



Introduction to GENESIS

Author

Genesis does not name its author, but tradition ascribes the book to Moses. Given that the events in Genesis occurred well before Moses lived, much of the book is based on oral tradition and written materials he presumably inherited, collected, organized, and edited under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Genesis" comes from the Greek *geneseos* ("ancestry, generation, lineage, history"), which appears in 2:4 of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament. The book of Genesis is organized according to eleven genealogies (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). The Hebrew title of the book, *Bereshit*, is the first word in Genesis and means "in the beginning."

Context

Moses likely lived during the late sixteenth century to the late fifteenth century BC. Thus, he would have collated, edited, and produced the book of Genesis between ca 1440 and 1400 BC. Much of the material he used, however, he inherited and likely dates from the patriarchal period (ca 2000–1550 BC). The location of the events recorded in chaps. 1–9 cannot be identified with certainty. However, the Table of Nations in chap. 10 mentions several identifiable countries, cities, and people groups in Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine, including Cush, Egypt (Mizraim), Canaan, Babylon, Assyria, Nineveh, Sodom, and Gomorrah. Abraham's homeland of Ur (11:31; 15:7) was located in southern Babylonia, and Haran (11:31; 12:4) was a major city in northern Mesopotamia. The rest of the events in Genesis take place in Canaan, Paddan-aram (northern Mesopotamia), and Egypt.

Message and Purpose

The book of Genesis provides an explanation of beginnings. The world God created was good, but human sin corrupted it and separated God from his creation. The increase in human sin brought God's judgment in the form of a devastating flood (6–9). Although the flood cleansed the earth, it did not purify the human heart. People again desired autonomy from God (11:1–9). As promised, God did not flood the earth a second time (9:11). Instead, he curbed human evil by reducing the human life span (6:3) and confusing their language (11:7–9). He then set in motion his grand redemptive plan to bless the nations through Abraham and his descendants (12:1–3).

The goal of Genesis is to present God as the sole Creator of the world and sovereign Lord of human history, to explain God's original creational intent and the early history of his people—specifically the history of Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants—and to show God's active involvement in the human sphere to bring about his redemptive aims, despite human sinfulness.

Placement in the Bible's Storyline

As the book of beginnings, Genesis brings forward redemptive themes that wind consistently throughout the Bible. Because of God's great love for his creatures, he will always seek communion with humanity. God initiates this relationship according to his favor, as in his call to Abraham, who responded in faith demonstrated through obedience, which was accounted to him as righteousness (Gn 15:6; Rm 4:1–22; Gl 3:6–9; Heb 11:8–10, 17–19; Jms 2:23). Genesis sets out the idea that salvation has always come through God's favor and a human faith response, never through works of merit, and not even through works of the law (laid out in the next four books of the Pentateuch), for these did not exist when God called Abraham (Rm 4). Genesis also offers a number of types of Christ (Adam, Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph) who picture and point forward to aspects of his redemptive work. Finally, Genesis holds before the reader God's ideal for human-divine fellowship in love, harmony, companionship, fruitfulness, and flourishing. Images of Eden appear in various parts of the Old and New Testaments, reminding humanity of what has been lost and enticing us forward toward God's kingdom of beauty, richness, and peace.

Recurring and Connecting Themes

Creation and Beginnings

Genesis opens by naming God as the source of all things and the creator of the heavens and the earth (Gn 1:1). This theme of beginnings continues through various other "firsts" (e.g., sin, birth, death, civilization, languages) until the book narrows its focus on the beginnings of the nation of Israel. Through the accounts of the patriarchs and matriarchs, Genesis shows God working out his plans to create worshipers who will witness to his glory until, one day, all humankind is restored to his shalom in the new heaven and new earth (Rv 21:1–4).

Sin and Redemption

Connecting to the theme of beginnings, Genesis explains sin's presence in the world and how it corrupts and destroys God's good creation. What began in the garden as a single choice (Gn 3:4–7) spreads throughout the entire earth bringing alienation, suffering, and death (6:1–8:22). At each step, however, God shows himself merciful and promises a way of redemption that begins in Genesis 3:15 when he tells the woman that her offspring will crush the deceiver's head.

Covenant

God codifies his mercy in the form of covenants through which he binds himself to his creation in specific ways. Whether it is the promise to never flood the earth again (9:11) or to make Abraham a great nation (15:18), God continues his work of creation

and redemption through these promises, committing himself to caring for and sustaining his creation until the day it is ultimately freed from sin through the promised Son.

God's Faithfulness

Genesis records both God's covenants and his faithfulness to fulfill what he has promised. God's trustworthiness is revealed page after page as he keeps his promise to give children, save the undeserving from destruction, bless those who follow him, and ultimately bring forth goodness despite the presence of evil (50:20). Seeing how God was faithful in the past testifies that he will continue to be faithful in the future.

