God" can be taken as "relating to God." These two aspects of "image" make way for man's purpose.

Man Was Made for Dominion

That man was made in the image of God qualifies him to have dominion over the earth. Following his declared intention to make man in his own image, God says, "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (v. 26b). Image indicates man's regal status. Because *'adam* relates to God and reflects God to the world, man is uniquely positioned to reign as God's vice-regent on earth.¹⁴ In the Ancient Near East, a Sovereign would often place his image at the extremities of his realm "to indicate that his authority reached there."¹⁵ Thus, God's creation of *'adam* in his image was an expression of dominion. Through humanity's visible dominion on earth, God's invisible dominion would be expanded.

A few verses later (v. 28), God commands his created people to "subdue" the earth and to have "dominion" over all the living creatures. Both terms (כבש and רדה) express the royal tasks humans were made to accomplish.¹⁶ Man's regal nature qualifies

¹³See Question 1 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

¹⁴Gentry and Wellum observe that man's rule is "a result" of their royal status. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 196. Likewise, Dempster writes, "Being made in the image of God signifies humans exercising dominion as *God's viceregents of creation*." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 59.

¹⁵T. Desmond Alexander, *Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 78; see also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

¹⁶Gentry and Wellum note, "The term 'to rule' (*rādā* in Gen. 1:26, 28) is particularly true of

him to do regal work. As mankind relates to God and reflects God, he is able to mediate between God and the world. Gentry and Wellum put it this way, “As servant king and son of God mankind will mediate God’s rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and the earth on the other.”¹⁷

As God’s image bearers are “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (v. 28), so God’s kingdom on earth expands.¹⁸ God’s intention was to increase his reign to every corner of the earth, filling the earth with his glory, through the reign of his human creatures. His goal was as Habakkuk 2:14 says, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” As man—the image of God—filled the earth, so also the knowledge and glory of God would fill the earth. From the beginning, God had the end in mind. In his creation of man, God dreamed of a world filled with his own image, so that every corner of the globe would be filled with his glory.

Importance and Implications

When The importance of “man made in the image of God” is expressed in the repetition found in verse 27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

In this repetition, the author of Genesis makes clear that this doctrine is not one to be neglected. That God created man in his image is to be the *sine qua non* of biblical anthropology. And, as important as the doctrine is, the truth of man’s divine image-bearing comes with many implications for life and our view of humanity as a whole.

kings, as Psalm 78:8 illustrates. Also the term ‘to subdue’ (*kābaš*) especially speaks of the work of a king (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:11).” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 196.

¹⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201.

¹⁸Dempster writes, “Another way of describing this emphasis on human dominion and dynasty would be by the simple expression ‘the kingdom of God’.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62.

More precisely, Genesis 1:26-30 informs our understanding of human dignity, human gender, and divine dependence.

Human Dignity

As already mentioned, man made in the image and likeness of God and the dominion that comes with it demonstrates humanity's royal status. Genesis 1 does not have in view one particular group of people, but rather speaks of *all* humanity. In other Ancient Near Eastern cultures only the king or dignitary enjoyed the status of being "in the image of God." However, this is not so in Scripture. Victor Hamilton comments, "In God's eyes all of mankind is royal. All humanity is related to God, not just the king."¹⁹ Put bluntly, every person—from the smallest infant to the most elderly senior, both the healthy and the unhealthy, both the "unborn" and the born, regardless of whether a person is Black, Caucasian, Asian, or Hispanic—is made to be God's royal vice-regent on earth. Human life is dignified and is to be honored as such. Whenever a human life is unjustly annihilated, it is an insult to God's reign on earth. If every person is made to represent God's invisible reign, then murder, abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are—in actuality—attempts to wipe out the visible representation of God's reign on earth. Genesis 1 would have its readers remember that all mankind is made with the uniquely distinct purpose of relating to God and reflecting his glory.

Human Gender

The final stanza of verse 27 says, "Male and female he created them." This is not a mere appendix to the Bible's anthropology. It is, in fact, a very important tenet in the biblical understanding of humanity. *'adam* typically refers to humanity as a whole. Verse 27 makes it clear that it is not any one particular gender—male *or* female—that is made in the image of God. Quite the contrary, Genesis 1:27 teaches that *both* male and

¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 135.

female were made in the image of God. Again, Victor Hamilton puts it well, “The verse affirms that God created in his image a male *'ādām* and a female *'ādām*. Both share the image of God. Sexuality is not an accident of nature, nor is it simply a biological phenomenon. Instead it is a gift of God.”²⁰ Gender was God’s intention. It was his will for *both* men and women to relate to him and to reflect his glory. Male and female together were intended to fill the earth with the image of God. God’s plan was for his invisible dominion to be evidenced through the visible dominion and multiplication of men and women. Gender, then, is an important component in humanity’s nature (imaging God) and purpose (exercising dominion on the earth).

Divine Dependence

God blessed the male *'adam* and the female *'adam* and commanded them to multiply with the purpose of filling the earth. To them, he gave the commission to subdue and to exercise dominion over all creatures. However, God did not leave humans alone to fend for themselves. Verses 29-30 asserts man’s (and animal’s) absolute dependence upon God,

And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Derek Kidner observes, “The concern of the verse is to show that all are fed from God’s hand.”²¹ Humanity’s royal status does not mean it enjoys an independent status. Royal as they may be, humans are every bit dependent upon God for sustenance. God says, “I have given you” proving that he is still the greater Sovereign, while mankind is his dependent vassal kings and queens. Humanity, then, must exercise

²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 138.

²¹Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 57.

dominion while at the same time recognizing that God is its lifeline. Without God's provision, even the dignified, royal 'adam would perish. And yet, because God is a gracious and loving King, he provides for all his creatures.²²

God's Image Looking Forward

The Genesis 1 record of man's creation leaves us anticipating a perfect 'adam who will successfully accomplish the task of subduing the earth and exercising dominion over all creation. Genesis 1:26-30 is messianic by nature.²³ As the narrative of Genesis progresses mankind eventually fails in its commission to exercise dominion over the earth. Tragically, instead of having dominion, humanity was dominated. Though they retained God's image, the image of God in 'adam was tarnished by sin thus preventing them from accomplishing the task of filling the earth with God's glory.

Later prophets looked forward to One who would make things right. One day a son of 'adam would receive "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him" (Dan. 7:14). The whole earth would be subjected under his kingly feet. God's intention of "filling the earth" with his image would be accomplished through one who will do what the original Adam failed to do.

This son of 'adam is Jesus Christ. It is no coincidence that the apostle Paul would come to say of Jesus, "He is *the image of the invisible God*, the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15).²⁴ Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of everything Genesis 1:26-30 teaches about mankind. As the *perfect* image of God, he exercises *perfect* dominion, and

²²Hamilton correctly observes, "What God creates he preserves. What he brings into being he provides for." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 140.

²³Commenting on the term *rādā*, Dempster observes, "Significantly, in eschatological contexts it depicts an ideal, messianic king." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 59.

²⁴Beale and Carson's *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* has a significant section explaining how "image" and "firstborn" in Col 1:15 is Adamic in nature. See G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 851-57.

in the end, the whole earth will be filled with his kingdom. God's plan for humanity and creation will come to completion under his reign. Thus, in seeing how Genesis presents mankind as God's *magnum opus*, we are given an anticipatory glimpse of the Messiah, to whom Genesis 1 points. The reign of man is fulfilled in the reign of Christ, and one day soon the hosts of heaven will sing in victory, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

CHAPTER 4
THE MOST HIGH AND PERSONAL YAHWEH
(GENESIS 2)

Genesis 1 introduced the Creator in a powerful. He is a God who spoke all things into existence, who sovereignly named his creations, and appraised it all as good. He is a God who reigns over all things and whose will is carried out perfectly. He is God *transcendent*—existing above creation but not limited by it. However, that is not the sum total of his character. As the Biblical storyline goes on to show, the Creator God is more than merely transcendent, and necessarily so.

A merely transcendent god—who is above and beyond the world of men—would be of little good for anyone, for such a god could be neither relational nor personal. This god is cold, detached, and apathetic toward his creation—reigning above it but never relating with it. Consider the terrible thought that a *solely* transcendent god, as powerful as he might be, could not and would not stoop down to fellowship with his creatures. The Islamic god, *Allah*, comes to mind. He is held by Muslims as a transcendent god, but rarely is he seen as a god who is personal and affectionate with his human creatures. In Islam, no human being can be considered a *friend* of Allah. Allah is too high and holy to enjoy a friendship with his human subjects.

On the other hand, a god who is merely immanent and not transcendent would be no better. A merely immanent god might love humans and enjoy a relationship with them, but he would not be sovereign over their lives. He would be able to speak with his people, walk with his people, interact with his people, but yet he would be powerless to save his people. A few examples are the Greek gods, the Egyptian gods, or even the gods that are worshipped in places like Buddhistic Asia, Hindu India, or tribal Africa. These

gods are personal and relational with mankind. In fact, many of these gods look like human men and women, live on earth with men and women, and are even believed to socially interact with humans from time to time. Yet, none of these gods are sovereignly transcendent. They can be defeated, manipulated, outsmarted, and, at times, even killed. Thus, a merely personal god is a limited god.

A merely transcendent god would leave humanity longing for a personal relationship, while a merely immanent god would leave humanity longing for a powerful Lord. Unless the God of the universe is *both* transcendent and immanent, then humanity is forced to choose between a king, who reigns over all, or a friend, who loves humanity. In order to be both a sovereign king and an affectionate friend, the true God must be both transcendent and immanent. He must be an almighty God and yet he must also be an affectionate God.

Enter the God of Genesis—who is both transcendently almighty and immanently affectionate. While Genesis 1 labors to show the Creator as transcendent, Genesis 2 shows him to be immanent. The God who spoke stars and galaxies and planets into being is the very same God who welcomes men and women into a personal relationship with himself. Thus, the God of the Bible fully satisfies his people’s longings by being their powerful, transcendent, omnipotent Creator, and also their personal, immanent, and affectionate Friend (Jas 2:23). And this makes the God of Genesis unique. No other god is said to be all-powerful and, at the same time, affectionately-personal. Truths like this is why the Psalmist can say with such confidence, “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord” (Ps 86:8a). In a world of transcendent gods and immanent gods, the God of the Bible stands above them all in the glory of his transcendent reign and his immanent relationality.

God’s Rest

The first hint that the Creator is immanent (in addition to being transcendent) is

that he rested on the seventh day. Verse 2 says, “And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.” Rest, in the Bible, does not imply idleness.¹ Rather, God resting was a sovereign statement that his creative work was finished.² Nothing more needed to be created. God, as sovereign ruler, was satisfied with what he had done, and so he rested from his creative work, and took pleasure in that which he had made. The seventh day rest pictures a “true sovereign on his throne” who *enjoys* his dominion.³ It is as if he sat down, took a breath, and smiled as his eyes roamed over his creation.

Furthermore, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. From henceforth, God’s people will be reminded of his creative work and his Sabbath rest. By his own ordination, God separated the seventh day from all the other days of the week, elevating its significance. Every week, on the seventh day, God’s people were to rest from their work and to think about their God. By establishing a day of rest, God establishes a day on which his people will enjoy his sovereign work.⁴ This is seen in later revelation when the reason given for keeping the Sabbath is that the Israelites should “remember” God’s sovereign work in the Exodus (see Deut 15:15). The word “remember” (זָכַר) means to call to mind. During the Sabbath, the people of Israel were expected to be mindful of God’s work on their behalf. Thus, if the Sabbath mentioned in Deuteronomy is consistent with the Sabbath spoken of Genesis, then it is likely that God’s original intention for the

¹G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 62-63.

²Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 56.

³Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66; Hamilton points out that the word “rested” is to show “that the universe is no longer in a process of being created.” Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 142.

⁴“This will be the temporal shrine in which the people of Israel can rest from their labors each week with their God.” Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 68.

Sabbath was for his people to be “mindful” of his sovereign work. The Creator and his people set aside a holy time together during which they were mindful of the work he had done. Thus, the transcendent Creator proved his immanence by making the seventh day holy in which he rested with his creatures.

Yahweh Elohim

Moving on to verse 4, there is another very important detail that must not be overlooked: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that *the LORD God* made the earth and the heavens.” There is a noticeable change in the cadence of the book. In Genesis 1, there is the familiar cadence, “And *Elohim*...and *Elohim*...and *Elohim*.” However, in 2:4 there is a sudden addition to that cadence. Instead of simply using *Elohim* (“God”) as he had in Genesis 1, Moses uses *Yahweh Elohim* (“the LORD God”) in Genesis 2. Why is this significant? It is significant because *Elohim* is the general name for God. *Elohim* speaks all creation into existence and he rules over all things. He is transcendent. *Yahweh*, on the other hand, is his personal, relational name.⁵ More specifically, *Yahweh* is the name God reveals to his covenant people, and the fact that he is described here as *Yahweh Elohim* most likely implies a *covenant* relationship with Adam. The Creator God is a covenant-making God.⁶ As *Elohim*, God is transcendent and majestically above all that there is; and yet, as *Yahweh*, he is personal and enjoys a relationship with his creation.⁷ This is not dualism—as if God had dual personalities. The transcendent *Elohim* is one and the same relational

⁵Hamilton writes, “In Gen. 1 the emphasis is on creation via the majestic God who speaks and it is done. The more generic name for God—⁷‘*lōhīm*—fits this emphasis admirably. By contrast, the emphasis in 2:4ff. is more personal.” Hamilton, *Genesis*, 153. See also Thomas Schreiner, *The King and His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 7.

⁶Dempster notes, “The personal name ‘Yahweh’ is added to the title ‘God’ at every point to indicate unmistakably that the God who later enters into covenant with Israel is also the God of Adam.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 64.

⁷See discussion in T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 120-22.

Yahweh. By merging *Yahweh* and *Elohim*, the writer of Genesis intentionally shows that the Creator is *both* transcendent *and* personal. This solves the problem that was mentioned earlier. The God of the Bible is above all and yet, at the same time, he is also relational with his people. The rest of Genesis 2 shows how *Yahweh Elohim*—the transcendentally powerful God—engaged in a personal relationship (a covenantal relationship) with his human creatures, Adam and Eve.

Yahweh Elohim Formed and Breathed Life

The creation of Adam was an intimately personal action. God did not create Adam from a distance, but *formed* him much like a potter forms a work of art. Look specifically at verses 5-7:

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

When the word “formed” is used elsewhere in the Bible it is often used to describe the work of a potter or an artisan.⁸ Isaiah 45:9 is one example of this.⁹ In light of this connotation, Genesis 2 declares that man was not mass-produced. He was not made through some impersonal process. Rather he was made by hand, and was given the same care and attention that an artisan would give to his art. He was made through artistic intentionality and skill.¹⁰ *Yahweh God* was personally invested in the creation of Adam, affectionately creating his masterpiece—his *magnum opus*. The artist and his art were

⁸See the Hebrew word *ysr*. “*Formed* expresses the relation of craftsman to material.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 65; see also Hamilton, *Genesis*, 156.

⁹See also Rom 9:20-21.

¹⁰Wenham observes, “‘Shaping’ is an artistic, inventive activity that requires skill and planning.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 59.

affectionately bound together.¹¹ By intimately forming, fashioning, and molding Adam, God showed himself to be a personally relational God.

After forming Adam according to his will, *Yahweh Elohim* leaned in and breathed life into Adam, and Adam became a living being. God gave his very own breath to give Adam the gift of life. Ultimately, this breath is what caused the dust of the *'adama* to become a living *'adam*.¹² Breathing life into man was not something God did from a distance. He stooped down, leaned in, came in close, and *breathed* his own breath into man's lungs. Commentator Derek Kidner writes, "*Breathed* is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss."¹³ Life was given as a result of God's immanent breathing.¹⁴ God came in close, breathed, and man became a living being. The very fact that humans breathe the breath of life proves that God is not distant nor disengaged from the world he made. He is personal, and without his divine breath there would be no life. Genesis 2 teaches that human life is absolutely dependent on their lovingly affectionate God *personally* giving his very own breath."

Yahweh Elohim Planted and Provided

After personally forming man and breathing life into him, God also planted a garden and affectionately provided for the man's every need. Verses 8-9 say, "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

¹¹Waltke says, "God as the Artist is bonded to his work. The image signifies a deliberate, not accidental creation." Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 85.

¹²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 64.

¹³Kidner, *Genesis*, 65.

¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 60.

The passage says, “the LORD God *planted a garden.*” It is quite the tender image. The Creator God, in this passage, is not seen as someone who creates from a distance, but rather he is described as a Divine Gardener.¹⁵ Eden is not merely a habitat for humanity; instead, it is *God’s* garden.¹⁶ A garden, in which, he himself walks and enjoys the scenery (cf. Genesis 3:8). After planting this garden, God brought Adam to live there.

In the process of planting the garden, God also provided for his people. To read Genesis 2 rightly, the reader must recognize the *Fatherly* care of God. God, just like a Father, gave his dependent son food to eat. And yet, it was not just any food. It was food that was “*pleasant to the sight and good*” (2:9). Consider this, why are apples red, bananas yellow, blueberries blue, and oranges orange? Why do fruit trees bloom with such beautiful flowers before producing fruit? Why is the world filled with such a variety of naturally sweet tastes? The answer is that God made the fruits, the flowers, and the colors to bring his creatures pleasure. Waltke puts it beautifully, “Life in the garden is represented as a banqueting table—good for food and delightful to the eye.”¹⁷ Adam’s Creator, the great artist of the universe, desired for Adam to not only have food, but to *delight* in eating the food he had created. God could have made Adam to be fueled by a bowl of flavorless grits, but instead God gave him color, texture, and tastes for his enjoyment.¹⁸ A personally affectionate God made Adam to not just be sustained by the

¹⁵Hamilton notes, “Verses 4-7 pictured God as a potter. Now the divine image that appears is that of God as a planter, as a horticulturalist.” Hamilton, *Genesis*, 161.

¹⁶There are a number of references in Gen 2 which indicate that Eden was God’s first temple. For more on these connections see Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29-80; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 86.

¹⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 86.

¹⁸Tim Chester writes, “The world is more delicious than it needs to be. We have a super-abundance of divine goodness and generosity. God went over the top. We don’t need the variety we enjoy, but he gave it to us out of sheer exuberant joy and grace.” Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 67-8.

provision, but to *enjoy* his provision.