Fruitful Approaches to Reading This Book

The book of Genesis is primarily historical prose narrative told from a theological perspective. It should be read as not simply the story of creation, the fall, Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants but as salvation history. It explains God's original creational intent and the initial stages of his grand redemptive plan to atone for sin, renew creation, and restore humanity's relationship with him.

Outline

- I. The Primeval History (1:1–11:26)
 - A. God Creates the Universe and Men and Women in His Image (1:1–2:3)
 - B. The Records of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
 1. No Shrub, No Plants, No Rain, but Mist (2:5–6)
 2. Creation of the Man (2:7)
 3. God Plants a Garden in Eden (2:8–17)
 4. Creation of the Woman (2:18–24)
 5. The Fall and Its Consequences (3:1–24)
6. Cain and Abel (4:1–26)
7. Eve Gives Birth to Seth (4:25–26)
- C. The Family Records from Adam to Noah (5:1–6:8)
 1. The Increase of Human Wickedness (6:1–4)
 2. God Will Judge (6:5–8)
- D. The Family Records of Noah (6:9–9:29)
 1. The Flood (6:9–8:14)
 2. God's Covenant with Noah (8:15–9:17)
 3. Curses and Blessings on Noah's Sons (9:18–29)
- E. The Family Records of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)
 1. Japheth, Ham, and Shem (10:2–31)
 2. The Tower of Babylon (11:1–9)
- F. The Family Records of Shem (11:10–26)
- II. The History of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs (11:27–50:26)
 - A. The Family Records of Terah (11:27–25:18)
 1. Terah (11:27–32)
 2. Abraham and Sarah (12:1–25:18)
 - a. God's Covenant with Abram (12:1–15:21)
 - b. Hagar Gives Birth to Ishmael (16:1–16)
 - c. Circumcision: The Sign of the Covenant (17:1–21)
 - d. Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed, Lot's Family Rescued (18:16–19:38)
 - e. Sarah Is Promised a Son, Protected from Abimelech, and Gives Birth to Isaac (18:1–15; 20:1–18; 21:1–34)
 - f. Offering of Isaac (22:1–19)
 - g. Sarah's Death and Isaac's New Life with Rebekah (22:20–24:67)
 - h. Abraham's Death and Ishmael's Family Records (25:1–18)
 - B. The Family Records of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
 1. Rebekah Gives Birth to Jacob and Esau (25:19–33)
 2. God Affirms the Covenant with Isaac (26:1–33)

3. Family Conflicts: Esau's Wives (26:34–35), Stolen Blessing (27:1–46)
4. Jacob's Life in Paddan-aram (28:1–33:20)
5. Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel (28:1–29:30)
6. Jacob's Fruitfulness: Children with Leah, Rachel, and Concubines (29:31–30:24), and Increased Flocks (30:25–43)
7. Escape from and Covenant with Laban (31:1–35)
8. Jacob Wrestles with God and Reconciles with Esau (32:1–33:20)
9. Jacob's Life in Canaan: The Rape of Dinah, Return to Bethel, Rachel's Death, Isaac's Death (34:1–35:29)
- C. The Family Records of Esau and Relation to Edomites (36:1–43)
- D. The Family Records of Jacob (37:1–50:26)
 1. Joseph's Dreams and His Brothers' Betrayal (37:2–36)
 2. Tamar and Judah (38:1–30)
 3. Joseph's Life and Success in Egypt (39:1–41:57)
 4. Joseph's Family in Egypt (42:1–50:26)
 - a. Israel's Family Reunited (42:1–47:31)
 - b. Jacob's Blessings (48:1–49:27)
 - c. The Death of Jacob (49:28–50:21)
 - d. Joseph's Death (50:22–26)

2200 BC	2100 BC	2000 BC	1900 BC	1800 BC
➡➡➡ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earliest pottery in South America 2200 • Abraham 2166–1991 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of Ziggurat at Ur in Sumer 2100 • Job 2100?–1900? • Abram and Sarai move from Haran to Canaan. 2091 • Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah 2085 • God's covenant with Abraham 2081? • Hagar bears Ishmael. 2080? • Sarah bears Isaac. 2066–1886 • Rebekah bears Jacob and Esau. 2006–1859 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese create first zoo, Park of Intelligence. 2000 • Babylonians and Egyptians divide days into hours, minutes, and seconds. 2000 • Code of medical ethics in Mesopotamia 2000 • Courier systems of communication are developed in both China and Egypt. 2000 • Rachel bears Joseph. 1915–1805 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin is born; Rachel dies. 1900 • Potter's wheel is introduced in Crete. 1900 • Use of the sail in the Aegean 1900 • Joseph sold into Egyptian slavery 1898 • Khnumhotep II, an architect of Pharaoh Amenemhet II, develops encryption. 1900 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical theory, Mesopotamia 1800 • Multiplication tables, Mesopotamia 1800 • Babylonians develop catalog of stars and planets 1800 • Horses are introduced in Egypt. 1800