It was because God is both infinite *and* personal that he provided more than mere sustenance. He provided pleasure. When the first man looked at the fruit of garden trees, he was reminded of the God who loved him. In this way, God's provision was a visible expression of his loving care.¹⁹

Also, take note of how extensive God's provision was. It was not only provision for Adam, but for all creation. The one river in Eden branched out into four rivers and watered all the lands around the garden: "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers" (v. 10). Life-giving water flowed from the place of God's presence. This foreshadows Ezekiel's vision of a day when a river would flow from God's temple giving life to all that is dead (Ezek 47:1-12). The basic principle seen in this is that life comes from wherever God is. And, therefore, as God dwelt with his creatures in Eden, life-giving waters flowed out of Eden. This life-giving provision shows him to be a God who personally cares for his creation. He planted, he watered, and he provided—expressing his personally affectionate care for that which he had made.

To this day, God's provision is *still* an expression of his loving care. God is a loving provider, and because of this beautiful truth, God's people should not be anxious about what they need. One of the most common stressors in life is whether or not needs will be met. "Will we be able to pay the bills this month?" "Will I lose my job? My house?" "Will my kids be fed and clothed adequately?" The provision seen in Genesis 2 reminds God's people to trust him whatever may come. It is not to say God's people are spared from hardship; instead, it is simply to say that God loves his people and will care for them. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-26:

¹⁹Jas 1:17 comes to mind: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

People must look to God for their needs, not to themselves. Their anxiety does nothing for them. God knows what his people need, and as a Father, he will *always* provide for his children. That provision may come in ways completely unexpected, but because God is affectionately personal, he will see to the needs of his people.”

Yahweh Elohim Personally Gave Man Work

Verse 15 says, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” The words *'abad* and *šmr*, in later revelation refer to the priests’ role of serving and guarding the temple (בְּגִוֹרֵי-לְעֹבְדָה וּלְשֹׁמְרָה).²⁰ Adam was created to be the first priest, and therefore, he was to serve and guard God’s sanctuary. Adam, together with his commission to subdue (*kbš*) and his commission to *serve and guard*, makes him a type of King-Priest.²¹ If the garden is to be viewed as the archetypal temple—the first *place* of God’s special presence—then it makes sense that God’s archetypal temple would need an archetypal priest to serve in it.²²

Furthermore, it was God’s intention for Adam to expand his temple presence throughout the entire earth.²³ This is seen particularly in the commission of Genesis 1:28a, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” In other words, God made the cosmos but he commissioned Adam to make it into a cosmic temple. Adam is

²⁰Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66-67.

²¹Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 7; Beale observes, “Adam should always best be referred to as a ‘priest-king.’” Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 70.

²²Beale says, “Genesis 2 was portraying Adam against the later portrait of Israel’s priests, and that he was the archetypal priest who served in and guarded (or ‘took care of’) God’s first temple.” Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 68.

²³Andrew S. Malone, *God’s Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 57.

the steward commissioned to prepare God's world-wide dwelling place. As God's temple expanded throughout the earth, then so would life. It is clear that Yahweh in all of his power and wisdom could have completed a cosmic temple without Adam's help. However, God in his sovereignty graciously chose to include Adam in his plan. The immanent God of the universe personally invited Adam in the work of subduing, expanding, working, and guarding God's temple. Thus, Genesis 2 presents Adam's work as a gift from his Maker.²⁴ God intentionally created Adam, and then gave him a purpose for which Adam was intentionally designed to fulfill. It is as if God invites Adam to become his helper in bringing about a world-wide Eden. As Genesis 3 will show, Adam will fail in this commission. However, as the redemptive storyline will eventually show, a new and greater Adam will come and complete Adam's original task of filling the earth with Edenic blessing and life (see Rom 5:18-21).

A distant and disengaged god most like would not have invited a human creature to participate in his work of expanding the divine presence throughout the world. However, because God is immanently relatable with his human creatures, he willingly, joyfully invited *'adam* to participate in his divine agenda.

Yahweh Lovingly Led Adam

In verses 16-17, God commanded Adam, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die."

Contemporary society frowns on the idea of an authoritative God who rules over man. An authoritative God is often thought of as an unpleasant, bossy tyrant. However, it would seem, that Scripture's depiction of God's command to Adam carries a fatherly tone. Remember that Adam was not just a subject in God's kingdom; rather,

²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 87.

Adam was viewed by God as a son (cf. Luke 3:38). Therefore, Genesis 2:16-17 is not only a command of a King to his servant, but also a command of a Father to his child.

When God said, “You may surely eat of *every* tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat,” he was not oppressing Adam as a tyrant would. On the contrary, he was setting boundaries for his son. God only prohibited *one* tree from the groves of beautiful and delicious fruit trees in the garden, and he did this for Adam’s well-being.

As an example, a father wants the best for his child. Being a good and loving father, he shows his child all of the good and safe places to play; but out of concern for the child’s well-being, the father also warns of the dangerous places to play. He tells the child, “You can play in the front yard, in your room, at the park, at grandma and grandpa’s house. Just don’t play in the street, because you could get hurt.” Is the father at that moment being a tyrant who wants to limit the child? Obviously not. If anything, this is a picture of a faithful parent who expresses love by protecting his child from the dangers of having no boundaries. In the same way, it was the faithful and affectionate Yahweh who set boundaries for his son Adam.

Furthering the point, the phrase “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” can be translated as “the tree of *judgment* [or *discernment*] of good and evil.”²⁵ The tree represented the ability to judge or discern for oneself what is good and what is evil. In his prohibition of the tree, God called Adam to trust in him for that discernment.²⁶ God is the standard of good and judges what is evil. He, in effect, was a father pleading with his son to trust his word concerning right and wrong.²⁷ Thus, in light of these considerations,

²⁵הַיָּדָעַת can mean discernment or judgment.

²⁶Hamilton says that the tree offers “moral autonomy.” He continues, “What is forbidden to man is the power to decide for himself what is in his best interests and what is not. This is a decision God has not delegated to the earthling.” Hamilton, *Genesis*, 165.

²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 86.

God should not be viewed as merely a transcendent authoritarian. Quite the contrary, he was a loving God who was affectionately looking after his son, Adam.

According to God, man's moral independence will bring inevitable death. The phrase, "you shall surely die" can be understood to mean "dying you shall die" (קוּת (תְּמוּת).²⁸ In other words, if Adam rebels and attempts to judge between good and evil himself, he will most-assuredly die. God's command reminds Adam that he is to remain absolutely dependent upon his Creator in order to know right and wrong.

Yahweh Elohim Made Man to be an Affectionate Creature

In the final section of this chapter, God determined, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (v. 18). Here we have the seedlings of biblical complementarianism. God's desire for Adam was that he should have a partner who *helps* him and also *complements* him. Victor Hamilton commenting on "a helper fit for him" writes, "It suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus, the new creation of this helper will be neither a superior or an inferior, but an equal."²⁹ God would not settle for an inferior creature to assist Adam in his work. His heart desired to give Adam the perfect complement to his existence.

God then brought all the animals to Adam to see what he would name them. "Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him" (vv. 19-20). It is important to understand that God was not in a learning stage. He was not *trying* to find a helper fit for Adam among

²⁸Hamilton, *Genesis*, 172.

²⁹Hamilton, *Genesis*, 175.

the animals (for that would be to imply that God is not omniscient), instead he was teaching Adam his need for a corresponding mate. As Adam named these animals, he noticed that every animal had a complementary mate. To put it plainly, he saw that for every male there was a female. And what did that show Adam? It showed him exactly what verse 20 says, “There was not found a helper fit for him.” It was at that moment that Adam recognized his need for a corresponding mate—a partner.

Having shown the man his need for a helper, God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep during which he “built” a woman from one of Adam’s ribs.³⁰ The woman’s creation is just as dignified as the man’s. Adam was *formed* and the woman was built. While “formed” communicates the Creator’s artistry and skill, “built” communicates “beauty, stability, and durability.”³¹ Thus both Adam and the woman were made in the image of God, and both were intimately and affectionately made by *Yahweh Elohim*.

After making the woman, God “brought her to the man.” Just as a father walks his daughter down the aisle, God escorted the woman to meet her husband. God is, as Waltke says, the “attendant to the bride.”³² In effect, *Yahweh Elohim* organized, orchestrated, and officiated the very first wedding. The God who spoke planets into being, personally attended the first holy matrimony.

Furthering the beauty of the scene, Adam greets his new bride with a song. “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (v. 23). There is good reason to see Adam’s statement as the first marriage vows. “Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” is more than a simple statement of similarity.³³ The phrase implies a covenant relationship, in which the

³⁰The writer uses the Hebrew word *banah*, which means “to build.”

³¹Hamilton, *Genesis*, 179.

³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 89.

³³Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 65.

speaker declares his loyalty.³⁴ As Dempster notes, “Instantly the man sees ‘himself’ in the woman.” And consequently, he vows his unity and bond with the first covenant wife guaranteeing his loyalty to her as she is intimately connected with him. This should be no surprise to us. God, being a personal and affectionate Creator, has created humans to be personal and affectionate beings. The image-bearers of God were made to mirror God’s loving affection toward others. God’s love for Adam led to Adam’s love for Eve. Thus, God’s loving creation of man overflowed into the intimacy of marriage.³⁵

Verses 24 and 25 conclude the section poetically by saying, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” God’s immanence, being perfect, allowed Adam and Eve to experience perfectly intimate, marital love in a perfect place where God’s divine affection was personally felt. The relational affection felt in marriage is sourced from the relational affection of the one who created it.³⁶

Conclusion

Genesis 2 leaves its readers longing for the same intimately close relationship with the Almighty Creator of the universe. It reveals to us that God’s heart, from the beginning, was to be *near* his people—even more specifically, to dwell with them. The One who made the far-reaches of the universe is the same God who invited mankind into his Edenic temple to enjoy his loving kindness.

The Garden of Genesis 2 became the pattern for God’s personal presence

³⁴Hamilton, *Genesis*, 180.

³⁵Waltke and Fredricks comment, “A man and woman are never more like God than on their wedding day when they commit themselves unconditionally to one another.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 89.

³⁶Again, referring to Dempster, “The man and woman are referential creatures, existing in and for relationship: to God, to each other and to the ground.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 65.

among his people. Looking forward, the immanent presence of God was given in both the tabernacle and the temple. In fact, the very next chapter of Genesis establishes that God “walked to and fro” with his people in the cool of the day.³⁷ This same verb is used later in Leviticus 26:11-12 in reference to the tabernacle and in 2 Samuel 7:6-7 in reference to the temple. God personally “walks” among his people, graciously gifting them with his especially immanent affection.

Furthering the significance of what is seen in Genesis 2, the arboreal presence of God is re-given fully in the New Creation.³⁸ Significantly, Revelation 21 speaks of the New Jerusalem in which God himself boldly proclaims, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (21:3). Later in Revelation 22, the description of this city transitions into a description of a garden. There, another river flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” and next to it stands the tree of life. Revelation 22:3 says beautifully, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.” Once again, God’s Edenic presence will dwell with redeemed humanity, and they will “worship” (or “serve”) him in the new and more perfect Garden. Thus, Genesis 2 prepares Bible readers for a renewed and fuller experience of the transcendent Creator’s perfectly immanent presence. The beginning of human history leaves us longing for the end, when God will forever dwell with his people.

³⁷Note the hitpa”el form of הִלָּךְ.

³⁸Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* gives a great discussion on the arboreal symbolism in the New Jerusalem that points back to Eden.

CHAPTER 5
THE REINVENTION OF GOD AND MAN
(GENESIS 3:1-7)

Milton's classic *Paradise Lost* poetically portrays Lucifer's rebellion in heaven,

He trusted to have equaled the Most High,
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim,
Against the throne and monarchy of God,
Raised impious war in heaven and battle proud,
With vain attempt.¹

Though Milton's words speak specifically of Satan's sin, they also are an apt description of Adam's sin. As Genesis 3 recounts, Adam—just like Milton's Satan—“trusted to have equaled the Most High.” His ambitious aim led him to raise up “against the throne and monarchy of God.” And because of his arrogant defiance, Adam and his descendants “raised impious war” against God and “battle proud, with vain attempt.” Any rebellion against God, whether it be that of Lucifer in Milton's poem or of Adam in Genesis 3, is a vain attempt to seize the Divine's throne. Sinful rebellion, regardless of its size or severity, is *high treason against the Majesty of God*.² From the smallest infraction to the grandest transgression, all sin is a person's attempted subversion of the godhood of God.

The aim of Genesis up to this point has been to prove the sovereign kingship of the Creator. Genesis 1 told of his sovereign transcendence as the Creator's word brought all creation into existence. Whatever he spoke, happened. For instance, when God said,

¹John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Arcturus, 2015), 12.

²Puritan Ralph Venning referred to sin as *crimen laesae Majestatis*. Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 30.

“Let there be light,” there was light. Genesis 2 went on to show that this transcendent Creator was also the personally affectionate Yahweh who enjoyed a relationship with his people. Yahweh God formed Adam, placed him in the garden of Eden, and sovereignly provided for him just as a father provides for his son. In the Garden, Yahweh gave Adam only one command: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (2: 17). It was a sovereign command given by Adam’s sovereign God, and the violation of this command would bring about the penalty of death. Sadly, however, Adam and his bride did not comply, and together they launched humanity into the deep darkness of sin and death. Genesis 3 recounts the tragedy of *paradise lost* as humanity presumed to have become equal with God and rebelled against the King of creation who loved them so passionately.

The Ancient Serpent

Adam and his wife did not simply stumble into sin. They were helped into it—coaxed along by a silver-tongued serpent. Verse 1 of chapter 3 begins, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.” Who exactly was this serpent? First, though Genesis 3 does not explicitly state who this serpent is, his identity can be deduced by what he does. The description “more crafty” does not reveal anything particularly sinister.³ However, how this serpent employed his craftiness unveils his maleficent intentions. As the chapter progresses, the serpent unashamedly questioned God’s command and motives. He went on to blaspheme God and cunningly lured humanity to rebel against him. This work of deception reveals who was truly behind the serpent’s actions. Later revelation speaks of “*that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world*” (cf. Revelation 12:9). Who, then, was this serpent? Or better, who was working through this serpent?

³The word עָרִימ can mean “cunning” or “shrewd.” The word, on its own, does not imply evil.

According to Scripture, working in and through this crafty serpent was none other than Satan himself, the Great Deceiver.

A second point of observation is that this serpent is not introduced as another divine rival. The serpent was *anti-god*, but he was *not* a god. In fact, the author of Genesis makes it crystal clear that this serpent was a *creature* made by God himself. He was one of the “beasts” that “the LORD God had made.” It would be a mistake then to think that this created serpent could ever be a *serious* antagonist to the Creator. The Creator and this created serpent (including the Satan who was controlling the serpent) must never be seen as equals dueling over the universe. This serpent was without a doubt an enemy of God but he was not a threat to God. God was still the sovereign Creator. Thus, Genesis 3 cautions its readers against attributing too much power to this satanic serpent. It was nothing more than a created beast, empowered by the devil, to speak out against God.⁴

Why is this important? Remembering that the serpent was nothing more than a created beast highlights the absurdity of Adam’s rebellion. He and his wife did not know that working in the serpent was a rebellious angel. For all they could see, this was one of the beast they were commissioned to rule over. And yet, instead of exercising dominion over the serpent, they were dominated by him. They obeyed the very beast they were created to rule.⁵ Genesis 3, then, shows God’s created order turned on its head, as royal humanity submitted itself to the serpent in order to overthrow their God.

⁴Kidner notes, “The chapter speaks not of evil invading, as though it had its own existence, but of creatures rebelling.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 72

⁵Beale agrees, “[Adam] allowed the serpent to rule over him rather than ruling over it and casting it out of the Garden.” G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 132.

The Birth of Temptation and Sin

The crafty serpent used two specific tactics in his attempt to deceive Adam and his wife. First, the serpent attempted to reinvent God by recasting him as one who was secretly evil, selfish, and self-preserving. Second, the serpent attempted to reinvent man by suggesting that the man and the woman could become their own sovereign deities. In other words, the serpent, in his deception, *demoted God* to be something less than what he is and *promoted man* to be something more than he was created to be. This is ultimately the aim of all temptation and sin—to demote God from his throne and to promote man as King.⁶ As Ralph Venning once said, sin “goes about to ungod God.”⁷

Demoting God

In his speech to the woman, the serpent attempted to recondition humanity’s understanding of their Creator. His evil intentions are implicit in his inquiry, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Looking closely at his question, it becomes clear that the serpent was subtly recasting God as someone who was distant and impersonal. Genesis 2 presented God as *Yahweh Elohim*—showing that the all-powerful Creator is immanently personal with his human creatures. Yet, the serpent sought to distance humanity from its affectionate and immanent Creator by referring to him only as *Elohim*, deliberately omitting God’s covenant name, *Yahweh*. In this way, the serpent subtly reinterpreted God. According to him, the close and personal *Yahweh Elohim* was in reality a distant, disengaged, merely-transcendent deity.

Moreover, by asking if God had prohibited Adam and his wife from eating “any tree in the garden”, the serpent exaggerated God’s command and was beginning to

⁶Beale, looking at Ezek 28 and Gen 3 together, notes that sin is “the rearranging of existence around the self, with the result that the human self comes to be its own idolatrous creator, healer and sustainer.” Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 293.

⁷Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, 30.

sow seeds of discontentment toward the Creator.⁸ The serpent's statement was not so much a question as it was a subtle accusation against God's good nature. The serpent insinuated that God's prohibition of the one tree was a prohibition of every tree. And, by implication, *any* restriction that God had placed on the man and woman was evil oppression. According to this satanic serpent, when God barred them from the *one* tree, he might as well have banned them from the whole garden.

This was the first phase of tempting humanity into rebellion against God. The progression of his temptation was simply this: first convince the man and woman that God was somehow different than they knew him to be (namely, that he was distant and not truly the personal Creator they had enjoyed), and then suggest that this distant God had somehow oppressed them.⁹ This sounds eerily similar to the way modern people think about God. The satanic serpent still works these very same tactics in order to muddle the truth of God's goodness.

The serpent spoke with the woman, but his question was directed at both the man and the woman. The serpent asked, "Did God actually say, 'You (plural) shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" And any other time the pronoun "you" is seen in this section of text it is in plural. It is a wonder, then, why Adam stayed silent throughout the discourse. As the leader, he should have been the one to answer the serpent's question, not the woman. It was to him that the original command had been spoken, not her.

By allowing the snake to question his wife and neglecting to intervene in the

⁸Hamilton states, "[The serpent's] first words should not be construed as a question but as an expression of shock and surprise. He grossly exaggerates God's prohibition, claiming that God did not allow them access to any of the orchard trees. Apart from this claim being unadulterated distortion, it is an attempt to create in the woman's mind the impression that God is spiteful, mean, obsessively jealous, and self-protective." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 188-89. See also Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 91.