THE CREATION

1 In the beginning^a God created the heavens and the earth.^{a,b}

² Now the earth was formless and empty,^c darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.^d ³ Then God said, “Let there be light,”^e and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶ Then God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.”^f ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse.^g And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse “sky.”^h Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹ Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place,^h and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land “earth,” and the gathering of the water he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation:

seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.”ⁱ And it was so. ¹² The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs^j for seasons^k and for days and years.^k ¹⁵ They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night—as well as the stars.^l ¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.^m And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, “Let the water swarm withⁿ living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”^o ²¹ So God created

the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water,^a according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them: “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”^b ²³ Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us^c make man^a in^b our image, according to our likeness.^d They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl^c on the earth.”^e

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.^f

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth,^g and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

²⁹ God also said, “Look, I have given you every

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANITY (Gn 1:27)

The image of God in humanity is understood as mirroring God’s attributes in our nature, actions, and relational capacities. In Jesus, we see the true image of God. He perfectly mirrors God’s attributes, fulfills God’s will, and enjoys a perfect relationship with the Father. The Bible continues to speak of the image of God in humanity even after our fall into sin, even though our ability to rightly reflect God has been marred.

seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,^h ³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given^o every green plant for food.”ⁱ And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed.^j Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.^k ² On the seventh^e day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested^f on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.^l ³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested^m from all his work of creation.ⁿ

^a1:21 Ps 104:25–28 ^b1:22 Gn 8:17; 9:1 ^c1:26 Gn 3:22; 11:7 ^d1:26 Gn 5:1,3; 9:6; Rm 8:29; 1Co 11:7; 15:49; 2Co 3:18; 4:4; Eph 4:24; Col 1:15; Jms 3:9 ^e1:26 Gn 9:2; Ps 8:6–8; Jms 3:7 ^f1:27 Gn 5:2; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6 ^g1:28 Gn 9:1,7 ^h1:29 Gn 9:3; Ps 104:14–15; 136:25; 145:15–16 ⁱ1:30 Ps 147:9 ^j1:31 Ttm 4:4 ^k2:1 Neh 9:6; Ps 33:6; Is 34:4; 45:12 ^l2:2 Ex 20:8–11; 31:17; Dt 5:12–14; Heb 4:4 ^m2:3 Ex 31:17 ⁿ2:3 Ex 20:11; 31:17; Ps 121:2

1:1 Verse 1 introduces a truly revolutionary idea for the ancient world. Instead of presenting creation as a collaborative effort by a group of gods (pantheon), the text teaches monotheism, proclaiming that God created the cosmos alone. Hebrew has several different verbs meaning “made,” “produced,” “built,” “formed,” “constructed,” and “fashioned,” which can be used to describe the activity of both God and humans. The Hebrew verb translated *created* (*bara*), however, is reserved for God alone. His creative power is unique and has no analogy in the human sphere. Although the objects of *bara* are usually created entities (heavens, stars, earth, animals, humans, etc.), this verb also refers to God’s spiritually regenerative power.

1:2 The English translation *formless and empty* derives from the Hb rhyming phrase *tohu wavohu*. The Hebrew term for *Spirit* (Hb *ruach*) can also mean “breeze,” “breath,” and “wind” (Ps 33:6). God’s breath (Hb *ruach*) is also instrumental in enlivening his people (Ezk 37:4–6). Other passages in the OT identify God’s breath as the source of wisdom and insight (Gn 41:38), as the author and giver of creativity (Ex 31:3; 35:31), and as a means of delivering God’s word and will (Nm 24:2; 1Sm 10:10; 19:20,23; Ezk

11:24). All three of these meanings suit the context of Gn 1, and thus all three of them may be in view in this passage. The verb translated *hovering* (cp. Dt 32:11) evokes the fluttering wings of a bird (see Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32). Israel would have understood the hovering of God’s Spirit in Gn 1:2 as a manifestation of his presence. Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation accounts also claim that *watery depths* preceded creation, reflecting a common understanding about the world’s beginnings (Rm 1:20). But unlike these creation accounts in which multiple gods participate, Scripture affirms that God alone created the cosmos.