⁹Kidner argues, "So the tempter pits his bare assertion against the word and works of God, presenting divine love as envy, service as servility, and a suicidal plunge as a leap into life." Kidner, *Genesis*, 73.

discussion, Adam failed in his commission to guard the garden. In fact, the woman had not even been created when the prohibition was given. Thus, in his silence, Adam failed to carry out his duty as a husband and as the keeper of the garden.¹⁰ This is the first glimpse of male passivity in the Bible, and, as history never fails to demonstrate, when men neglect to lead their families as God intended, horrible results ensue.

Because Adam remained silent, his wife was left to answer the serpent herself. “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,’ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Her restatement was a tragic misquotation of God’s original prohibition. Comparing her restatement with God’s original command, three inaccuracies become apparent.

As for her first inaccuracy, God had said that Adam and his wife could eat of “*every tree* of the garden” except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God’s use of the phrase “every tree” emphasized the liberty he had given Adam and his bride. He had not unjustly limited his human creatures. Out of the thousands of garden trees, there was only one tree from which they were not permitted to eat. Thus the woman’s restatement did not accurately display God’s abundant generosity. The statement, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden” was grossly underwhelming when compared with God’s actual statement, “You may eat from *every tree*.”

As to the second inaccuracy, God told Adam that he must not “eat” of the fruit of the prohibited tree. However, according to the woman’s restatement, God said that they must not eat nor touch the fruit of the tree; ergo, she added to God’s prohibition. As G. K.

¹⁰Thomas Schreiner says, “Presumably, Adam and Eve were to evict the serpent from the garden by obeying the Lord.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 9. Also see T. D. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 26.

Beale notes, the woman became “the first legalist in history.”¹¹ However, even adding to God’s prohibition did not help her to obey God’s command.

Finally, the woman’s most serious misstatement of God’s command concerned the consequence of disobedience. God warned Adam that if he ate from the fruit of the tree he would “surely die.” In the Hebrew, God’s warning is literally “dying you will die,” which expresses the certainty of the fatal consequence.¹² However, the woman’s restatement is much less definite. According to her, God’s warning of the consequence was “lest you die” which implies much more ambiguity.¹³ Whereas God’s original command spoke of death as a fatal *certainty*, the woman’s misquotation of God spoke of death as a dangerous *possibility*.

After hearing her horrible misquotation of God’s command, the serpent responded by saying, “You will not surely die.” The serpent’s reinvention of God was no longer subtle. In verses 4 and 5, he blatantly called God a liar. What began as a subtle insinuation had now become an outright allegation against God’s goodness. According to the serpent, God had spoken falsehood.

He continued, “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The serpent claimed to know God’s mind and suggested that God had spitefully lied to protect his own divinity.¹⁴ God was recast as a divine Scrooge, who knew that Adam and his wife would become godlike if they ate from the tree. Therefore, in order to prevent these humans from infringing upon his own divinity, God lied to them by claiming that they would die if they ate from

¹¹Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 134.

¹²Literally, “dying you will die” (מֹת תָּמֹת).

¹³The Hebrew for “lest you die” is לֹא-תָּמֹת, which softens the consequence of disobedience.

¹⁴Hamilton comments, “Now [the serpent] directs her attention to God’s inner thoughts. Implicit here is the suggestion that the serpent knows God better than the woman does, for he can penetrate his mind and claim to know what God knows.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 189.

the forbidden tree. God, accordingly, was not acting in humanity's best interest, but out of his own self-preservation. God wanted to keep them from reaching their "divine potential." Paraphrasing the accusation, "How malevolent God must be that he would lie to you and keep back the best from you."

Consider how Satan utilizes this same reinvention of God in the present day. "Your adulterous lust will not harm you, for God knows that if you look at that site, flirt with that coworker, act out on your own sexual preferences you will find ultimate and lasting pleasure." "Your greed will not kill you, for God knows that if you pursue money, cheat for money, steal money you will find true happiness." "Your pride will not lead to destruction, for God knows that you are truly self-sustainable and self-sufficient." The ways in which Satan tries to reinvent God and his prohibitions are various, and in these reinventions, the good God is always recast as a maleficent oppressor. Simultaneously, sin is recast as innocent and, ultimately, as the good pursuit of independence from an evil God. However, this was just the first phase of Satan's sinful temptation. The serpent would not falsely demote God without also wrongly promoting man. The reinvention of God was followed by a reinvention of humanity.

Promoting Man

After accusing God of being a distantly malevolent liar, the serpent suggested to the man and woman that they could become more than what they were made to be. Looking again at verse 5, the serpent promised, "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The thrust of the serpent's temptation was that Adam and his wife could "become even as God."¹⁵ Thus the serpent enticed Adam and Eve, not with a fruit, but with divinity.¹⁶ It was proposed that in knowing good and evil

¹⁵This is the literal Hebrew translation of וְהָיִתְּמֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים יֹדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע.

¹⁶Von Rad writes, "The unthinkable and terrible is described as simply and unsensationally as possible." Gerhard von Rad quoted in Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 9.

for themselves the man and woman could become their own autonomous rulers, independent from the Creator.

In this way, satanic temptation invites mankind to become more than what it was meant to be. Genesis 3 is not the only place in the Bible this truth about temptation and sin is found. Paul’s letter to the Romans also shows how sin seeks to demote God as something less and to promote man as something more. According to Romans 1:18-32, first comes the reinvention of God as unrighteous men “suppress the truth” about him. Then comes the reinvention of humanity as they “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”

In every sin, whether it is eating forbidden fruit or committing blatant idolatry, God is recast as a distant, suspicious, and malicious deity, while man becomes, in his own eyes, self-righteous, self-sustainable, and divine.¹⁷ Test any sinful temptation and you will find this to be true.¹⁸ Murder is the self-attained right to decide who should live and who should die—perhaps God is not doing a good enough job making this decision. Hatred and unjust anger is nothing more than wrath that burns against those who do not live according to one’s own “sovereign” agenda. Revenge is committed by someone who did not receive the reverence and respect he—in his own perception—deserves, and so he punishes the offender. Stealing is a declaration that God has not sufficiently provided the necessities of life, so now the person thinks he or she must take other people’s possessions in order to provide for himself or herself. Lust happens when a person starts to seek his own “sovereign” pleasure and satisfaction. And the list could go on.

Sin happens only when there is a distortion of God and a distortion of people.

¹⁷Hamilton notes, “Whenever autonomy displaces submission and obedience in a person, that finite individual attempts to rise above the limitations imposed on him by his creator.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 190.

¹⁸Christopher Wright comments, “Therein lies the root of all other forms of idolatry: we deify our own capacities, and thereby make gods of ourselves and our choices and all their implications.” Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 164.

Ask yourself: “How have I recently bought the lie that God is something he is not and that I could become something more than I was made to be? How is Satan distorting my view of God and myself?” Temptation and sin *always* seeks God’s demotion and the self’s promotion. This is why it is so important to remember the truth about God—as holy, just, omnipotent, omniscient, and sovereign (to name just a few of his attributes)—as well as the truth about ourselves—namely, that we are creatures made by God and were created to live under his sovereign rule. When the truth about God and about self become distorted, sin is born. And as the end of Genesis 3 demonstrates, when sin is fully grown it brings forth death (see James 1:15).

The Fall

The actual “fall” of mankind is described with surprising brevity in verse 6: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

Notice that the desires of the fruit are listed according to attraction. The fruit was (1) good for food, (2) it was a desire to the eyes, and (3) it was desirable to make one wise. As for the first two attractions, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was no different from any other tree. All the other trees of the garden were “pleasant to the sight and good for food” (2:9). The fruit of the forbidden tree offered nothing more than any other tree of the garden except for one attractive possibility: the tree could make one wise like God. Ultimately, the tree was attractive and desirable to Eve because it offered independence from God. In her eyes, no longer would she need to rely on God’s wisdom, for in eating the fruit she would have wisdom of her own.

Adam’s wife saw, she desired, she took, she ate, and then she gave the forbidden fruit to Adam who was with her, watching passively. Adam, instead of rescuing his wife from rebellion, followed her example and ate. The woman did not even

need to convince her husband. He willingly took the fruit from her hand, ate it and followed his wife into rebellion against their Creator.¹⁹ One bite of a forbidden fruit created a cosmic chasm between God and man.

“Now hold on,” someone might say. “How could eating *a fruit* so effectively destroy man’s relationship with God? The consequence seems a bit disproportionate to the action, does it not?” Remember the motive that had driven Adam and Eve to eat the fruit. It was not curiosity or an innocent spirit of inquiry that drove them to eat it. Their motive was nothing short of self-deification—they wanted to become gods. Thus their sin was not *merely* eating a piece of fruit. The very moment their hands took the fruit and their lips tasted its sweet juice, the man and woman declared their independence from God.²⁰ In their action, it was as if they said, “We are going to call our own shots. We are working for our own kingdom and our own glory now.” Thus, their eating of the forbidden fruit was high treason against the sovereign Kingship of the Creator. It was no insignificant sin. Believing the serpent’s lies about God’s hidden motives and about man’s potential godhood, Adam and his bride laid hold of self-made autonomy.

The Problem and the Failed Solution

Adam and Eve’s pursuit of autonomy led to a tragic realization. Verse 7 tells us, “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” This was not quite the result they had hoped for, of course. Sin never delivers what it promises. Rather than becoming wiser and godlike, man and woman became cognizant of their nakedness. In Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve were “both naked and were not ashamed.” So, what was the difference between humanity’s nakedness in Genesis 2 and their nakedness in Genesis 3? It was simply this, nakedness in Genesis 2 was not accompanied

¹⁹Hamilton observes, “The man neither approves nor rebukes. Hers is a sin of initiative. His is a sin of acquiescence.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 190.

²⁰Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 9.

by sinful shame. However, once the man and woman had eaten the forbidden fruit, shame entered. Their nakedness was different now.²¹ Whereas it had once been a symbol of bliss, freedom, and paradise, nakedness was now a symbol of the shameful exposure that comes from sin. Adam and his wife were exposed and vulnerable. Rather than receiving divine wisdom, they received only shame.

Their shamefully naked exposure was a problem that needed a resolution. And just how did these first humans seek a solution to their problem? The end of verse 7 answers, “And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” Rather than confess their sin and plead to their Creator for forgiveness, they continued in their autonomy. In making a covering for themselves, Adam and his wife were attempting self-atonement or self-justification. The covering, however, was entirely insufficient. This goes to show that humans cannot make atonement nor justification for their own sin. We cannot cover the consequences of our own fall. Self-sown fig leaves can never adequately cover mankind’s sinful nakedness. Some other covering is needed. Someone else must make a more permanent atonement on our behalf. Genesis 3:1-7, therefore, leaves its readers longing for God to somehow intervene by covering mankind’s shame. How will God solve the problem of man’s sin? How will God cover man’s shameful nakedness? How will God restore fallen humanity?

Readers of Genesis are left longing for a Savior—someone who will cover the consequences of sin. Sin was and is no light rebellion. Shameful nakedness was and is no light consequence. For that reason, men and women need a Redeemer who will right our wrong and will cover us with the grace of God.

²¹Even the Hebrew words עָרוֹם (Gen 2:25) and עֵירֹם (Gen 3:7) mark a difference in Adam and Eve’s post-fall nakedness. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were *‘arom* (naked and unashamed) and after the Fall they were *‘eyrom* (naked and ashamed). Waltke and Fredricks comment, “In the Bible, *‘arûm* usually describes someone stripped of protective clothing and ‘naked’ in the sense of being defenseless, weak, or humiliated (Deut. 28:48; Job 1:21; Isa. 58:7).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 92.

Conclusion

It is ironic that the man and woman's fall came as a result of their own self-promotion.²² 'Adam listened to the serpent's alluring claim that they could rise to the place of God, and having believed the lie, they gave place to temptation, and ate the forbidden fruit in an act of defiance. They trusted to have equaled the Most High, but instead found themselves shamefully exposed and fearful of the holiness of God. They raised themselves up with ambition aim "against the throne and monarchy of God...with vain attempt." Their rebellion did nothing but result in their own hurt. God's sovereignty was never in danger. His throne was never up for grabs. Satan's great lie was to convince the first man and woman that God was really less than what he is and man can become more than what God intended him to be. Such is the tragedy of paradise lost. And it is a tragedy all people have suffered by nature of their sin: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). However, though the first half of Genesis 3 tells us of the tragedy of sin, the last half of the chapter will give us hope in a serpent-crushing Savior.

²²Graeme Goldsworthy rightly says, "The fall was a giant leap upward that went horribly wrong because it simply could not succeed. Dissatisfied with their humanness, the couple reached for godhood. In lusting after a throne that was not theirs they lost the privileges they already had. They degraded themselves by trying to become what they could never be." Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 105.

CHAPTER 6
EXILED FROM EDEN
(GENESIS 3:8-24)

The concept of *corruptio optimi pessima*—the corruption of the best is the worst—is never more clearly demonstrated than in the Garden of Eden.¹ Adam and his wife were made to be the pinnacle of God’s creation and were given dominion over the beasts of the earth. Tragically, those made in God’s image submitted themselves under the sinful temptation of the Serpent. The dominion-keepers were dominated and subdued by the very creature they were commissioned to subdue. This was a drastic contradiction to God’s creative intentions.

Moreover, by submitting themselves to the defiant serpent, humanity joined themselves with the serpent’s defiance of God. Adam and his wife became like the serpent (in contrast to being in God’s likeness). Instead of imaging their Creator’s perfect and holy reign, humanity imaged the serpent’s treacherous rebellion. This shows that men and women come to resemble whatever thing or person they revere. G.K. Beale rightly says, “Whatever people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration.”² As long as Adam and his bride revered God, they reflected his holy and perfect nature. However, the moment they listened to the serpent and yielded to his lies, they became just as rebellious and contrary to God as the devil who was working through the serpent.³

¹Hoekema’s *In the Image of God* describes humanity’s fall as *corruptio optimi pessima*. Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 85.

²G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16; Beale goes on to say, “Adam’s shift from trusting God to trusting the serpent meant that he no longer reflected God’s image but must have begun to mirror the serpent’s image.” Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 133.

³Ralph Venning aptly describes sin as “the Devil’s image.” He writes, “When God made man,

The depth of humanity’s corruption is seen most clearly in the painful consequences that came from their sin. As is seen in the latter half of Genesis 3, mankind’s sin not only disrupted their relationship with God, but it also disrupted the entirety of the creative order. Dempster agrees, “The flagrant rebellion against the divine word by the pinnacle of creation, which has just been invested with the divine rule, is a heinous crime against the cosmos and its Creator.”⁴ Adam’s sin led to corruption *both* vertically—in his relationship with God—and horizontally—in his dominion over the earth. In other words, when Adam fell, all the earth fell with him. Like an infectious plague, the corruption of Adam’s sin spreads to every creature, every corner of creation, even infecting the ground itself. The corruption of the best is the worst, because when the best is corrupted *everything* becomes corrupted.

Sinful Man’s First Encounter with a Holy God

In this last half of Genesis 3, Moses records what happened during sinful man’s first encounter with a holy God. Verse 8 begins, “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” The tense of the verb “walk” (הלך) in Genesis 3:8 implies that this was a habitual practice—as if God’s walk in the garden was a routine occurrence.⁵ His arrival in the garden was not novel, but normal. Taking into consideration the Genesis 2 description of God and man’s relationship before the fall, it is likely that this evening walk would have been daily time

he made him in his own image; so when the Devil made man sin, he thereby made him his own image and likeness. Never was child more like the father than a sinner is like the Devil; sin has the nature, the complexion, the air, the features, the very behavior of the Devil.” Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 33-34.

⁴Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 66.

⁵Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1990), 192.

communion and fellowship between the humans and their Creator. That Adam and his wife hid at the sound of God's arrival indicates a drastic change in their relationship with God. The beautiful sound that once signaled daily communion with God was now a terrifying commotion to fallen man and his bride. It was no longer the sound of immanent communion, but the terrible noise of impending condemnation. That "the man and his wife hid themselves" signifies their guilt.⁶ Instead of making them *like God*, sin made them terrified of God.

This is not too dissimilar from the way disobedient children hide from their father when he comes home. When all is right and the children have behaved, daddy is greeted with shouts of joy and is lavished with hugs and kisses. Conversely, it is very apparent when the children have gotten into trouble that day. Father comes home, opens the door, and there are no joyful shouts that "Daddy's home!" When he asks his wife where the children are, he finds out they are hiding in their bedrooms which implies the guilt of disobedience and the fear of discipline. In the same way, the guilty man and woman were not there to greet their Father because sin caused Adam and his bride to become fearful fugitives. Thus, in their fallen state, the first humans sought to cover themselves with leaves and then they sought to conceal themselves behind trees. Both their self-covering and self-concealment are proof of their newfound depravity.

In approaching Adam and his wife, it is significant that God does not make any direct statement during his inquisition in verses 9 to 13. In his first correspondence with fallen humanity, he asked only questions: (1) Where are you? (2) Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat? (3) What is this that you have done? The justice of God will without a doubt expose man's sinfulness and punish it, but he will do so with a merciful demeanor.⁷ God did not display

⁶Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 92.

⁷Waltke and Fredricks comment, "God models justice. The just King will not pass sentence

the harsh vengeance of an angry god, but instead he modelled the merciful justice of a lovingly inquisitive Father. Even with their self-covering and their self-concealment, the Creator demonstrates remarkable forbearance and love. Adam responded to sin with rashness, while God responded to it with precision. Adam covered, but God uncovered. Adam hid, and God found. And all this, God did with a strange mixture of love and justice—punishing sin and also promising propitiation.

In verse 9, God calls out to the man saying, “Where are you?” Given what is known about God (as the Creator), it is clear that God knew exactly where Adam and his bride hid. God’s question was not asked in ignorance. Instead, it was a gracious approach intended to draw Adam out from behind the trees.⁸ God, in his justice, could have wrested Adam from his hiding place—dragging him out from behind the trees as a vengeful God eager to punish the man. God, however, did not resort to cruelty. Quite the contrary, he graciously preserved his relationality with his covenant people. Even in their sin, God’s questions show that he remained the same loving and tender covenant God he had always been.

His patient questioning worked. Adam came out of his hiding place, with his mouth filled with excuses, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (3:10). This was far from a confession of sin. Adam acknowledged his nakedness and his fear, but he did not confess the sin itself. Notice how Adam carefully avoided saying that his fear and hiding was because of his sin. He claims that the reason for his fearful hiding was “because of” (כִּי) his nakedness.

without careful investigation (cf. 4:9-10; 18:21). Although omniscient, God questions them, inducing them to confess their guilt.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 92. Wenham writes, “These further questions are not those of an ignorant inquirer. Their very formation suggests the all-knowing detective who by his questioning prods the culprit into confessing his guilt.” Gordan J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 77.