1:3–4 As the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, God spoke habitable spaces and their inhabitants into existence through his divine word (vv. 3–26; cp. Jn 1:1–3). The Hb seamlessly moved from “the Spirit of God” as the subject in Gn 1:2 to “God” in v. 3, equating the two. Because ancient Israel received God’s self-revelation early in human history, knowledge of the Trinity as a clear understanding of the Son and the Spirit as distinct persons comes only in the fullness of God’s self-revelation recorded in the NT: in the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14) and the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ac 2:1). The subsequent revelation of God in Christ

offers a much fuller revelation of the Creator (Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–12). Without disregarding its original context, Gn 1 should be read in light of God’s complete self-revelation in the NT, which says that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fully participated in creation (Jn 1:1–18; Col 1:16–17). Within the chapter, the goodness (Hb *tov*, “good”) of God’s creation is affirmed seven times. In the world of ancient Israel and its neighbors, seven signified fullness, completion, and perfection, a number associated not only with creation and Sabbath rest (Ex 34:21) but also with temple building (1Kg 6:37–38).

1:5 Genesis 1 presents the creation of the world in a seven-day week. Later texts speak of creation as if God were building something sacred like a macro-temple (see Is 66:1–2). God spread out the sky like a canopy (lit “tent curtain,” as in Ps 104:2; cp. Jb 8:9; Is 40:22) and laid the beams of his palace on the waters above (Ps 104:3). He established its dimensions and spread a measuring line across it (Jb 38:5). He supported its foundations, laid its cornerstone, and set its bars and doors in place (Jb 38:6,10). God affirms himself as the Creator who is above and beyond his creation, as the transcendent and infinite One whom no temple can contain, as he sovereignly administers the

creation from “heaven,” which is his “throne,” while “earth” is his “footstool” (Is 66:1; cp. 1Kg 8:27; Ezk 43:7).

1:6–8 The Hebrew word translated *expanse* is from a root meaning “to spread out, to stamp (metal) or beat firmly.” It describes the work of a craftsman who hammers gold into foil sheets or plates (Ex 39:3; Nm 16:39; Is 40:19). Here it refers to a vast, dome-like structure God names “sky” that separates the primordial body of water into two (cp. Jb 37:16–18; Is 40:22).

1:11–12 The frequent repetition of *according to its/their kind(s)* (1:11–24) emphasizes God’s orderly creation. God created each plant and animal with the innate ability to reproduce within its own species.

1:14–19 God’s creative acts included ordering time and marking its passing. The sun, moon, and stars provide light, but their regular rising and setting also impart stability, organization, and predictability to human life (cp. Ps 104:19).

1:16,18 The Hebrew terms translated to *rule* and *rule over* are from the same verbal root meaning “to have dominion, to exercise

^a1:1 Or *created the universe*

^b1:8 Or “heavens.”

^c1:14 Or *for the appointed times*

^d1:20 Lit *with swarms of*

authority over.” The text suggests that they “rule” because of their preeminent position in the sky and the significance of their function. These great lights serve God and order the creation. They are not equal with God and are not to receive worship. This idea was particularly important in Israel’s context where astral bodies received worship as deities, and in due time, Israel itself would fall into this kind of idolatry (cp. Jr 7:18; 19:13; 44:17; Ezk 8:16).

1:20 Abundance and fertility are parts of God’s creational intent and are signs of his blessing. These commands recur several times in various OT contexts of re-creation and blessing (8:17; 9:1,7; 35:11; Jr 23:3; Ezk 36:11; cp. Ex 1:7).

1:26 Many Christian traditions agree that the plural “us” in *Let us make* refers to the Trinity (see note on 1:3–4). Scripture testifies to the roles of the Spirit and the Son in creation (Jn 1:3). Another possible explanation for the plural address is that God is

speaking to the heavenly hosts who dwell in his presence (1Kg 22:19; Ps 85:6–7; Is 6:6–8) and over whom he presides (Ps 82:1). In this context the Hebrew word *‘adam* translated *man* refers to “mankind, humanity.” Chapter 1 describes the similarity between the plants and animals and their offspring as “according to its/their kind(s).” But the terms *image* and *likeness* are reserved for the relationship between parents and children (5:3), in particular, humanity’s unique connection to God as his children (1:26–27). It was a common practice in the ancient Near East for kings to erect statues of themselves throughout their kingdoms as visible symbols of their rule and authority. These images were known by the same term for “image” (Hb *tselem*) as in this verse. Thus, to be created in God’s image is to be not only his son/child but also his royal representative who reflects the Father’s rule and his standards

of justice and righteousness in the world.

1:27 As in v. 26, the Hebrew word *‘adam* translated *man* refers to humanity. The word translated *him* refers to the preceding *‘adam*, the collective noun meaning “man/humanity,” not only to the man, Adam. Both male and female are created in God’s image, and both are needed to carry out God’s forthcoming commands to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and rule over it (cp. 2:18).