⁸Kidner writes, “God’s first word to fallen man has all the marks of grace. It is a question, since to help him he must draw rather than drive him out of hiding.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 74.

Once again, God in his forbearance and wisdom uncovered the truth. His first question drew Adam out of his concealment, and his next question exposed the *real* reason for Adam's nakedness. In verse 11, God asked Adam outright, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Notice that God did not give Adam a chance to respond to the first question. In fact, the first question is followed immediately by a second, proving to the man that God knew exactly what he had done. Adam's knowledge of his nakedness could only be the result of Adam sinfully eating from the forbidden tree.

From concealing himself behind the garden trees, to concealing the reason for his naked state, Adam has yet to confess his sinful rebellion. Even after God exposed the real reason for Adam's nakedness, Adam refused to stop concealing his sin and guilt. This time the sinner tried guilt-evasion. In verse 12 Adam shifted the guilt away from himself to his wife and subsequently to God: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate." Notice how the phrase "I ate" comes at the very last. Instead of hiding behind the garden trees, Adam now hid behind his wife. He named the woman first, highlighting her guilt. He named God next, implying indirect guilt. According to Adam, the woman bears the guilt for *giving* him the fruit, and God bears the blame for *giving* him the woman.⁹ Thus, Adam conceals his own guilt by shifting the blame to both his wife and his God because of their "giving" (נתן). In this way, Adam presented himself as a victim, and not as the culprit.

Turning to the woman, God asked, "What is this that you have done?" The woman followed her husband's lead in shifting guilt and answered, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Adam shifted the blame to the woman, and the woman now shifted the blame to the serpent. Her testimony was similar to Adam's as she viewed

⁹Waltke and Fredricks argue, "The couple shows their allegiance to Satan by distorting the truth and accusing one another and ultimately God. They are preoccupied with 'I.'" Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 93.

herself as a victim of the serpent's deception. In her mind, she ate the forbidden fruit through no fault of her own.

From first to last, Adam and his bride set out to conceal their sin. This goes to show that confession does not come naturally to sinful humans. In fact, sinful humanity does all it can to keep from confessing sin. Adam and his wife set the pace for future humanity. From here, the story of *'adam* is filled with men and women who cover, conceal, and blame, but do not confess. In the future, Cain will attempt to cover up his brother's murder; Achan will cover up forbidden treasure; David will seek to conceal an illicit affair; and so on. Humanity's natural response to sin is to hide their guilt. This is an important paradigm to recognize, because whenever a man or woman in Scripture *confesses* their guilt something unique and "unnatural" is happening. If covering, concealing, and blame-shifting are all natural responses that result from rebellion, then confession is something completely unnatural to man. Confession and repentance, therefore, come from God.

In summarizing sinful man's first encounter with a holy God, Genesis shows that God was the same gracious Yahweh of Genesis 2—gently drawing his people out of their hiding, but yet still just in confronting their sin and uncovering the true reason for their fearful hiding. However, whereas God had not changed, the man and the woman had. They who were once naked and unashamed were now shamefully exposed before their Creator.¹⁰ Moreover, their sin resulted in reality-changing consequences—completely altering the world of paradise to become a world filled with curses. The death God had forewarned in Genesis 2:17 would surely come.

The Consequences of Sin

The consequences of Genesis 3:14-19 demonstrate the severity of God's

¹⁰Be sure to note the change in their "nakedness." In Gen 2:25 *'adam* is עָרֹם while in Genesis 3:10 *'adam* is עֵרֹם. The latter implies shame.

judgment against sin. To God, sin is no light matter and warrants strict judgment. Sadly, God's judgment was not limited to 'adam but also included the cursing of the 'adama ("cursed is the ground because of you"). Both the dominion-maker and the dominion itself were cast into condemnation. With each pronouncement of judgment, however, there was a hint of grace. Thus, God's redemptive plan includes justice mingled with mercy.

Before considering the consequences of sin, it is important to make a few general observations. First, in his pronouncement of judgment, God addressed the guilty parties in order of their *involvement*. The serpent initiated the deception, the woman ate first, and then Adam—the keeper of the garden—ate last. Accordingly, God spoke first to the serpent, then to the woman, and finally to the man. Second, God addressed the guilty parties in order of their *responsibility*. The serpent tempted the couple, but by no means did the serpent force them into sin. His was not the power of coercion, but rather the power of persuasion. Adam's wife was the first to eat the fruit, however, it was never intended for her to be the primary representative for the couple. She was intended to be the "helper" but not the "keeper." The "keeper" himself—Adam—was commissioned to guard the holy sanctuary of God. It was to him that God had spoken his command, and it was to him that God warned of the consequence, "You will surely die." Therefore, the order of judgment is issued first to the tempter, then to the helper, and finally to the "keeper" of the garden.

To the Serpent

To the serpent, God pronounced a two-fold judgment. In the first part of the pronouncement, God said, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." The point of this judgment was not that the snake would no longer have legs. Instead, by saying to the serpent "on your belly you shall go" and "dust

you shall eat,” God was announcing that this satanic serpent would live in humiliation and shame.¹¹ The beast that pridefully raised itself above *'adam* would now exist on its belly and in the dust. The serpent who made himself high—presumptuously claiming to know the “true motives” of God—was forevermore brought low.

God’s pronouncement dealt not only with the serpent’s humiliation, but it also dealt with its future destruction. In verse 15 God announced, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” “Offspring” is ambiguous as it could mean a singular offspring or the collective offspring as a group.¹² It seems best to interpret “offspring” as implying both. This why the judgment should be read and interpreted at two levels.

At one level, God was foretelling the future conflict between God’s people and those who, like the serpent, rebel against God. This is seen in the collective plurality of “your offspring and her offspring.” And as the greater storyline of Scripture shows, this enmity would manifest itself through the mocking, persecution, oppressions, and attempted murder of God’s people. Some specific examples include but are not limited to Cain’s murder of Abel, Ishmael’s mocking of Isaac, Goliath’s taunting of David, and even the Pharisees’ opposition against Christ (interestingly, the Pharisees were referred to by John the Baptist as γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν—literally, “offspring of poisonous snakes”).¹³

At a second level, God was speaking of the destruction of Satan. The serpent was not working out its own agenda. It was under the control of Satan. In Revelation

¹¹Waltke and Fredricks note, “This symbolizes abject humiliation (Ps. 44:25; 72:9) and total defeat (Isa. 25:12; Mic. 7:17) in the Bible.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 93. Hamilton notes, “The writer clearly intends these two facts to be expressions of humiliation and subjugation (as in Ps. 72:9; Isa. 49:23; Mic. 7:17).” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 197.

¹²Waltke and Fredricks write, “Like the English word, *zera* ‘ can refer to an immediate descendant (Gen. 4:25; 15:3), a distant offspring, or a large group of descendants. Here and throughout Scripture, all three senses are developed and merged.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 93.

¹³Dempster asserts, “This serpentine figure will raise its head in the Text in a variety of ways, and it represents an evil power opposing the purposes of God (see e.g. Is. 27:1; Amos 9:3; Job 26:13).” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 67.

12:9, Satan is called out as “that ancient serpent” or “that original serpent” (ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος). Ultimately, God’s pronouncement guarantees the overthrow of Satan’s power through an offspring of the woman. Notice the singular “he” and the singular “your.” As Waltke says, “God announces a battle wo champions, and there will be a seed that conquers Satan.”¹⁴ Judgment of the serpent and the salvation of mankind would come through a future showdown, in which the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent’s head.¹⁵ “Bruising the head” means certain death for the serpent. His power and the effects of his temptation would be definitively overcome.¹⁶

This victory over the serpent, however, will come at a cost. God foretells, “And you shall bruise his heel.” The bruising of the serpentine head would happen with the bruising of the offspring’s heel. The serpent’s destruction would come through the son’s death. This is the seedling of *substitutionary atonement* in which a willing Savior would lay down his life on behalf of other. He would die so that the rest of ‘adam might live.

This helps to explain why Genesis 3:15 has so often called the *protevangelium* (or the “first proclamation of good news”). It is this particular promise of a snake-crushing offspring that is threaded throughout the entire Biblical story. And the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is found at the cross. The author of Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ when he writes, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of

¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 94.

¹⁵James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010) 76.

¹⁶Dempster comments, “The triumph of the woman’s seed would suggest a return to the Edenic state, before the serpent had wrought its damage, and wresting of the dominion of the world from the serpent.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 68.

death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Accordingly, the New Testament writers understood the death of Christ as the means through which the enemy’s power was destroyed. Through death, he destroyed the one who had the power death. Through the bruising of his heel, he bruised the head of the serpentine tempter.

To the Woman

Now on to the second guilty culprit. God addressed the woman: “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (3:16). Again, this is a two-fold judgment. First, the woman’s pain in pregnancy would increase greatly. Whereas childbirth was once filled only with joy and gladness, now the joy would come through great suffering. This being so, the pain of childbirth is an illustration of the pain that sin has caused. The intense pain a woman goes through in bringing a life into this world is only a small picture of the pain that sin has brought to all people. With every painful contraction, the world is reminded that humanity continues in the pain of sin. This is not all bad news, however. The judgment is wrapped in mercy. On the one hand, the woman’s pain in her labor would multiply; but yet, on the other hand, the woman would still have children. Adam and his wife would not be the last of humanity. In his punishment, God revealed that humanity would indeed continue. And taking into consideration what God has already promised—that one of Eve’s children would crush the power of the serpent—the grace of God shines through even in judgment.

The second part of the judgment addresses the woman’s relationship with the man. God said to the woman, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” This does not mean, as some have proposed, that the woman would have affectionate feelings for her husband, but her husband would respond by domineering over her. This sentiment misses what is meant by the word “desire.” The same Hebrew word is seen again in Genesis 4:6. Right after God rejected Cain’s offering, God said to

him, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its *desire* is for you, but you must rule over it.” The word *desire* (תְּשׁוּקָה), as it is used here, refers to *craving* or *controlling*. In other words, Cain’s sin was craving (תְּשׁוּקָה) him, and therefore he must rule (מָשַׁל) over it. God’s words to Cain imply conflict. If “desire” and “rule” are used in the same way in Genesis 3:16, then conflict is in mind. The woman would *crave* her husband—or more specifically, she would crave control over her husband, and yet he would rule over her.¹⁷ This was the entrance of marital conflict, relational tension, and the war between the genders.¹⁸ Little did the woman know that when she ate the forbidden fruit, she ate to the ruin of her perfect marriage. Rather than marital bliss, Adam and his wife would experience marital strife. Perfect marriage between a man and a woman shattered during the Fall.

To the Man

Finally, God speaks to Adam, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” God references his command from Genesis 2:16-17 showing that his word and warning was coming true. Adam is indicted for disobedience. It was to Adam that God spoke his command, and now Adam must answer for what he has done.

When *'adam* fell, the *'adamah* fell with him. God says, “Cursed is the ground

¹⁷Hamilton writes, “The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

¹⁸Waltke and Fredricks observe, “Their alienation from one another is profoundly illustrated by God’s description of the power struggles, rather than love and cherishing that is to come.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 94.

because of you.” Because the head of creation fell, God subjected creation to futility (cf. Romans 8:20). Moreover, the ground, of which he was commissioned to work, would produce thorns and weeds making work toilsome. It would rebel against him as he rebelled against God.¹⁹ Hard work would hurt, but Adam would have to work hard to eat. Just as the woman’s childbearing pain (עֲצֻבוֹן) would increase, so now also man’s work would include pain (עֲצֻבוֹן). However, even here, there is grace. The man would still eat. God would still provide food. Working the ground would be done with pain, but God would still provide sustenance, giving the man and woman what they needed to live.

After cursing the ground and cursing man’s work, God pronounced death: “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (3:19). The *certain* death God foretold would “surely” come. God would have justice, and he would be true to his word. If God did not consign man to death, then God would have failed to carry out his own word, showing him to be a God whose promises and warnings mean nothing. As it is, what God says will happen always happens. His word does not change. In this way, sin entered into the world through one man’s sin, and death through sin (Rom. 5:12).

A Glimpse of Hope

Thus far, with every pronouncement of judgment, God has also spoken an implicit word of grace. The serpent had deceived the first humans into rebellion. Grace was seen as God promised his defeat through the serpent-crushing offspring of the woman. The woman, who had initiated the rebellion, would have pain in childbirth, but yet God’s grace is implicitly seen in the fact that humanity would survive. The man, who listened to the voice of his wife, became the reason the ground would be cursed. Yet God’s grace is seen in that he would continue to provide food.

It seems that Adam grasped the significance of God’s implicit grace, for he

¹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 95; Stephen Dempster observes, “Adam’s destiny is now to be placed under the foot of Adamah rather than *vice versa*.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 68.

called his wife “Eve,” which means “the mother of all the living” (3:20). It is interesting that though Adam had just received the pronouncement of “death,” he—in faith—named his wife the “mother of the *living*.”²⁰ Together with God’s promise of a serpent-crushing offspring along with the implicit graces spoken to he and his bride, Adam concluded that life would continue in spite of death.²¹

The grace that was implicit in God’s pronouncements of judgments became explicit in God’s clothing of Adam and Eve. Previously, after Adam and Eve discovered they were shamefully exposed, they attempted to cover themselves with fig leaves. However, their self-made covering was insufficient to cover their nakedness. Therefore, God took it upon himself to make garments of skin for them. While *’adam* was incapable of covering the consequences of his own sin, God proved his gracious heart to provide a covering for naked and exposed *’adam*.²² Moreover, the covering he provided was given through the sacrifice of an innocent victim. A “garment of skin” implies the death of an animal. On one level, this act of covering may be a foreshadowing of the sin sacrifices to come. Ultimately, however, the covering points to the work of Christ, who exchanges his people’s filthy rags for robes of righteousness.²³

God, at his heart, is a God who desires to cover over the consequences of sin. With this in mind, Genesis 3 prepares its readers for the complete covering God would give in the future. In Genesis, God covers nakedness. Later, God will cover sin itself.

²⁰Waltke and Fredricks note, “Adam’s naming of Eve is the beginning of hope. Adam shows his restoration to God by believing the promise that the faithful woman will bear offspring that will defeat Satan.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 95; see also Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 207.

²¹Dempster writes, “In the context it shows Adam reclaiming dominion in faith through *naming* his wife *the mother*, which cannot help but allude to the more specific role she will have as the one who will provide a seed who will strike the serpent.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 68-69; see also Kidner, *Genesis*, 76-7.

²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 95.

²³Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 10.

Zechariah 3 anticipates this as God silences an accusing Satan and proclaims over the sinful Joshua, “Remove the filthy garments from him...*Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you*, and I will clothe you with pure vestments” (Zechariah 3:4, emphasis added). The exchanging of fig leaves for God-made garments in Genesis 3 hints at the *spiritual* change of garments spoken of in Zechariah 3.²⁴ One day, God would remove his people’s “filthy garments” by forgiving their sin and would “clothe [them] with pure vestments.” Thus, even in the Fall of humanity, God’s grace is made evident.

The Edenic Exile

The aftermath of sin reaches a climax in the final verses of chapter 3. “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ therefore *the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden* to work the ground from which he was taken. *He drove out the man*, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” (3:22-24).

The worst of sin’s repercussions is that it separates man from his God. Contemplating on this sin-caused separation, the puritan pastor Ralph Venning laments, “This will be the misery of miseries for the damned, that they must depart from God, in whose presence only there is joy and pleasure for evermore. This will prick and wound sinners to the heart that they must see God’s face no more.”²⁵ The *good* that was seen in God’s original creation was all but forgotten. Light turned to darkness, warmth turned to cold, intimacy with God turned to utter isolation. Sin brought about a desperate chasm between *’adam* and the Creator—the worst of the worse consequences of sin.

²⁴This is contra Wenham’s thoughts that this is “not so much an act of grace.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 85.

²⁵Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, 77.

This expulsion from the garden is best seen as a type of exile—and the prototype of all future exiles, including Israel’s exile from the Promised Land.²⁶ Notice the language used in verse 23. God “sent him out” (*shalach*). The same word is used later in 1 Kings 9:6-7 as God warned that he would “cast out” (*shalach*) idolatrous Israel from his sight. Similarly, the phrase “he drove out (*gāraš*) the man” refers to exile as a consequence of sin. The same word is used in speaking of Cain’s exile after his murder of Abel (Gen. 4:14), God’s promise to drive out the sinful Canaanites (Exod. 34:11), and of rebellious Israel (Hosea 9:15). All this to show that the ultimate consequence of sin is expulsion *out of* and *away from* the presence of God.

Remembering that Eden was a prototypical temple, it is important to see that man’s expulsion from the garden dramatically changed the nature of his work. Recall Genesis 2:15 which states that God place man in Eden to “work (עבד) it and keep (שמר) it.” Now, *adam*’s work is only that of עבד. He has been deprived of the task of שמר. In fact, God gives the task of שמר to the cherubim, showing that man’s *priestly* role has partially been taken away.²⁷ Humanity was made to mediate God’s presence to the world by working and keeping the garden, but sin has driven them outside of the garden to become only workers and not keepers. Man’s exile from the Edenic temple damage his purpose, his pleasure, and his personal relationship with God.

Conclusion

Genesis 3 shows that when the *best* of creation falls the *worst* of repercussions happen—namely the world becomes cursed and humanity is exiled from the presence of God. It also shows that God is a God of justice and he keeps his word concerning sin. He

²⁶Oren Martin calls the expulsion from Eden the “archetype of all subsequent exile.” Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 97.

²⁷G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 70.

warned that rebellion would bring certain death, and Genesis 3 shows that his word was true. And yet, even in his justice, Yahweh proves himself to be a God of mercy. His justice was mingled with mercy as he simultaneously judged *'adam's* sin while promising restoration in the coming “offspring of woman.” In this way, Genesis 3 prepares its readers for the Savior who would restore humanity by destroying Satan’s work.

CHAPTER 7
SIN'S INCREASE AND THE FALLEN HOUSE OF
HUMANITY
(GENESIS 4 AND 5)

A leak in the roof can eventually ruin a house. First, comes a small hole. Then comes the rain. Drip, drip, drip. The rain trickles into the attic, and within a few hours the wood becomes soft and turns yellow. Days later more rain showers come and after just a few weeks the wood turns gray and begins to warp, the nails begin to rust, and a line of mildew begins to form along the edges of the beams. The drip, drip, drip continues and the wood becomes black and decayed. A fluffy white mold begins to spread. The beams sag, the drywall crumbles, and the hole in the roof gets bigger. Drip, drip, drip. The leak spreads to the rest of the rafters, the ceiling joists, and even the studs in the walls. Mildew, wood rot, and mold soon overtake the house. Drip, drip, drip. Chunks of the ceiling eventually collapse, the walls lose their structural integrity, and the house becomes exposed, dilapidated, and condemnable.