1:28 To be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth is part of God’s original creational intent for men and women and a sign of God’s blessing (9:1; 28:3; Ex 1:7; Lv 26:9; Ps 127:3–5). As his representatives, God commands humanity to *subdue* the earth and *rule* over it. As seen in Gn 1:16–17, *rule* may imply caring for creation by providing stability and organization, stewarding its potential in ways that bless rather than harm or exploit it. Fruitfulness and rulership go beyond biological reproduction;

they constitute a stewardship that is holistic and all-encompassing in scope.

1:29–30 God designed plants and fruit trees to reproduce “according to their kinds” so that vegetation would flourish and grow and so that humans and animals would have a constant supply of food.

2:2–3 The verb translated *rested* (Hb *shabbat*) also means “to cease.” By the seventh day creation was complete, so God ceased from his work. He then *blessed the seventh day and declared it holy*. That is, he set it apart as a day of rest from the other six days of activity. God’s rest here becomes the basis for Israel’s Sabbath observance (Ex

^a1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb *‘adam*, also in v. 27

^b1:26 Or *as*

^c1:26 Or *scurry*

^d1:30 I have given added for clarity

^e2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read *sixth*

^f2:2 Or *ceased*, also in v. 3

you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal.

You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.^a

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.^a

He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.^b

¹⁶ He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort.^c Your desire^d will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

¹⁷ And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.^e You will eat from it by means of painful labor^b all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.^f

¹⁹ You will eat bread^c by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground,^g since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust.”

describes how life will be after sinful choices upset the balance of creation. Instead of life and shalom, reality will now be marked by conflict, pain, unending toil, and eventually, death. While this section of Scripture is often referred to as “The Curse,” the serpent (3:14) and the ground (v. 17) are the only ones directly cursed.

3:14 Verse 1 describes the serpent as the “most cunning” (Hb *arum*) of creatures. Now, however, he is the most **cursed** (Hb *arur*). The sound play between these words in Hebrew calls attention to the serpent’s unfavorable status.

3:15 Although Satan would strike the heel of the woman’s offspring, her offspring would crush the serpent’s head, destroying him. This promise is fulfilled in Christ’s defeat of Satan at the cross and by his resurrection, as well as by his promised final banishment of evil at his second coming (Rm 16:20; Heb 2:14; Rv

12:9; 20:10). Christian teaching often refers to this promise as the *protevangelium*, literally in Lat, “the first gospel,” which points to its future fulfillment.

3:16 The woman’s **desire** for her husband is paired with the accompanying reality that he will **rule over** her (Hb *mashal*, “to rule or govern,” which is a different term than that used to commission the man and woman to co-rule the created order). This new dynamic manifests in different ways, but her **desire** and his **rule over** her bring brokenness and hostility into a relationship intended for communion and life. But marriages, and men’s and women’s relationships more generally (1:26–28; 2:23–25; cp. 4:7), do not have to proceed in this broken way. Beauty, joy, love, and collaboration are still possible even if they have been made difficult. In the covenant community of the church, apostolic teaching urges men and women to pursue

transformed relationships (cp. Eph 4:21–32; 5:21–33) and rejects all forms of abusive, manipulative, or domineering behavior (Col 3:1–19; 1Pt 3:1–9).

3:17–19 God condemns the man for disobeying a direct command that the man had heard from God himself (2:16–17). Unlike the woman, the man was not deceived (1Tm 2:14) but transgressed because he listened to a voice other than God’s. Prior to their disobedience, the man and woman lived in harmony with the earth, working and watching over it. In return, it gave back the fruit that would sustain them (Gn 2:15). Their rule and stewardship was mutually beneficial; but sin destroys this relationship. Just as women will experience increased hardship (Hb *be’esev*, “in pain, suffering, sorrow” from *tsv*, “suffering, pain, hardship,” 3:16) in the work of childbearing, bringing forth fruit from the **ground** will also involve hard, **painful**

WORD STUDY

CHAVVAH (CSB: “LIVING”) • Naming someone else is an act of recognizing their status and identity or marking a change in that status (as in Gn 17:5). In Hebrew there is a wordplay on the woman’s name. Adam calls her “*chavvah*” (“living, life”) because she will be the mother of all the “*chay*” (living). “Eve” comes from the ancient Latin translation of the Old Testament, the Vulgate. It transliterates “*chavvah*” as “*Hava*,” which in English is either “Eva” or “Eve.” By this name, Adam recognizes Eve’s role and identity and honors her with a fitting name. Giving Eve this name is an act of faith that life will continue despite the certainty of death and the yet unknown hardships facing them outside the garden.

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve^b because she was the mother of all the living. ²¹ The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

²² The LORD God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.”^h ²³ So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.ⁱ

[physical] **labor**. And all humans, taken from the ground through their father ‘adam, will fight with the earth until they finally return to it in death.