Such is the nature of sin in the house of humanity. Adam's sin punched a hole in the roof of humanity's house, and as sin and depravity continued to trickle in, mankind became increasingly corrupt. After Adam and his bride were expelled from the garden, the cycle of sin continued on in the lives of his sons. Adam's one act of rebellion made way for Cain's fratricide, which led to Lamech's braggadocious homicide, which added to the violence that filled the whole earth. The nature of sin is progressive; it does not stay stagnant. It grows worse and worse and worse. To this point, Romans 5 tells us that "sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin and *so death spread to all men because all sinned*" (verse 12).

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden for their sin, while

in Genesis 4, Adam’s sin is carried on through his progeny. As fallen ’*adam* spread on the earth, so do rebellion, violence, and corruption. Thus, Genesis 3 tells of sin’s *initiation* and Genesis 4 tells of sin’s *continuation*. Offense builds upon offense, rebellion upon rebellion, transgression upon transgression, and sin’s leaky drip into the house of humanity leads to its increasing corruption. Humanity has fallen into a downward spiral in which Adam’s sin is repeated and escalated in the lives of his children.

A Pattern of Reversal

So strong was Eve’s faith in the promise of a serpent-crushing offspring that she names her firstborn son “Cain,” which sounds like the Hebrew קַיִן, “gotten.”¹ She explains, “I have *gotten* a man with the help of the LORD” (v. 1). It seems that Eve’s hope was that Cain would go on to be the one who would deliver the world from the curses brought about by sin.² Surely, this firstborn son was the chosen one given by God to victoriously crush the serpent. As it is, God’s plan was not to redeem the world through Cain. This feeds into the larger story of Scripture in which “apparent” Messiahs become failed redeemers. As Genesis 4 will show Cain will not only fail in redeeming humanity, he himself will add to its moral corruption.³

Eve soon gave birth to another son and named him Abel. The name is a bit of a dark forecast as Abel’s name means “vapor” (אֲבֵל).⁴ The names also introduce a pattern that is seen throughout the rest of Scriptures—that is, the pattern in which the older,

¹Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 96.

²Hamilton comments, “In the birth of Cain Eve thought, mistakenly, that the divinely promised seed of 3:15 had now come in Cain. The child, whose birth is so welcomed, could be looked on as God himself.” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 221.

³This same failure is seen later in Genesis as Noah—God’s supposed “relief-bringer” —ends up shamefully naked (עָרֹם) just as post-Fall Adam was shamefully naked (עָרֹם).

⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 97.

seemingly *superior* son is passed over for the younger, *inferior*, son.⁵ This is God's sovereign *reversal* as he exalts the inferior and humbles the superior. This pattern is seen in Genesis 4 as the younger son's sacrifice is accepted and the older son's sacrifice is rejected. The inferior "Vapor" pleases God, while the superior "Gotten One" is turned away. Verses 3-5a say, "In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel's offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard."

Genesis 4 gives no indication why one sacrifice was accepted and the other rejected, and it is misguided to say that the acceptance of one and rejection of the other had anything to do with the *elements* that were sacrificed. In other words, it is errant to think that Abel's offering was accepted because he offered his flock's firstborn while Cain brought only his fruits.⁶ The difference between the sacrifices is not explicitly identified until Hebrews 11:4, which says, "*By faith* Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts." The difference, then, was a matter of faith. *By faith* Abel was accepted and *by a lack of faith* Cain was rejected.⁷ It is only by faith that any man can please God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).⁸

⁵Ishmael is passed over for Isaac, Esau for Jacob, Judah for Reuben, the sons of Jesse for David, etc. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 70.

⁶Hamilton rightly remarks, "There seems to be no obvious distinction between the two offerings. A fruit or vegetable offering is neither superior or inferior to an animal offering." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 223. This is contra Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 104.

⁷Thomas Schreiner writes, "Hebrews informs us that Cain did not bring his offering in faith. Hence, his offering was not motivated by trust in God." Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 11.

⁸Schreiner comments, "We see from the beginning that mechanical obedience is not pleasing to the Lord, that he demands obedience that flows from a heart of faith (see Rom. 1:5; 16:26)." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 11.

The seemingly inferior Abel becomes aligned with the righteous by faith, while Cain shows himself to be faithlessly unrighteous—as his actions will soon prove.

A Failed Redeemer

Yahweh’s acceptance of his brother’s sacrifice angered Cain. Literally, he *burned* (תָּרַה) in anger and became depressed.⁹ Instead of evaluating the state of his heart and his faith, his eyes were cast sideways in jealousy toward his brother. It was Cain’s faithlessness that the Lord addressed when he asked, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you [or for you], but you must rule over it.” Sin, here, is described as something that “longed for” or “craved after” Cain. It is presented as a predator waiting to pounce and devour the one who gives it a place.¹⁰ God warns, “But you must rule over it.” It is interesting that the word for “rule” is מָשַׁל, which means “to have dominion” or “reign over.” It is as if Yahweh petitions Cain to stand as the king his father failed to be by *ruling over* his sin—conquering it. The first *’adam* failed to carry out his task of ruling the earth¹¹ because of sin, and now Cain will show humanity’s inability to have dominion over their own sinful nature. God’s warning to Cain recalls God’s warning to Adam that consequence of sin is death (2:17). Though God does not use the explicit word “death,” Yahweh does warn Cain that his sin will lead to him being devoured. As it is, Cain did not have dominion over his sin, but instead his sin had dominion over him. The tragedy of Cain’s story is that he gives in to the attractive lures of sin, and in the end was consumed by it just like his father.

⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 224.

¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks suggest, “The depiction of sin as a demon or a vicious animal lying in wait to devour is possibly an allusion to the serpent waiting to strike the heel (3:15; 1 Peter 5:8).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 98.

¹¹Granted a different word is used for “dominion” in Gen 1:28.

Cain, rejecting God's word, was premeditative in his murderous intentions as he tricked Abel to come to the field with him. Verse 8 tells of the tragedy, "Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him." Cain's sin is spoken of with incredible brevity. Like Adam and Eve's sin in Genesis 3, only one verse is dedicated to describe the sinful act. After all the build-up and the forewarning, man's sin occurs in a momentary flash. Cain killed his brother, Abel, as *easily* as Eve took the fruit and ate it. Sin is not overly complex. In fact, it is dangerously simple and terrifyingly easy. In one swift motion, Adam and Eve's sin brought death and Cain's sin swallowed him up. Eve's hope that Cain would be the one to end humanity's subjugation to sin and Satan came crashing down. Cain, far from being the saving son of the woman, proved himself to be the cursed seed of the serpent.¹² Despite Eve's initial hope, Cain is a *failed* redeemer.

Driven Further East of Eden

The similarities between Adam and Cain's sin are seen most clearly in the aftermath of Abel's murder. God's approach, the sinner's guilt-evasion, the subsequent exile, and the merciful covering in Genesis 4 all echo the Fall in Genesis 3.

The first parallel is God's initial approach of the guilty culprit. In Genesis 3, the all-knowing Creator did not wrench Adam from his hiding place. Instead, he approached Adam with the gentle question, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). God uses the same approach with Cain. Instead of aggressively confronting Cain's sin with force, God employs the same line of gentle inquisition: "Where is Abel your brother?" (4:9). This might be an indicator that God views Cain in the same way he viewed the fearfully hidden Adam.¹³ Using the same tender inquisition, God will uncover the sin Cain was

¹²Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 11; also, T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 107-8.

¹³Hamilton observes, "God's question 'where is your brother?' (4:9) balances his earlier

hiding.

A second echo is seen in Cain's response to God's question. God mercifully employed the same gentle inquisition with Cain as he did Adam, but Cain sinfully employed the same guilt-evading tactics his father did in the garden. To God's question, Cain answered, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (v. 9). It is ironic that Cain uses the word "keeper." Just as Adam failed to "keep" (שמר) the garden, so now Cain failed to "keep" (שמר) his brother. Moreover, his answer denies culpability.¹⁴ Just as Adam denied moral responsibility for his sin, Cain also denied responsibility for his.¹⁵

God asked a second question, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." "What have you done?" recalls the question God asked Cain's mother (3:13).¹⁶ When God says, "Your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" he revealed that he knew what Cain had done. Just as Adam's guilt evasion failed to conceal his sin, so also Cain's evasion failed to hide his brother's blood.

The third echo is seen in God's judgment of Cain in verses 11-12: "And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth." The language of "curse" casts the mind back to Genesis 3. To the serpent, God said, "You are cursed" (אָרֹר אֶתְּהָ). Not coincidentally, God speaks to Cain with the same vernacular, "You are cursed (אָרֹר אֶתְּהָ)

question, 'where are you?' (3:9)." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 227.

¹⁴Hamilton argues, "He is a liar, evasive and indifferent when questioned by Yahweh." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 231.

¹⁵Waltke and Fredricks rightly observe, "Having dispatched his brother, he now denies any responsibility. His play at innocence reprises his father's attempt at concealment." Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 98.

¹⁶Compare Gen 3:13 (מִהֶנָּה נִזְאֶת עֲשִׂית) with Gen 4:10 (מִהֶנָּה עֲשִׂית).

from the ground.” Cain is judged—cursed—as if *he* were the serpent.¹⁷ This shows the downward spiral of humanity’s depravity. Adam and Eve were not directly *cursed*, but now their son stands under the *curse* of the serpent.

In addition to becoming cursed, Cain must also endure exile from the presence of God. What happened to his parents would now happen to him. Cain lamented, “Behold, *you have driven me* (גרש) today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden” (4:14). The phrase “you have driven me away” was used in Genesis 3:24, when Yahweh drove out Adam from the Garden sanctuary.¹⁸ This shows, again, that God’s typical response to man’s sin is exile. Adam’s sin resulted in expulsion to the east of Eden, and now Cain will be driven even *further* east of Eden. The chasm between *’adam* and his Creator seems to be an ever-worsening separation as the God of justice exacts judgment on sinners through the punishment of exile.

One final echo of Adam’s Fall is the mercy God shows to Cain. Cain expressed his deep fear, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wander on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” In a sense, Cain is an exposed, uncovered fugitive. What happens next, however, shows that God’s mercy can be extended *even* to Cain.¹⁹ Yahweh answers his fear, “If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” He then “put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.” Cain the exposed and uncovered criminal receives a form of covering—a distinctive mark that will protect him from the vengeance of men. This is not

¹⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 98.

¹⁸Goldsworthy writes, “The first murderer receives a judgment that is similar to the judgment on Adam (Gen. 4:11-12). The earth will resist him and he is banished from his familiar territory.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 108.

¹⁹Again, Goldsworthy writes, “There is also mercy, for God places a mark on him to protect him from the vengeance of men (Gen. 4:15) even though he has forfeited all claim to such protection.” Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 108.

too different from what was seen in the garden as God covered Adam and Eve's nakedness with garments of skin.²⁰ Once again, God shows his justice to be mingled with mercy.²¹ Once again, God's grace precedes the justice of exile.

Verse 16 shows Cain's punishment enacted as he is sent away from "the presence of the LORD" to a place that is, again, "east of Eden." Here again, the wage of sin is exile away from God's presence.

Depravity Deepens

God had pronounced judgement on Cain saying that he would be a "wanderer" on the earth. Literally, Cain was to be reduced to a vagabond (נדד). In light of this punishment, it is interesting that Cain goes on to build a "city," which he names after his son Enoch. How is it that a man doomed to restless wandering was able to build a city? In the rest of Genesis, cities are places of great wickedness—cultural centers of rebellion against God. Some examples are Babel in Genesis 11, Sodom in Genesis 19, Shechem in Genesis 34.²² In each of these cases, the people of the city rebel against God in some fashion and are consequently destroyed for their wickedness. It is possible that Cain's city-building is a rejection of God's judgment.²³ If that is true, then this son of Adam shows himself to be so rotten to the core that not even judgment can dissuade him from sinning.

Verses 18-22 provide a short genealogy of Cain's descendants, many of whom became cultural developers—tent-dwellers, livestock owners, musicians, bronze smiths,

²⁰Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 12.

²¹Hamilton aptly says, "Cain is banned and blessed. He leaves God's presence but not God's protection." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 235.

²²Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 108.

²³Dempster posits, "Instead of wandering, the new nomad defiantly builds a city. It is really an anti-city, since his character is stained with blood and discord." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 70.

iron workers, etc.²⁴ One particularly significant descendant was a man named Lamech. Lamech's boast in verses 23-24 provides an insightful metric for tracking the downward depravity of humankind. With proud poetry he sings,

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
If Cain's revenge is sevenfold,
then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.

Two observations can be made. First, Lamech speaks to his *two* wives. He is the first recorded man in history to not have a monogamous marriage. As far as the Biblical record shows Lamech is the first man to engage in polygamy. It should be noted that in the Bible, sin's increase is often signified by the deterioration of human sexuality and marriage. This is seen later with the people of Sodom whose sexual immorality led to judgment (Jude 7) and later still with Esau who married multiple Canaanite wives and brought bitterness into the covenant household, leading eventually to his disinheritance (Gen 26:34-35). Lamech's polygamy—and the breakdown of the marital union between a *singular* man and his *singular* wife (see Gen 2:24)—may be an indicator that humanity was undergoing even greater spiritual decay and moral corruption.²⁵

If Lamech's polygamous relationships do not clearly indicate the growing sinfulness of humanity, then his excessive vengefulness leaves no doubt. He bragged, "I have killed a man for *wounding* me, and young man for *striking* me." This was no eye-for-eye justice. Wounding is exchanged for massacre, striking for slaughter. Moreover, Lamech exults in his unjust murder. If Cain's sin warranted a sevenfold revenge, then his sin—being so much worse—warranted seventy-sevenfold revenge. Dempster rightly marks the progression of sin, "The irresponsible 'Am I my brother's keeper?' attempts to

²⁴Dempster calls this the "anti-genealogy." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 70.

²⁵Waltke and Fredicks argue, "The escalation of sin is now extended to the marital relationship. Polygamy is a rejection of God's marital plan (2:24)." Waltke and Fredicks, *Genesis*, 100.

deny murder (Gen. 4:9); ‘I have killed a man for wounding me’ glories in it (Gen. 4:23).”²⁶ Thus, from Adam to Cain to Lamech, the house of humanity became increasingly ruined as decay and corruption spread from generation to generation.

Adam ate the forbidden fruit, Cain killed his brother, Lamech slaughtered a young man, and the violence continued to grow until “the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and *the earth was filled with violence*” (6:11). This was far from God’s intention of the earth being filled with his image. In just a few generations, God’s image-bearers deteriorated to become murderous rebels. Adam’s sin punched a hole in humanity’s roof and the leak of sin spread to decay, mold, and mildew humanity’s soul until the whole earth became dilapidated and condemnable.

This, of course, should confront the false notion of there being “small” sins—as Adam’s eating of a forbidden fruit might seem to be “small.” It is as Ralph Venning says, “A little sin makes way for a greater, as a little boy-thief entering a house makes way for a man-thief to enter. Give the devil and sin an inch, and they will take an ell. Vain babbling increases to more ungodliness. A little leak in a ship may by degrees fill it with water and sink it.”²⁷ This is what happens in Genesis 3 and 4. Adam’s “little” sin made way for “bigger” sins. Eating a forbidden fruit made way to fratricide, and later to an unrestrained slaughter, and still later to a world filled with violence. No sin is small, and every sin leads to incredible consequences. It is like the “plague of plagues”²⁸ that spreads from one generation to the next infecting all humanity.

Another Offspring

Humanity was at an impasse. Cain, the one-time anticipated Savior of

²⁶Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71.

²⁷Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 265.

²⁸*Plague of Plagues* was Ralph Venning’s original title for his exposition on sin.

humanity, was exiled and his brother, Abel, was dead. It would seem that the hope for a serpent-crushing offspring was now extinguished. However, in a gracious turn of events, chapter 4 ends with Adam and Eve having another son. Eve, recognizing God's hand in preserving the promise, called him "Seth" because, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." "Another offspring (אֲחֵרִי)" connects to God's original promise of an offspring who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).²⁹ Eve rightly interprets Seth's birth as God's grace in carrying forward his promise. As is seen throughout the rest of Genesis, God overcomes every obstacle, hindrance, and impossibility in fulfilling his promise. Just as God's promise carries on despite the impossible situation of Cain's exile and Abel's death, God's promise will later overcome Sarai's barrenness, Esau's murderous intentions, Joseph's slavery and imprisonment, and so on. God's promise cannot be halted. The serpent-crusher will come to redeem humanity just as God foretold.

Moreover, the battle between the seeds continues through the lines of Cain and Seth. The difference is apparent. Cain's lineage leads to greater violence, while Seth's lineage leads to greater worship. Cain's descendant, Lamech, boasted in murder, and Seth's descendant, Enosh, lived during a time when people called upon "the name of the LORD." One seed spreads violence, while the other seed spreads reconciliation with God.

In many ways the genealogy in Genesis 5 offsets the genealogy of Cain in Genesis 4.³⁰ However, Seth's genealogy also demonstrates the effectiveness of God's warnings. In Genesis 2, God warned Adam that in eating the fruit he would "surely die

²⁹Dempster writes, "In the context, this reference to the replacement of the seed instantly resonates with Genesis 3:15 and represents an implicit hope that Eve has for this child to relieve the earth from the curse imposed on it." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71.

³⁰Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71.

(מֹוֹת)” (v. 17). The genealogy of Genesis 5 shows the fulfillment of that warning.³¹ Woven throughout the genealogy is the refrain, “and he died (מֹוֹת).” After every birth, there was also death. Whereas sinless *'adam* once enjoyed immortality, now all *'adam* is forced to face their own mortality. In Genesis 5, people live long lives, but they do not have eternal life. In this way, Genesis 5 and Romans 5 have much in common in that both passages affirm the consequence of sin is death: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom 5:12).

On the other hand, even in the message of death there is hope of deliverance. Seth’s genealogy concludes with the birth of a new Adamic figure—Noah. In fact, Noah’s father, another Lamech, expresses his hope that Noah will be the one to bring redemption. He says, “Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, *this one shall bring us relief* from our work and from the painful toil of our hands” (v. 29). The word for relief can also mean “comfort” (נַחֵם). In Genesis 4, Eve put her hope in an offspring. Likewise, Lamech in Genesis 5 puts his faith in his son. This demonstrates “the link between *the birth of a son* and *relief from the curse of the land*.”³² It seems all *'adam* is anxiously awaiting the arrival of the promised offspring who will reverse the curse and bring rest. Noah is presented as a hoped-for Savior. As will be seen later, however, he too will become a failed redeemer, and he will repeat Adam’s cycle of sin.

Conclusion

Adam’s sin allowed depravity and death to leak in and ruin the house of humanity. One man’s sin led to complete decay (both spiritual and physical) for all mankind. The moral corruption and spiritual decay spread like dry rot and mold, leaving

³¹The genealogy “functions as the death knell of the judgment in Eden.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71.

³²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71.

the once noble mansion of *'adam* to become nothing more than dilapidated and uninhabitable ruins. None of this, however, detracted from God's plan of redemption. No matter how fallen humanity had become, God's redemption would one day restore them.

Moreover, in a story of failed redeemers, like Cain, we are left once again anticipating the true offspring who would reverse *'adamah*'s curse and bring rest to humanity. Who will repair the damage done to the house of man? Who will renovate the ruins? Only Jesus Christ, the true offspring of the woman. He will repair the leak, fix the rotten beams, burn away the mold, and restore the fallen house. Romans 5:18-19 says, "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Jesus, then, is the offspring to whom we must look for both relief and restoration.

CHAPTER 8
A PREVIEW OF COSMIC REDEMPTION THROUGH
RETRIBUTION AND RESCUE
(GENESIS 6 AND 7)

The simple message of Genesis is that the God of the Bible keeps his promise. Whether it be his promise to bring sinners retribution or redemption, God *always* does as he says. This promise-keeping attribute of God displays both his grace and his justice. The Genesis account of the flood serves as a true illustration of God’s intentions to both redeem sinners and to call sinners into reckoning—graciously saving some, while condemning others. In the process, the flood account shows that God alone is God. What Genesis 6 and 7 illustrates, Deuteronomy 32:39 proclaims, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.” The flood waters in which some drowned were the same waters upon which the ark floated. God graciously rescued Noah and his family, while at the same time he poured out his justice upon the rest of sinful humanity. Thus, God proved himself to be both faithful to his covenant and just in his condemnation. The flood narrative wonderfully mingles God’s justice and mercy, retribution and rescue, death and deliverance. Genesis, then, presents God as he is—that is, a God who is one hundred percent true to his word as he fulfills his promise to judge sin and save sinners in order to redeem this ruined world.

The Worsening of Sin

The plague of sin began at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, where Adam failed to obey God and was consequently exiled from God’s presence in Eden. Adam’s sin was continued on through the life of his son, Cain, who rebelled against God

by murdering his brother. Cain's son, Lamech, proved the ever-worsening state of sin as he not only engaged in polygamous relationships but also boasted in his unjust and vengeful slaughter of a young man. The whole race of '*adam slid deeper and further* into depravity and rebellion. Genesis 6 chronicles the deepening decline.

Verses 1 and 2 begin the section saying, "When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose." Much time has been spent debating over exactly who the "sons of God" were and how or why they intermarried with the daughters of men. In an excursus summarizing the debate, Gentry and Wellum outline three of the most prominent views.¹ The first view of these intermarriages is that the descendants of Seth were illicitly mingling and marrying with the descendants of Cain. Second, the sons of God might have been kings and dignitaries who married the daughters of common men. The third view proposes that the sons of God might have been angels who married with human women. All three views have potential and hold some validity. However, Moses did not explicitly identify the "sons of God," and therefore, any attempt at identifying this group of beings can be nothing more than speculation. Why, then, did Moses write about them? It would seem that his main concern was not with who exactly these people/kings/angels were, but rather his concern was with what they were doing.

It seems that the key to understanding Moses' intention in his description of these ancient marriages is to highlight that the "*sons of God*" were engaging in marriage with the "*daughters of men*." Given the overall tone of the text, God negatively viewed this as an illicit union. First, God makes a pronouncement of judgment because of the marriages: "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120

¹Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 149.

years” (v. 3). Up to that point, mankind had a lifespan average of 800 to 900 years. Because of these marriages, God drastically shortened that lifespan to 120 years. Second, the marriages resulted in the unnatural birth of giants, or Nephilim (נְפִילִים). Interestingly, the title “Nephilim” is literally translated as “fallen ones.” Thus, the Scriptures speak of these offspring in a rather negative way. Moreover, the Nephilim are later regarded as the spiritual ancestors of the “sons of Anak” (Num 13:33)—cursed Canaanite giants. Still more, the description of these beings as “the mighty men” (גִּבּוֹרִים) is the same description given later to Nimrod, who also was גִּבּוֹר and was viewed as a sinfully rebellious and conquering warrior—the founder of Babel. The Nephilim, in being described as “mighty men”, were probably oppressive and corrupt warriors who added to the violence that filled the earth. If this is the case, then it helps in explaining how Genesis 6:1-4 relate to the rest of the chapter.

Once again, with the ever-increasing sinfulness of man comes the desecration of sacred marriage and the intensification of violence. It seems that in Scripture the growth of man’s depravity is measured by sexual immorality *or* violence (or both). Looking at sin’s progression thus far in Genesis, this is made clear. Sin’s increase was made evident in Cain’s violence, later in Lamech’s polygamy and bloodletting, and in Genesis 6 with illicit marriages and the birth of violent warrior-giants.

’Adam was ever descending into the pit of sin, rejecting God’s intention for them to be creatures who image the loving, righteous, and holy God of the universe. The people of the world were redefining what it meant to be human, using their own subjective standards to determine what was right and wrong. Adam sinned in hopes of becoming “like God,” and now his descendants were living as if they *were* their own gods.

Furthermore, the plague of sin was a true epidemic spreading not only across generations and marriages, but also spreading into the depths of the human heart. Verse 5 says, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every*

intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”² In other words, sin was great on the earth and great in man’s heart.³ The phrase “The LORD saw” in Genesis 6 contrasts God’s perspective Genesis 1 when he “saw” the earth was good. This is a dramatic change in the state of the created world. The world of men was reduced from good (טוב) to evil (רָעָה) in the short span of six chapters of human history. Evil on the outside, evil on the inside, evil continually, ‘adam had completely abandoned God’s created intentions.

Retribution and Redemption

Knowing that sin had filled man’s heart, it should be no surprise to read that grief filled God’s heart. “And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart” (v. 6). After God saw humanity’s expansive rebellion, God determined to destroy mankind. To be clear, his regret was not an admission that he made a mistake, instead his regret was that humanity’s sin demanded his justice. Paul House rightly observes, “God’s regret means action must be taken, not that a great cosmic mistake has been made.”⁴ In verse 7 it is a grieving God who says, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds for the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” God’s pronouncement of judgment against sin reveals his view of sin—namely, that it is a filthy stain in creation that must be washed away. The word for “blot out” (מָחָה) implies

²Gentry and Wellum write, “Verse 5 describes the human situation as ‘bad,’ ‘evil,’ or ‘wicked,’ and traces this to the condition of the human heart, the centre of our being where we feel, reason, and make decisions and plans.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 148.

³Schreiner says, “Human beings are not stained with a light imperfection (8:21; cf. 6:5); the evil that besets the human race is at the core of humanity and is not easily erased.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 12.

⁴Quoted in Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 286.

“wiping off” or “washing away.”⁵ Just as one washes filth off a valuable dish, God will wash sinful humanity off his earth. This shows just how far humanity had fallen. Humanity, instead of being the royal-priests God made them to be, had become royal-pests who deserved nothing less than complete extermination which would come through the floodwaters of his judgment.

Given what we know about humanity thus far, it should be no surprise that God desired to destroy mankind. What *is* surprising, however, is that he chose to graciously save one man and his family. Verse 8 relays the shocking mercy of God, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.” The *one* difference between death and deliverance in Genesis 6 is the redemptive conjunction “but.” Without this redemptive conjunction Noah would have been “blotted out” with the rest of humanity. This *must* be the case or else we must be prepared to accept Noah as the first sinless post-fall man. Sin demanded justice, therefore the fact that Noah found “favor” (חן) with God is only grace. This is an important detail. Noah did not *earn* God’s grace, but instead he “found” or “encountered” (מצא) God’s favor.⁶ It was, therefore, God’s initiative to give Noah grace.

The judgment of God’s wrath sets the black backdrop against which the glittering diamond of God’s grace is highlighted.⁷ It should be expected that holy God would judge sinful humanity, but it is not expected that he would graciously save a sinful man. God’s justice and grace come together in this account to show that God is just in his retribution and graciously faithful in his rescue of Noah. In this God is glorified in both his judgment and salvation.

⁵Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 275.

⁶Waltke and Fredricks write, “The narrator leaves it to the audience to realize that Noah’s righteousness is not his own but a gift of grace, just as much as it was the gift of sovereign grace that put enmity against the Serpent in Eve’s heart.” Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 119.

⁷Schreiner writes, “The wonder and the grace of salvation stand out when set against the backdrop of God’s wrath unleashed upon the world.” Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 13.

God's Covenant

Acknowledging God's grace, Noah truly was a man who stood distinct from the rest of his generation. Verses 9 and 10 relay his distinct relationship with God: "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth." The adjective "righteous" implies that Noah's life before God was "right" or acceptable. It seems that the chronology of God's grace and Noah's righteousness are important in chapter 6. First, Noah finds favor in the eyes of the Lord, and *then* Noah is described as righteous. If *grace* describes God's attitude toward Noah, then *righteousness* describes Noah's attitude toward God. God poured out grace, Noah walked with God. From a canonical context, it makes sense that God's grace (יָרַח) precedes man's righteousness (צַדִּיק).⁸ Grace is still the underlying reason for Noah's salvation. Noah's righteousness before God was secondary to grace. The idea that God's grace was given because of Noah's description as "blameless" seems to damage the essence of grace or favor. In other words, if "favor" was given *because of* Noah's blamelessness, then the emphasis would be on Noah's righteousness and not on God's grace. As "blameless" as he was, Noah was still just a sinner, especially seeing that "blameless" does not mean "sinless."⁹ Noah was a blameless man, but he was still a man who needed and received God's grace.¹⁰

Noah's righteousness is contrasted with the world's corruption. When God looked at Noah, he saw Noah in grace. Yet, when God looked at the world, he saw the

⁸Goldsworthy observes, "Later it will become much clearer that God's grace is the cause of sinful people becoming righteous." Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 114.

⁹Hamilton comments, "Of course, Noah was not 'free from defect.' He was *tāmīm*, but not sinless. Perhaps a word like 'wholesome' or 'sound' or 'candid' would be appropriate when applying this word to people (see Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13; Ps. 15:2; 18:24 [Eng. 23] = 2 Sam. 22:24; Prov. 11:5; Job 12:4)." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 277.

¹⁰Ezek 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die." Noah is a sinner who deserves to die alongside everyone else. That he remains alive is grace.

world's evil. "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (6:11-12). The word for "corrupt" (תָּחַשׁ) can mean ruined. Sin caused the world to become a decrepit version of what God originally intended. Man's violence-filled world became an antithesis to God's intentions of a glory-filled creation.¹¹

After seeing the world's corruption, God revealed to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth." It is interesting that the very earth 'adam had corrupted would become the means of their judgment. God used the very earth which they had corrupted to judge them. In justice, he would wipe the slate clean, cleansing his world from sin.

However, God's pronouncement of judgement was followed by instructions for Noah's deliverance: "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood." God's instructions were specific, even outlining the cubits of the ark's height, breadth, and length. In verses 17 and 18, God explained to Noah, "For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you." It was in the context of condemnation for the whole world that God made a covenant with Noah. This is the first time in Genesis that the word "covenant" is used. In this context, it speaks of a promise of rescue that will also lead to Noah's trust and obedience.¹² God proclaimed his covenant to rescue Noah and his family and expected Noah to trust and obey him by building the ark. God will save and Noah will obey. This is the essence of covenant

¹¹Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 72.

¹²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 72.

throughout the Bible. God promises salvation, and that salvation results in his people's obedience.¹³

In justice, God pronounced unspeakable death, "Everything that is on the earth shall die" (v. 17). However, in his covenant grace, he guaranteed the preservation of life for Noah's family and for the remnant of creatures who boarded the ark. Genesis 6, then, demonstrates that God's justice over man's sin leads to death, while God's covenant leads to life. Imagine what this would have insinuated to God's future covenant people. In the flood, God gives a visible illustration of the death brought about by sin and the life that is gained by covenant grace and obedience. Noah's redeemed life was secured by God's covenant favor and resulted in Noah's covenant obedience. Thus, verse 22 models the right response to God's covenant grace, "Noah did this; he did *all* that God commanded him." This sets the pattern for God's future covenant people. When God graciously promises redemption, his people are to respond by doing all that God commands them.

The Flood

The ark having been completed, the covenant God, *Yahweh*, instructed Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation" (7:1). Noah's unmerited salvation came by grace, but his righteousness was proven through his obedience to God's command.¹⁴ God gave further instructions concerning the animals that were to board the ark, and again, Noah "did all that the LORD had commanded him" (7:5).

Verses 6 and 7 say, "Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters

¹³Dempster rightly notes that covenant is "based on promise and responsibility." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 73.

¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks comment, "Noah's righteousness is not a work to gain merit with God but the outcome of his faith in God, as seen in his building and provisioning the ark in the preceding frames." Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 137.

came upon the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood." As is true throughout Genesis, the death God foretold came just as he said. Man's sin led to just retribution as the floodwaters rose. The fountains of the deep "burst forth" and the windows of heaven were opened, as the flood of God's wrath came upon sinful 'adam. Further still, it was Yahweh himself who shut the door to the ark (7:16), showing that he was faithful to keep his promise. Here again, the truth of God's promise-keeping is demonstrated. He keeps his word both for retribution and for redemption. He justly condemns and faithfully keeps his covenant.

In verses 17-20, Moses mentions the increasing waters four times. In verse 17, "the waters increased and bore up the ark." In verse 18, "the waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth." In verse 19, "And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered." And in verse 20, "The waters prevailed above the mountains." Very simply, the floodwaters rose higher and higher until the peaks of the mountains were completely covered. In this, God's wrath against sin was visibly manifest. Humanity was horribly sinful, and God's justice completely covered it. *All* the earth became corrupt because of sin, and therefore *all* the earth was covered with the floodwaters of God's wrath.¹⁵ The whole earth was ruined, and consequently the whole earth needed cleansing. As is always true, God's wrath comprehensively judges sin. And thus, the flood became a paradigmatic foreshadowing of God's coming, eschatological wrath against humanity's rebellion.

The world was created to be filled with God's image. Sinful man filled it with violence. And because creation was now corrupt, it now underwent a form of "de-

¹⁵Schreiner rightly concludes, "The account of the flood generation underscores the depth and horror of human sin. Human beings are not stained with a light imperfection (8:21; cf. 6:5); the evil that besets the human race is at the core of humanity and is not easily erased." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 12.

creation.” T.D. Alexander observes, “The description of the floodwaters gradually covering the entire earth, including the highest mountains portrays a return to the earth’s original state before the separation of the land and the seas (cf. 1:9-10).”¹⁶ It is as if God, the master artist, sees that his clay has become tainted and needs to be destroyed, deformed, and formed again. A new Adam and his children, floated safely on the waters waiting for God to deliver a renewed creation in which his family would live.¹⁷ Creation, having been ruined, was being recreated. This recreation will be seen more fully in Genesis 8 and 9.

Verses 22-24 summarize the final result of the flood. “Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. And the water prevailed on the earth 150 days.” A world ruined by sin received both retribution and rescue. God’s judgment was poured out on the sons of Adam because of sin, while one son of Adam and his family were saved by grace.

The Paradigm and Its Significance for Today

The flood was a historical event that had eschatological significance. What God did at micro-level in giving life to Noah and pronouncing death upon the flood generation, he will one day do at a cosmic-level. From a micro-level, Genesis 6 demonstrates how man’s sin is pervasive, infecting both the external world and the internal human heart. Sin expands wide, and it runs deep. Sin warrants the justice of God. Whereas God once saw his creation as good, he now saw it as corrupt—ruined, and

¹⁶T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 164.

¹⁷Waltke and Fredricks write, “The water is death and judgment for the evil world but also divine cleansing and preservation for the elect remnant.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 140.

corrupt creation necessitates God's cleansing judgment. In "blotting out" sinful mankind, God would wash creation clean. In this light, it is clear that judgment was not merely about punishing sinners, but *also* about freeing creation from its ruin and corruption.¹⁸ Indeed, the floodwaters were God's wrath poured out on man's sin, but those same floodwaters brought about a renewed creation. Moreover, in order for creation to begin anew, there must be a new humanity—a new *'adam*. In his gracious salvation of Noah, God preserved a remnant who would trust him and live blamelessly before him. God's covenant with Noah ensured the survival of Noah's family despite the coming floodwater. God also provided a means—in this case, an ark—in which Noah and his family would be spared from God's wrath.

From a "big-picture" perspective, the flood account establishes a paradigm that shows how *ruined* creation is *redeemed* through both covenant grace and condemning justice. In order for the ruined world to be made right again, God, in the end, will cleanse the world of sin through judgment and preserve a remnant of people through grace. This is ultimately what God began at the cross of Christ. Just before he was betrayed and arrested, Jesus spoke to his disciples about his crucifixion, "Now is *the judgment of this world* (κρίσις... τοῦ κόσμου τούτου); now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:31-32). On the one hand, the cross brings retribution to the rebellious world, while on the other hand, it also brings rescue for those who trust in Christ.¹⁹ Thus, what the flood account portrayed, the crucifixion of Christ fulfilled. Just retribution and gracious rescue mingle together for the purpose of redeeming the ruined world. Genesis 6 and 7 give its readers

¹⁸Tikva Frymer-Kensy notes, "The flood is not primarily an agent of punishment[,] but a means of getting rid of a thoroughly polluted world and starting again with a clean, well-washed one." Quoted in T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 28-29.

¹⁹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 443.

an insider's peak at the redemption to come at the end of the age. God will work through both condemnation and covenant to wipe away the corruption of the world. The question every person must ask, then, is whether he or she is inside "the ark" (the means of God's gracious salvation) or outside of it. The difference between the two is God's grace, his covenant promises, and his people's trust and obedience. Redemption of the ruined world will come, and it will come through both retribution and rescue.