3:22 The term translated **man** (Hb *‘adam*) can mean “humanity,” but here it refers to Adam specifically because he, not Eve, was taken from the ground (2:7; 3:23) and originally placed in the garden and charged with keeping it (2:15–17). Although Eve is not mentioned, we know that she, too, was exiled along with Adam (4:1). For us, see the notes on 1:2, 3–4, 26. On **knowing good and evil**, see the notes on 2:9 and 3:4–5. God banishes the man and the woman before they can eat from the **tree of life** and **live forever** in a sinful state, separated from God.

^a3:15 Lit *your seed and her seed*

^b3:17 Lit *it through pain*

^c3:19 Or *food*

^d3:20 Lit *Living*, or *Life*

CAIN MURDERS ABEL

4 The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”^a ² She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD.^c ⁴ And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.^b The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,^c ⁵ but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious?^d And why do you look despondent?^e ⁷ If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”^e

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”^g And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.^f

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰ Then he said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!^g ¹¹ So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed.^c ¹² If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”^h

¹³ But Cain answered the LORD, “My punishment^b is too great to bear! ¹⁴ Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me.”ⁱ

¹⁵ Then the LORD replied to him, “In that case,^e whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” And he placed a mark^j on

^a4:3 Ex 23:19; 34:26; Neh 10:35 ^b4:4 Ex 13:12; Nm 18:17; Pr 3:9 ^c4:4 Heb 11:4 ^d4:6 Jnh 4:4 ^e4:7 Gn 3:16 ^f4:8 Mt 23:35; Lk 11:51; 1Jn 3:12–15; Jd 11 ^g4:10 Nm 35:33; Dt 21:1–9; Heb 12:24; Rv 6:9–10 ^h4:12 Dt 28:16–18; Is 26:21 ⁱ4:14 Nm 35:26–27

^j4:15 Ex 9:4; Ezk 9:4,6; Rv 13:16–17

4:1–2 Despite human sin and banishment, God’s plan goes forward as Eve **conceived** two children, Cain (Hb *qayin* meaning, “acquired, possessed”) and Abel (Hb *hevel*, “breath, vapor,” as in Ec 1:2). Both participate in fulfilling God’s mandate to work/cultivate the ground and steward God’s creatures.

4:3–7 God is neither fickle nor unfair. His response to Cain’s offering suggests that he rejected it because of Cain’s behavior. Cain was not doing **what is right**, so

God warns him to **rule over** his sinful desires.

4:8–14 Rather than controlling himself, Cain defies God and murders his brother. As with Adam and Eve, God asks Cain about his deed: **Where is your brother Abel?** Cain has no one to blame but still lies and evades the question. By his heinous sin, Cain has polluted the ground with Abel’s innocent blood (Heb 11:4; 12:24), just as his parents’ sin resulted in the ground being cursed (Gn 3:17–18). Cain

A CLOSER LOOK

FERTILITY • Creation’s ability to reproduce and bring new life into existence is a reflection of God’s own life-giving nature. Plants and animals all replicate themselves “according to their kinds” (Gn 1:12,24). Likewise, men and women are empowered to “be fruitful [and] multiply” (1:28), bringing new image bearers into being. But sin’s presence changes all this. The fertility so central to creation is put in jeopardy. The woman “will bear children with painful effort” (3:16) and the earth will “produce thorns and thistles” (3:18). In fact, when Eve, “the mother of all the living” (3:20), gives birth to her first son, she knows that it is only “with the LORD’s help” (4:1) that it happened.

Because of this stark reality, Scripture often uses fertility to represent the essential struggle between life and death, even likening the earth to a woman groaning in childbirth as it waits for God’s final redemption (Rm 8:22–25). Scripture also records accounts of infertility, stillbirth, infant loss, and maternal mortality, telling the truth about life under the weight of sin. But even here, God’s grace and care for his creation are evident because Scripture also records life continuing—often through miraculous means. God even chooses to send the promised Son (Gn 3:15) through a supernatural birth. In all this, Scripture reminds us of our dependence on God while foreshadowing a day when he will wipe the tears from every eye, and death will be no more (Rv 21:4).

Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,^f east of Eden.

THE LINE OF CAIN

¹⁷ Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. ¹⁸ Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered

is further **alienated** from the ground and effectively exiled from his agricultural vocation. Sent away from God’s presence like his parents were sent from the garden, he will wander the earth until he eventually builds a city far from Eden (4:17).

4:17–22 This list of names signals that God’s original creational intent for men and women to multiply and fill the earth is moving forward. The inclusion of wives and sisters underscores that this work cannot happen without

women’s presence and participation. East of Eden, humanity begins to create cities and civilization through the skills of husbandry, music, and metallurgy. Even still, the presence of sin looms and grows (4:23–24).