CHAPTER 9
THE PERSISTENCE OF SIN
(GENESIS 8 AND 9)

In Lewis' popular series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, evil is introduced as a son of Adam named Digory rang a forbidden bell which awakened the ancient sorceress, Jadis—the destroyer of Charn. Through an unfortunate chain of events, Jadis followed the Digory and his friend, Polly into the Narnian world. Seeing the foul queen and her hatred for good, the Creator of Narnia, Aslan, laments, “You see, friends, that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam.”¹ That which was good and pure had now become tainted due to the misdeeds of Adam's race. Yet, not all was lost as Aslan spoke a word of hope, “But do not be cast down. Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it.”² In this, Aslan spoke of Narnia's future restoration.

The rest of *The Chronicles* works in a cyclical fashion, focusing on the battle between the sons and daughters of Adam and Jadis-like villains. The cycle is seen as Narnia undergoes a series of falls and restorations, leading up to the final restoration when evil is finally vanquished. In the first book, Digory falls to evil temptation, but then helps defeat it bringing about a 900-year peace in Narnia. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, evil surfaces again as the evil witch takes control of Narnia and entices

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1982), 80.

²Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, 80.

another son of Adam named Edmund. With Aslan's intervention, Adam's race overthrows the evil and the witch is killed. Again, a time of peace and restoration was established.

It was not to last, however, as Narnia falls to another evil tyrant in the book, *Prince Caspian*. Again, the white witch is spoken of and a son of Adam is urged by a wicked hag to call her back. Caspian's advisor rejected the counsel claiming that the witch was dead. To the advisor, the hag told of the witch's persistence, "Master Doctor, who ever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back."³ And though Caspian is victorious over the temptation, it takes the intervention of Aslan and the work of Adam's race to overthrow evil and to bring peace back to Narnia.

Another Jadis-like evil appears in the book, *The Silver Chair*, and the son of Adam, Prince Rillian, is deceived by the Queen of the Underworld—the Lady of the Green Kirtle. Again, it is up to Aslan and the sons of Adam to defeat evil and bring a period of restoration.

The cycle of fall, evil oppression, overthrow, and temporary peace finally comes to a climax in the final book, *The Last Battle*. Once again, the Narnians are tempted and subjected to oppression. And again, Aslan intervenes and employs Adam's race to bring about the final destruction of Old Narnia, which gives way to a new, perfected Narnia—a Narnia that will never again be harassed by evil.

This cycle of temptation, ruin, and restoration is demonstrative of redemptive history. Like Digory's fall to temptation, Adam's sin had ongoing effects that brought ruin to God's created world. Even after times of restoration, evil was soon to resurface and bring fresh ruin to the world. As will be seen in Genesis 8 and 9, the floodwaters only temporarily brought renewal to the earth. Because of the evil buried deep in 'adam's heart, the good world would soon be ruined all over again. Similar to the Jadis-like evil in

³Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, 394.

Narnia, sin kept coming back even after times of restoration and threw the world again into ruin.

Renewed Creation

Genesis 7 concluded with a cliffhanger, “And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.” The entire earth was reduced to become a flooded graveyard. Absolute catastrophe had struck in the story of *’adam* as creation returned to its watery formlessness. It is as if the cosmic clock had been reset to Genesis 1:2. Not all was lost, however. The calamity of the flood was offset by the covenant faithfulness of God: “But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark” (8:1).⁴

In Genesis, the word “remembered” (זָכַר) is often used in conjunction with God’s covenant mercy.⁵ This one word turns the flood narrative from tragedy into triumph. The flood, as comprehensive as it was, did not cover Noah and his family. Moreover, it was God’s covenant remembrance that stirred him into action. Whenever God remembers his covenant, he always responds with appropriate actions—actions that are consistent with his covenant promises. God always does as he has promised, and because God promised Noah’s salvation, it was secure in the never-forgetting mind of Yahweh. Having thus remembered his covenant, God now set about to renew his creation.⁶

⁴Waltke and Fredricks write, “It is only the remembering of God that gives hope and makes new life possible.” Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 140.

⁵Waltke and Fredricks observe that the word ‘remember’ “signifies to act upon a previous commitment to a covenant partner.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 140. Hamilton likewise notes, “For God to remember someone means that God extends mercy to someone by saving that person from death (8:1; 19:29) or from barrenness (30:22).” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 299.

⁶Thomas Schreiner outlines some of the parallels between Gen 1 and Gen 8. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids:

Blowing Wind and Receding Water

The latter half of verse 1 says, “And God made a wind blow over the earth and the waters subsided.” Just as the earth being covered over with water recalls the formless state of the earth, so also God’s “wind” (רוּחַ) blowing over the earth recalls God’s Spirit (רוּחַ) which hovered over the face of the waters at the beginning of creation. Interestingly, as soon as God’s רוּחַ blew over the earth, the waters began to recede. While the intense wrath of God was made manifest as the floodwaters of judgment covered the entire earth, including its highest peaks, now, the faithful love of God is seen as the waters abate, and the mountain peaks are revealed.

Verses 13 and 14 say, “In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.” The water “dried up” (יָבַשׁ) from off the earth, which corresponds with the dry land (יַבְשָׁה) that appeared after God’s creative work in the first chapter of Genesis.⁷ Creation had begun again, washed clean of the scars of humanity’s violence.

Birds, Animals, and Every Creeping Thing

Once the waters had completely receded, God instructed Noah, “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth” (v. 17). The “every living thing” in Genesis 8 is reminiscent of the

Baker Academic, 2013), 14.

⁷Commentator Victor Hamilton highlights the parallel with Gen 1. He writes, “In v. 14 it is *yābaš*, which refers here to the complete absence of waters. This verb is related to the noun ‘dry land’ (*yabbāšā*) in Gen. 1.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 305.

“living creatures” spoken of in Genesis 1. God’s renewed creation would be filled with living creatures. In this, God’s commitment to creation is demonstrated through the restoration of dry land and renewed swarms of creeping creatures. “Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.”

A Renewed Priestly Role

Noah’s first act after disembarking from the ark was to build an altar and to offer “burnt offerings” to the Lord. In later Scripture, altar-building and the sacrificing of burnt offerings (עֹלָה) are explicitly priestly functions. Moreover, when God “smelled” the smoke from the offering it was to him a “pleasing aroma.” The word for “pleasing” (נִיחִיחַ) can also imply “appeasement.” It was in response to this appeasing whole sacrifice that God promised himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease’ (vv. 21-22). Thus, Noah’s sacrifice pleased God who in turn promised to withhold judgment. Though the human heart was just as sinful as before, God would not strike the ground nor slay the creatures, the seasons would continue, and life would be preserved. Even in knowing man’s internal evil, God allowed his wrath to be appeased through the whole offering.⁸ Hence, Noah stands as a sort of mediating priest, whose sacrifices appease God and bring peace to the earth.

This recalls Adam’s priestly role in the garden. Though *’adam’s* priestly function was damaged because of the Fall, Genesis 8 gives a small glimpse of mankind’s priestly work being renewed. Noah, a type of Adam, stood before the altar offering a

⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 142.

whole sacrifice in complete dedication to his covenant God, fulling the priestly role Adam once enjoyed.

Renewed Blessing and Renewed Dominion

God's renewed creation also came with a renewed blessing and renewed a commission. Just as he did for Adam, "God blessed Noah" and then commanded him to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (cf. Gen. 1:28). God's blessing was re-given and, once again, he commissioned his image-bearer to fill the earth with the glory of God. Further still, God gives Noah and his family renewed dominion over the animals. It is a dominion like the dominion Adam once maintained, but with one primary caveat. This renewed dominion was based on the fear of the animals.⁹ To Noah, he said, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered" (9:2).

Dominion also included a sanction that man may eat the animals as he does the green plants. This displays God provision. "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Just as God provided Adam "every plant yielding seed" and "every tree" for food, God now provided "every moving thing."¹⁰ The only prohibition is that man must not eat the blood, which represents its life (v. 4).¹¹ Humans are allowed to eat meat, but they are not to do so in a way that dishonors life. As one commentator proposes, the permission is not "a license to savagery."¹² Life is still sacred even if eating meat is now

⁹Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dominion: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 73; also, Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 168.

¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 314.

¹¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 144.

¹²Sarna quoted in Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 144.

permitted. Additionally, later revelation shows that God had special plans for blood to serve as a symbol of forgiveness through sacrifice. Blood is a symbol that is full of meaning not yet revealed in Genesis 9.

Man was not allowed eat the blood of the animals, and he was not allowed to shed the blood of other men. In this prohibition, God affirms that man—even in his fallen state—is still the image of God. By requiring “a reckoning” for bloodshed, God shows his own value on human life. In poetic form, judgment is pronounced on any who might kill another: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, *for God made man in his own image*” (9:6). Even fallen *'adam* still remains in the image of God, and his life is highly valued by God.¹³ By putting fear into the animals and by requiring justice for bloodshed, God protects humanity’s vitality.

God’s Covenant

Having protected man from animals and from other humans, God now promised protection from himself. “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (vv. 9-11). How would *'adam* be able to fulfill his mandate if God blotted him out every time sin surfaced on the earth? God’s promise ensures that he will never again flood the earth. To be sure, it is not a promise that he will not judge sin. It only guarantees that he will not judge man’s sin with a world-wide flood.

¹³Hamilton writes, “There is no evidence here that sin has effaced the divine image. It is still resident in post-Flood, post-paradise man.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 314; also, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 145.

The first time God made a covenant with Noah, he proved himself faithful as he “remembered” Noah and his family. Likewise, God will “remember” his second covenant with Noah—a promise to never again flood the earth—when he sees the covenant sign. In verses 12 through 13 God says, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow (קַוְיָ) in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” In the Ancient Near East, the gods of the nations were often depicted carrying a bow as a symbol of their power, strength, and combat.¹⁴ In Genesis, however, God’s power and strength is displayed not primarily by bending his bow in combat, but by hanging up his war bow, thus ending the hostility between God and man—at least as it pertains to flooding the earth with waters of judgment. The war bow which was once an “emblem of wrath,” now became a “token of grace.”¹⁵ Whereas other gods of the Ancient Near East kept their bows pointed at men, only *Yahweh* retires his bow, hanging it publicly in the clouds, in order to make peace with the sons of Adam.¹⁶ He ensured Noah and his family, “When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth” (9:16).

This promise is implicitly applied to Noah’s sons in verses 18 and 19, showing that God’s promise guarantees the future survival of humanity. Noah’s sons are the “future generations” spoken of in 9:12. They will not drown in the waters of judgment but will live on, and “from these [sons] the people of the whole earth” would be

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 317.

¹⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 170.

¹⁶Hamilton notes, “In what is nothing less than a radical reinterpretation of divine power, the bow ceases to function as a symbol of combat is now a symbol of peace and well-being. Its placement in the clouds points to the cessation of God’s hostilities against mankind.” Hamilton, *Genesis*, 317; see also Gentry and Wellum, who write, “The rainbow, then, is a physical picture that God has ‘laid his weapons down,’ as indicated in the promise, ‘never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.’” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 171.

dispersed.

Thus, Genesis 8 and 9 show a renewed creation, a renewed priestly role, a renewed blessing, a renewed dominion, and a renewed peace with God. However, not all was made new in this post-flood creation. As has already been seen, the intention of man's heart was "evil from his youth" (8:21) even after the flood. Though the earth was renewed, 'adam's heart remained thoroughly wicked and corrupt.¹⁷ Because man's heart was yet to be renewed, the sons of Adam were to undergo a renewed "fall."

Renewed Fall

Strengthening the tie between this renewed creation and original creation, the son of Adam is once again in an Eden-like place. Verse 20 says, "Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard." Before the flood, the ground was cursed, bringing painful toil to all of man's planting and harvesting. 'adam would sow seed, only to harvest thorns and thistles. That Noah was able to successfully plant a vineyard may be an indication the curse on the ground had been, at least partially, lifted.¹⁸ This is not to say that man has regained Eden; however, that man is once again in a garden-like place in which he can plant and harvest freely is reminiscent of the Edenic sanctuary.

Just like Adam, however, Noah was unable to remain obedient and pure even in this renewed creation.¹⁹ Verses 21 through 23 tell of the new Adam's fall. "He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of

¹⁷Gentry and Wellum argue, "The condition of humanity after the cataclysmic judgment remains the same as it was before; so the judgment has not altered or changed the condition of the human heart." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 169.

¹⁸Commentator Victor P. Hamilton observes, "That Noah was even able to plant a vineyard that produced lush growth is testimony to the lifting of the curse on the ground (8:21). Noah is not pictured as eking out a miserable, hand-to-mouth existence as he works among thorns and thistles." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 321; also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 166.

¹⁹Dempster observes, "Virtually cast as a new Adam after the flood, Noah fails like the old one as a result of fruit taken from a vine instead of a tree." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 73.

Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.”

Whereas Adam ate, Noah drank and both men's actions resulted in disgrace and nakedness.²⁰ Adam saw that he was עֵירֹם and Noah laid in his tent עָרְוָה. Both words imply shameful exposure.²¹ What is more, Noah's sin led to his son's sin. Noah's son, Ham, “saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside” (v. 22). Exactly what is meant by “saw the nakedness of his father” has been widely disputed by scholars. Explanations range from mockery to “homosexual voyeurism.”²² It is difficult to know the true nature of Ham's sin. Whatever the case, it dishonored his father.

Ham's shameful action is contrasted by the gracious action of his brothers, Shem and Japheth. Ham gazed at his father's nakedness, while his brothers covered Noah's nakedness. The consequent result is seen in verses 24 and 25: “When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.’” “Cursed (אָרַר) be Canaan” brings to mind the Genesis 3 pronouncement upon the serpent, “Cursed (אָרַר) are you” (v. 15). This shows Ham's son, Canaan, to be in line with the satanic serpent. As Schreiner notes, Ham's sin shows that “the children of the serpent were not extinguished by the flood but rather were alive and well upon planet earth.”²³ The conflict between the

²⁰Waltke and Fredricks comment, “Both follow a similar pattern of sinning, the former by eating and the latter by drinking (3:6; 9:21).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 128; also, Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 14.

²¹Waltke and Fredricks rightly note, “Nakedness is associated with shame (Gen. 3:7, 21), is publicly demeaning (2 Sam. 6:16, 20), and is incompatible with living in God's presence (Ex. 20:26; cf. Deut. 23:12-14).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 148.

²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 149.

²³Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 14.

offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent will continue in the lives of Noah's sons. Later revelation provides greater clarity on Canaan's curse. Namely, it is seen in the hostility between Israel and the Canaanites and the Canaanite conquest.²⁴

That Ham is not cursed but Canaan demonstrates the on-going impact of "cursing" for future generations.²⁵ And vice versa, it shows the redemptive beauty of blessing. The curse on Canaan is followed by a statement of blessing for Shem and Japheth: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant" (vv. 26-27). While judgment is pronounced on Ham's descendants, blessing is pronounced for Shem's children. Once again, justice was mingled with mercy as Shem becomes the light of hope in the forthcoming victory of the woman's seed over the serpent.²⁶

The final verses of chapter 9 conclude saying, "After the flood Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died." The words "and he died" (מות) recall the same tragic phrase found in Genesis 5. Even in this renewed creation, death still preys on the sons of Adam. The flood cleansed away the scars of corruption from the surface of the earth, but it did not wash away man's death nor the filth of sin that was still residing inside of him.

As will be seen in subsequent chapters in Genesis (and in the greater canonical context of Scripture as a whole), the earth would eventually be filled again with the wickedness of mankind. The cosmos, though temporarily restored in Genesis 8, were

²⁴Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 74.

²⁵Dempster notes, "The fact that Canaan, the 'son' of Ham, is cursed, and not Ham, shows the biblical understanding that the curse registers an impact on the generations. Humanity is an interconnected whole." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 74; see also Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 324.

²⁶Dempster writes, "Shem is marked for divine blessing and his line is singled out in the subsequent story as a harbinger of hope for the world." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 74.

again ruined and in need of a lasting renewal. This renewal will not happen, however, until God eradicates sin from the human heart.

Conclusion

Genesis 8 and 9 provide an object lesson showing that even if everything else was made right in the world, it would soon be ruined again because of man's wicked heart. Without the recreation of humanity, creation will become ruined again and again. What is needed, then, is not *merely* a renewed creation, or a renewed mandate, or even renewed blessing. What is needed is a renewed humanity made complete with a new heart.

The flood "blotted out" (washed away) wickedness from the surface of the earth, but it did not "blot out" wickedness from the depths of the human heart. Sin, the root of all corruption, still persisted. And therefore, until sin is fully eradicated from 'adam's heart, creation will continue to be ruined and in need of restoration. Just as Jadis-like evil continued to haunt Narnia bringing it into cycles of ruin and restoration, so also man's evil will continue to haunt the earth leading to ruin, even though there will be multiple "minor" restorations. Until the evil is completely defeated and destroyed, the cosmos will continue in this cycle.

It is no coincidence that the New Creation promised throughout the pages of Scriptures begins with the creation of a new humanity who have a new heart that is able to obey God.²⁷ For example, in Ezekiel 36:26-27 God makes a promise, "And I will give you *a new heart*, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." Accordingly, God's gift of a new heart will result in complete obedience. Later in the New Testament,

²⁷One important Old Testament text that speaks of New Creation is Isa 65:17: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind."

the apostle Paul speaks of Christians as a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). The new heavens and earth begin with a new humanity recreated with new heart to worship and obey God. It is important to note, however, just how this new humanity is made. Namely, as the first part of 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, the new humanity is created “in Christ.” Thus, it is the perfect and obedient Last Adam who recreates the race of Adam and brings lasting “rest” to the earth.

Because of his commitment to his creation, the Lord will one day do as Aslan illustrates when he makes an end to the Old Narnia, doing away with its evil and corruption and making way for the *real* Narnia. Similarly, the old earth will one day melt away, making way for the *real* world—a new world—which is described powerfully in Revelation 22: “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (vv. 3-4). Thus, Genesis 9 points readers to the hope that, in the end, God will create a new humanity (complete with a renewed human heart that is free from sin) and will restore the world in such a way that it will never again be ruined by man’s sin.

CHAPTER 10

THE CITY OF MAN (GENESIS 10 AND 11)

Genesis 8 and 9 reset the clock to a renewed world complete with a renewed creation mandate and a renewed blessing upon mankind. However, as Genesis 9 made painfully clear, man's heart remained the same. Even after the Fall, God spoke of man's persistently sinful heart, which is spoken of as "evil from his youth" (9:21). Knowing the state of man's internal heart, it is no surprise the renewed earth soon endured another Fall as Noah's sin resulted in his own shameful exposure and the cursing of his grandson. Just as Adam's sin progressed through the lives of his children, so also Noah's sin continued to progress and prevail in the lives of his sons and their children. Like a never-ending plague, sin continued to spread and grow after Noah's drunken nakedness. In Genesis 6, wickedness filled the earth, beckoning the just intervention of God. In Genesis 10 and 11, wickedness fills the city of men and once again brings God's justice down.

In many ways, Genesis 10 and 11 serve as the culmination of the major themes seen in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. These two chapters speak of God's sovereignty over the sons of Adam, the enmity between the seed of serpent (through the line of Ham) and the seed of the woman (the line of Shem), the sinfulness of men, the justice of God, and the tenacious promise of God to redeem the world through a promised offspring.

The Post-Flood Genealogy

The genealogy of chapter 10, which is often called "The Table of Nations,"

outlines the prominent people groups that descended from Noah's sons.¹ Though the genealogy speaks of all three of Noah's sons and their descendants, special emphasis is given to the sons of Ham, in particular Canaan, and the sons of Shem. This emphasis builds upon Noah's pronounced blessing upon Shem and his curse upon Canaan, but ultimately it points backward to Genesis 3:15 which spoke of the ongoing enmity between the serpent and the woman through their respective children.² The background this genealogy provides is important for understanding future events in Scripture. The sons of Canaan will indeed become the servants of Shem, just Noah said. This servitude, however, would be realized as future Shemites conquer idolatrous nations against whom is the curse of God. At a minimum, this genealogy shows that the world is still awaiting the promised, snake-crushing offspring. The flood did not exterminate the rebellious seed, and so God's promised Savior is still to come.

At a more basic level, the genealogy also affirms that all the nations of the world exist because of the grace of God. Without God's gracious intervention, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, would not have even survived to have children. Therefore, these seventy nations owe their existence to the gracious and sustaining will of God. For future Israelites, who would have read this genealogy, Genesis 10 is an affirmation that God is the Lord of all nations—including the nations that rebel against him.³

Nimrod, The Mighty

Among the list of names, one name is given special attention. The man Nimrod

¹Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 74.

²T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 166; also, Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 115.

³Hamilton writes, "The theological value of the Table is that it affirms Israel as part of one world governed by one God." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 346.

is given more space than any other person in the genealogy, and through Nimrod's life, the narrator shows how humanity has become just as fallen as it was before the flood. Verses 8 and 9 speak of him saying, "Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.'" Though the English leaves the tone of Scripture rather ambiguous, the Hebrew leans more toward a negative view of this man. Nimrod's name literally translated means, "rebel" (נִמְרוֹד).⁴ Moreover, he is described as "mighty" (גִּבּוֹר), which is the same description given of the violently oppressive Nephilim (see Gen. 6:4). Nimrod was "a mighty hunter before the LORD," which ought to be viewed as evidence of his hostility against God. The phrase "before the LORD" can also be translated as "in the sight of the LORD," "opposite the Lord," or "facing the LORD."⁵ Thus, Nimrod is to be seen as a man who had risen up in rebellion against God. His character and inward nature was utterly opposed to what God intended for his image-bearers.⁶

Still more, Nimrod is associated with the founding of several rebellious and violent cities of men. Verses 10 through 12 outline the boundaries of his kingdom: "The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Cala, and Resen between Nineveh and Cala: that is the great city." Of particular importance are two of the cities attributed to Nimrod's reign. The first city is Babel—the rebellious city spoken of in the very next chapter and the future city of Babylon. The *Haggadah* portrays Nimrod

⁴Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 169.

⁵Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*, 130.

⁶Alexander writes, "Nimrod's aggression as a person runs counter to what God intended when at creation he commissioned people to rule the earth on his behalf...Although God originally intended humanity to rule over the earth in peace, Nimrod uses power to establish a kingdom that is a distortion of one that God wished to have on earth." Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*, 130.

as the captain at the helm of Babel’s rebellious building project.⁷ He is the evil city’s founder, architect, and the one who incites people to revolt against their Creator. The second city is that of Nineveh. Nimrod “went into Assyria,” which most likely connects with his identity as a might “hunter” or “chaser” as he is seen here invading surrounding nations.⁸ That he goes on to build Nineveh, “the bloody city” (cf. Nahum 3:1), shows him to be “the ancestor of the Assyrians”—perhaps some of the most violent people in history.⁹

This special focus on Nimrod shows that humanity has returned to the same wickedness spoken of in Genesis 6. Nimrod, the “rebel,” was a “mighty man” who stands in the place of the “fallen ones” (the Nephilim) who were also mighty men. His violent oppression recalls the violent oppression of the ancient giants.¹⁰ He spreads his wicked reign by conquering the nations around him, and instead of building altars in order call upon the name of God, he built cities to make a name for himself.¹¹ Nimrod, with the expansion of his cities and his defiant reign, serves as an illustration of man’s incessantly rebellious nature. Because wickedness continued to reign in the heart of mankind, men reigned rebelliously on the earth filling it once again with ruin and violence. Within three generations after the flood and the renewal of the world, humanity demonstrates its complete inability to obey God. Tragically, as is demonstrated in the building of Babel, humanity repeats Adam and Eve’s quest to become “like God.” *’adam* makes war against the city of God by building a city for itself.

⁷See T.B. *Hag*. 13a and Pes. 94b quoted in Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 338.

⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 339.

⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 340; See also Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 169.

¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 169.

¹¹Waltke and Fredricks note, “Nimrod built cities, not altars to the Lord.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 170.

The Building of Babel

After describing the sinful nature of Babel's founder, chapter 11 now describes the building of Babel itself. Verses 1 and 2 recount, "Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there." That this group of people came "from the east" (מִקְדָּם) is significant. In Genesis 3, the Lord drove Adam *to the east* of Eden (v. 24). Cain also was driven "east of Eden" (4:16) In Genesis 11, humanity willingly migrates eastward signifying its growing distance from Eden and its increasing separation from God.¹² Humanity may be outside of God's blessing and exiled from Eden, but that does not stop them from trying to build a paradise for themselves. The building of Babel is man's attempt to regain utopian peace independent from God and outside of Edenic blessing.

The people's intentions are recorded in verses 3 and 4: "And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.'" As is made clear in their dialogue, humanity's intentions in building a city were utterly opposed to God's reign on the earth. With these motives in mind, the people of Babel sought to "displace God from his rightful place as Lord of the universe."¹³ The city, then, is the "antithesis of what God intends."¹⁴

The people's rebellion against the kingship of God is seen in three parts. First,

¹²Kenneth Mathews observes, "[Eastward] marks events of *separation* in Genesis. By this spatial term the narrative also conveys a metaphorical sphere, meaning the Babelites are outside God's blessing." Mathews quoted in Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 178.

¹³Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 116.

¹⁴T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 29.

they want to build a city and a tower “with its top in the heavens.” The tower is built as an expression of humanity’s self-asserted greatness.¹⁵ In other words, the tower of Babel could be seen as man’s idolatrous monument to itself. That its top is “in the heavens,” might be an indicator that these people were building a throne upon which they would sit in the place of God.¹⁶ Stephen Dempster highlights the hostility of the people of Babel when he proposes that the building of the tower was “a rebellion *en masse*, storming as it were heaven’s gates.”¹⁷ This is not too surprising considering that Nimrod “the mighty hunter *against the LORD*” may very well have been leading the project.

Second, the people wish to make a name (נָשָׂא) for themselves. Instead of faithfully serving as the ones who image God and spread his fame on the earth, the people of Babel are concerned with their own fame. That are not committed to the glory of God, but wish only to glorify themselves. Additionally, it may very well have been their attempt to regain immortality.¹⁸ Knowing that they themselves would die, they sought to earn a name that would be remembered forever through the tower they built.

Third, the people directly opposed the revealed will of God. One of the underlying motives for building the city and the tower was to prevent dispersal over the whole earth. This contrasts what God commanded in Genesis 9:1: “Be fruitful and multiply and *fill the earth*.” The builders’ hope “flies directly in the face of the divine commandment.”¹⁹ The people of Babel, then, were creating a city that would be

¹⁵In fact, the Hebrew word for ‘tower’ is *migdāl*, which is related to the Hebrew word for ‘great.’ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 353.

¹⁶It is God who is said to “sit in the heavens (בְּשָׁמַיִם).” Waltke and Fredricks write in agreement, “Here the addition ‘to the heavens’ shows they are vying with God himself. The Lord, not humankind dwells in the heavens (Gen. 19:24; 21:17; 22:11, 15; Deut. 26:15; Ps. 115:16).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 179.

¹⁷Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 74.

¹⁸Waltke and Fredricks write, “Since *name* connotes fame and progeny, these city builders are futilely attempting to find significance and immortality in their own achievements (see 6:4).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 179; also, Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 353.

¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 353. Alexander adds, “Human beings set about building a

conducted according to their own will instead of the word of God.

This ultimately demonstrates why Babel stands as the archetype “city of man.”²⁰ Throughout Scripture, rebellious humanity is symbolized by the building of rebellious cities. First was Babel, then Sodom and Gomorrah, later Nineveh, and still later Babylon—which is described in Revelation 17 as the “mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations” (v. 5). These cities promote the glory and will of *’adam* instead of abiding by the will of God in order to glorify him. Babel, then, is the epitome of man’s wickedness and is built by sheer rebellious desire.

Divine Judgment

That humanity has returned to its pre-flood rebellion hints at the coming intervention of God. When the Nephilim ruled and violence filled the earth, God was motivated to intervene by reigning down judgment. So also, it is while Nimrod rules and incites humanity to rebellion by making a tower that God will bring judgment once again—not through a flood of water, but through a flood of confusion.

Genesis 11:5 says, “And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.” This is another subtle connection to Genesis 6. In chapter 6, God *saw* (ראה) the wickedness of the earth, while in chapter 11 he comes down to *see* (ראה) the city. It is ironic, however, that though humanity built the tower of Babel as a memorial of their “greatness,” the Lord still “came *down*” to see it.²¹ Humanity’s self-asserted greatness is unimpressive when compared with the greatness of God. Sinful humanity builds *upward* toward heaven, but yet the great God still descends just to see it.

city with a tower that will reach up to the heavens in order that humankind will not be dispersed throughout the earth. This reverses the divine plan, for God is interested in making the whole earth his residence by filling it with holy people.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 29; likewise, Waltke and Fredricks write, “This skyscraper is a symbol of their united titanic societal self-assertion against God, who commands them to ‘fill the earth’ (9:1).” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 180.

²⁰Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 129.

²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 354.

Their “great” tower was not so “great.”

Having seen the city and the tower, God said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech” (vv. 6-7). God’s evaluation, “nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them,” is not a statement of anxiety. The God who “came down” to see the tower is not concerned for the safety of his throne. Quite the contrary, God knows that this act of rebellion will soon be followed by even greater acts of rebellion.²² Unless he frustrates this singular act of defiance, mankind would go on to build other cities and towers all in the name of opposition to God’s will and reign on earth.

Interestingly, God’s judgment comes not by directly destroying the city and the tower, but by destroying the source of the unity with which mankind has joined together to build the tower—that is, he destroyed their unified language.²³ “Come, let us go down and there confuse their language” contrasts the builders who said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower.”²⁴ What man built, God would frustrate. The result was that humans could no longer understand one another. The people’s unity was broken and “the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth” (v. 8). Ironically, the people of Babel built the city and the tower to *prevent* dispersion, but it could not prevent God’s judgment. God, as it were, conquered humanity’s fortress and exiled them from

²²Waltke and Fredricks observe, “In Gen. 11:6 Yahweh states that nothing will be able to restrain or thwart the workings of man unless this initial building project, a threat to the divine will and rule, is halted. As in Gen. 3, mankind is trying to overstep his limits, and in fact does so, only to pay a price for that self-exaltation. This proposed or potential action must be thwarted, here as it was in Gen. 3.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 355; Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 119.

²³Hamilton writes, “It is not the tower that must be done away with, but what makes possible the building of the tower—an international language that provides communication among linguistic groups.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 355.

²⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 352.

Shinar.²⁵ This also demonstrates the sovereignty of God. Nothing thwarts his will, including a rebelliously unified humanity. They sought to prevent dispersion, and yet they were driven “over the face of all the earth” just as God originally commanded.²⁶

The builders of the tower set out to make a name for themselves, and ironically that is just what they did. However, instead of being remembered for their anti-God ingenuity, they are forever remembered for the confusion that God brought upon them. The name “Babel” references God’s judgement which confused man’s rebellious action. In the end, God’s will is accomplished and his name alone is glorified. The destruction of Babel shows that “God will frustrate and confound all other buildings, that are set up in opposition to the great building of the work of redemption.”²⁷ God is victoriously faithful to his redemptive plan even as humanity is helplessly rebellious in their sinful desires.

The Hope of Redemption

The tragedy of Babel is followed by the genealogy of Shem. This is not by accident. The *tôlêdôt* of Shem revives hope in the coming redemption. Dempster highlights the importance of genealogies like this one found at the end of chapter 11. He writes, “Throughout Genesis genealogies are deployed in such a way that when two or more are listed from the same generation, the last will include a member who will assume a prominent role in subsequent narrative.”²⁸ In other words, that Abram’s name is found at the end of this genealogy is significant for the next section of Genesis. It is also interesting that just as Noah came ten generations after Adam, so also Abram comes ten

²⁵Hamilton comments, “The builders also thought that the existence of such a fortified city would be the guarantee of their security. With such a fortress they would be less vulnerable.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 353.

²⁶Waltke and Fredricks write, “In spite of their rebellion, the Sovereign fulfills his design that people fill the earth.” Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 181.

²⁷Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003) 50.

²⁸Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 74.

generations after Noah.²⁹ Noah was a new Adam through whom God brought about a renewed creation. What, then, might God do through Abram?

The genealogy itself gives a hint. Genesis 11:10-26 follows the same structure as the genealogy of Genesis 5. That is, both genealogies follow the same formula, “When [X] had lived [Y] years, he fathered [Z]. And [X] lived after he fathered [Z] [Y] years and had other sons and daughters.” However, there is one very important difference. In Genesis 5, the formula concludes with “and he died,” whereas the phrase “and he died” is omitted in Genesis 11:10-26. Could it be that the genealogy by omitting the phrase “and he died” is giving a subtle hint of God’s plan to redeem humanity from sin and death through Abram’s lineage? It is difficult to know for certain; however, it is an intriguing possibility. Nevertheless, as Genesis 12 makes clear, God will work through Abram and his seed to reverse the curse and renew blessing to all the families of the earth.

Genesis 11:27-32 begins another genealogy that provides further insight into Terah’s family. Three sons of Terah are named: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. According to the genealogy, Haran “died in the presence of his father” leaving behind his son Lot. The genealogy also turns the spotlight onto Abram’s wife, Sarai, who is described as “barren.” Both Abram and Sarai will play a distinct role in Genesis 12-25. The genealogy ends with the death of Abram’s father, and Abram living in Haran. Thus, the redemptive hope rests on Abram, through whom God’s plan will spring forward in an extraordinary way. Whereas Genesis 1 through 11 have focused on humanity as a whole, the rest of Genesis will focus on one particular family and the blessing that God gives through them. With Abram and Sarai, history moves closer toward its “divine goal” –the goal of redemption and restoration.³⁰

²⁹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 75.

³⁰Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 76.

Conclusion

Genesis 10 and 11 provide a powerful conclusion for the first major section of Genesis. These two chapters unapologetically assert the sovereignty of God over the sinful children of Adam. God is just as sovereign in Genesis 10-11 as he was in Genesis 1. His will is effectively accomplished and nothing can hinder his plan and purposes. These chapters also maintain the on-going warfare between the serpent and the woman, and yet, these chapters herald what Genesis 3:15 promised. That is, the seed of the serpent will be definitively defeated and blessing will be restored through the seed of the woman.

Furthermore, Genesis 10 and 11 show the persistence of man's sin and the inevitability of God's judgment. Because of his holiness, he cannot and will not tolerate rebellion. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. In Genesis 4, Cain was exiled from God's presence. And in Genesis 11, the people of Babel were exiled from Shinar and forced to dwell in isolation from one another.³¹

Finally, Genesis 10 and 11 proclaim the tenacity of God's redemptive promises. With the highlighting of one particular offspring, Abram, Genesis 10 and 11 rekindle hope in the promised, serpent-crushing offspring. God will faithfully fulfill his promises and the world of men will be saved from sin and death. Edenic blessing will once again visit the earth, and God will dwell with his people.

Finally, these last two chapters of this section in Genesis lead the reader to hope in a city that is built not by men but by God himself. If humanity cannot regain paradise for itself, then people must look to God to renew Edenic paradise. This, of course, is what God does through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By bearing the sinful curse of humanity, Jesus reconciled sinners to their Blessed God. By bearing judgment through the cross, Jesus defeats the city of men and establishes the city of God.

³¹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 75.

As is seen with the downfall of Babel, “Christ’s kingdom is established, by bringing down every high thing to make way for it.”³² The leveling of the city of Man prepares for the founding of the city of God, whose king is the promised Savior. Thus, it is while man’s kingdom falls that God’s kingdom is powerfully established on earth as it is in heaven.

And thus concludes our tour of the gospel’s foundation. It is only after one comes to understand and value the Christ-saturated foundation that is laid in Genesis 1-11 that he or she may fully appreciate the beauty of the Gospel writers’ frescoes. Without the foundation stones of Genesis, the beautiful masterpiece we call “the gospel” would never exist. If we did not have Genesis to teach us about God’s sovereignty as the Creator, man’s helplessness in sin, and the hope of a promised Savior, we would never be able to understand the significance, beauty, and glory of the cross of Christ, for the gospel of Jesus Christ rests on the firm foundation provided by the book of Genesis.

³²Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, 50.

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ABSTRACT

THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS: HOW AN ANCIENT MESSAGE SUBVERTS CONTEMPORARY WORLDVIEWS AND LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR A CHRIST-CENTERED GOSPEL

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The goal of this project was to explore the biblical theological themes found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Chapter 1 briefly outlines these themes, the “building blocks” of the gospel, and also establishes a definition for biblical theology—a definition which governs the hermeneutic used to interpret this section of Genesis. Chapters 2 through 4 explore God’s sovereignty in creation, the specific creation of man as the image bearer of God, and the unique relationship between God and *'adam* in Eden. Chapters 5 and 6 exegete Genesis 3 and investigate the major themes connected with the sinful fall of mankind. Chapter 7 deals with the worsening impact of sin through Adam’s descendants, while chapters 8 through 9 consider the flood, Noah’s salvation, and his subsequent fall in the renewed creation. Chapter 10 concludes the project by looking at the tower of Babel and the genealogy that leads to Abram. This project shows how the basic framework of the gospel—including God’s sovereignty, man’s depravity, Christ’s redemption, and the response of faith—are all established in the first book of the Bible.

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