^a4:1 Lit *the LORD*

^b4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits “Let’s go out to the field.”

^c4:11 Lit *blood from your hand*

^d4:13 Or *sin*

^e4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read “Not so!”

^f4:16 Lit *Wandering*

⁶Ham's sons:^a Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. ⁷Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Ramah, and Sabteca. And Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. ⁹He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD." ¹⁰His kingdom started with Babylon,^b Erech,^a Accad,⁸ and Calneh,^c in the land of Shinar.^{d,e} ¹¹From that land he went to Assyria^d and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah,¹² and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

¹³Mizraim^{e,e} fathered the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, ¹⁴Pathrus, Casluh (the Philistines came from them), and Caphtor.^f

¹⁵Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth,¹⁶ as well as the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites,^g ¹⁷the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites,¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered. ¹⁹The Canaanite border went from Sidon going toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and going toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.

²⁰These are Ham's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

²¹And Shem, Japheth's older brother, also had sons. Shem was the father of all the sons of Eber.^h ²²Shem's sonsⁱ were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arpachshad fathered^f Shelah,^j and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg,^g for during his days the earth was divided;^k his brother was named Joktan. ²⁶And Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph,

Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were Joktan's sons. ³⁰Their settlements extended from Mesha to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

³¹These are Shem's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

³²These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood.^l

THE TOWER OF BABYLON

11 The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. ²As people migrated from the east,^m they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.^m ³They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphaltⁿ for mortar.) ⁴And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky.^o Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

⁵Then the LORD came down^p to look over the city and the tower that the humans^l were building. ⁶The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth,^q and they stopped building the city. ⁹Therefore it is called Babylon,^{j,k,r} for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

chronological order. Sometimes the biblical narrative is structured to make a theological, rather than historical, point. Chapter 10 seems to report *natural* human migration, but 11:1–9 provides the *theological* explanation of those events: God dispersed the peoples of the earth to curb evil. Placing the theological explanation after the seemingly normal events of migration adds a degree of surprise. **10:8–12** Nimrod emerges as a powerful hunter and kingdom builder, establishing Babylon in the land of Shinar and, further north in the Tigris and Euphrates

River Valley, building the city of Nineveh. These ancient cities were the seeds of future world empires and would play a crucial role in Israel's history. The tower of Babylon would be built in Shinar, and Shinar/Babylon eventually became associated with hubris and idolatry (cp. Nebuchadnezzar's golden image in Dn 1, 2–3; cp. Rv 17:5; 18:2). **10:31** Five times (5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1) Shem is listed first among his brothers, but at the end of chap. 10 the order is reversed. There are also two genealogies of Shem—one before the tower of Babylon story (10:21–31)

and one afterward (11:10–26). These features suggest that there is something significant about Shem's line. Its importance is revealed in 11:26 and 12:1–3. **11:1–5** The pride of the humans (lit "sons of Adam") bears overtones of the fall into sin in Eden. Instead of spreading out as God had commanded after the flood, humans sought to band together in a kingdom, build a tower to give access to the sky (lit "the heavens," that is, God's domain), and make a name for themselves. **11:6–9** God had punished pride, rebellion, and overstepping

bounds by banishment, destruction, and shortened lifespans.

^a10:10 Or Uruk
^b10:10 Or Akkad
^c10:10 Or and all of them
^d10:10 Or in Babylonia
^e10:13 = Egypt
^f10:24 LXX reads *fathered Cainan, and Cainan fathered*; Gn 11:12–13; Lk 3:35–36
^g10:25 = Division
^h11:2 Or *migrated eastward*
ⁱ11:5 Or *the descendants of Adam*
^j11:9 Hb *Babel*
^k11:9 In Hb, the name for "Babylon," *babel* sounds like the word for "confuse," *balal*.

FROM SHEM TO ABRAM

¹⁰These are the family records^a of Shem. Shem lived 100 years and fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. ¹¹After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹²Arpachshad lived 35 years^a and fathered Shelah. ¹³After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Shelah lived 30 years and fathered Eber. ¹⁵After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁶Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg. ¹⁷After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁸Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu. ¹⁹After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁰Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug. ²¹After he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²²Serug lived 30 years and fathered Nahor. ²³After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁴Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah.^b ²⁵After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years

and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁶Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah's lifetime. ²⁹Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram's wife was named Sarai,^c and Nahor's wife was named Milcah.^d She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰Sarai was unable to conceive;^e she did not have a child.

³¹Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran's son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans^f to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³²Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.

THE CALL OF ABRAM

12 The LORD said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives,

^a11:10 Gn 2:4; 11:27 ^b11:24 Jos 24:2 ^c11:29 Gn 17:15; 20:12 ^d11:29 Gn 22:20,23; 24:15 ^e11:30 Gn 25:21; 29:31; Ex 23:26; Jdg 13:2–3; 1Sm 2:5; Jb 24:21; Is 54:1; Lk 1:36; 23:29; Gl 4:27; Heb 11:11 ^f11:31 Gn 15:7; Neh 9:7; Ac 7:4

Now God would confuse languages to hinder human disobedience and pride. **11:10** The tower of Babylon episode is sandwiched between two genealogies of Shem because the answer to human hubris, which reaches its peak at the tower of Babylon, will come from the line of Shem. Whereas the residents sought to make a name (Hb *shem*) for themselves, through Shem

(whose name means "Name"), God will make a name (Hb *shem*) for Abram (12:2). Through Abram, all nations, including those listed in chap. 10, will be blessed (12:3; see Ac 2:1–21). In this sense, Pentecost reverses the curse of Babylon, not by re-creating one human language but by miraculously translating the gospel into many languages, and birthing the church through whom God builds his kingdom in the world.

11:26 The significance of Shem's line is now revealed. Through Abram, Shem's descendant, God's redemptive plan will continue. **11:28** Ur of the Chaldeans may have been located in Northern Mesopotamia, but it is more likely the metropolis in southern Iraq excavated from 1922 to 1934 by British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley. **11:30** Any time a barren woman is mentioned, God is about to do the

^a11:12–13 LXX reads *years and fathered Cainan*. ^bAfter he fathered Cainan, Arpachshad lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he died. Cainan lived 130 years and fathered Shelah. After he fathered Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he died; Gn 10:24; Lk 3:35–36



The ziggurat at Ur measures approximately 200 by 170 feet at the base. Three levels tall, the inner core is mud brick while the outer shell, which is 8 feet thick, is baked brick. At the top was a temple to Nanna, the moon god.

and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.^a
2 I will make you
into a great nation,^b
I will bless you,^c
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^d
3 I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse anyone who treats you
with contempt,^e
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed^A through you.^{B,f}

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him,
and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-
five years old when he left Haran.^g ⁵ He took his
wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions
they had accumulated, and the people they had
acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land
of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan,
⁶ Abram passed through the land to the
site of Shechem,^h at the oak of Moreh. (At that
time the Canaanites were in the land.) ⁷ The
LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your
offspringⁱ I will give this land." So he built an

unexpected. Through the childless Sarai, God will miraculously produce countless descendants, both physical and spiritual. 12:1 The magnitude of God's command becomes more apparent with each phrase. The progression from **your land** to **your relatives** to **your father's house** ends with the smallest and most significant kin group. The father's house (Hb *bet 'ab*) included multiple families and generations related by blood and marriage living together. It

was much larger than a modern nuclear family. God commands Abram to surrender his relational and financial security to follow him to an unknown locale, and he obeys (cp. Heb 11:8). 12:2–3 The Abrahamic blessing contains the tripartite covenant promise(s): land, greatness (of name and number/progeny), and universal blessing for "all the peoples on earth." These verses locate the Abrahamic covenant which provided national, personal,

and spiritual identity for Jews in the future. As such, Abraham's offspring must continue in their father's faith and obedience (Rm 4:16–24; Gl 3:6–9). Whereas the residents tried to make a name for themselves (Gn 11:4), God will make a name for Abram that will bless all peoples on earth. Paul cites this promise as a proclamation of the gospel (Gl 3:7). 12:6 Periodically in the OT, statements are found in parentheses. These historical notices are in the

ancient Hebrew manuscripts and indicate the events happened long before the ancient audience's time. The narrator is simply providing an explanation for his audience. In this case, he reminded the original hearers that although the Canaanites were no longer in

^A12:3 Or will find blessing
^B12:3 Or will bless themselves by you
^C12:7 Lit seed



The migration of Abraham from Ur to Beer-sheba serves as a pivotal narrative in the study of ancient Near Eastern cultures. This journey, marked by a divine calling (Gn 12:1–3) and spiritual transformation (e.g., Gn 22), underscores the themes of faith, identity, and land. It reflects the transition from urban civilization to nomadic life, revealing the intricate relationship between migration, community formation, and the socio-spiritual landscape of early Hebrew heritage. Such movements laid the foundation for the Israelite legacy.

LOTTIE MOON

DECEMBER 12, 1840–DECEMBER 24, 1912

TO ALL THE PEOPLES ON EARTH

Rural China was a far stretch from the wealthy Virginian plantation where Charlotte "Lottie" Diggs Moon and her sisters grew up. Lottie mastered five languages and was one of the first women in the American South to earn a master's degree. But as a college student, Lottie had rebelled against Christianity, mocking those who believed, until friends prayed her into an evangelistic meeting. There, at age eighteen, she made a decision to follow Christ, and was baptized.

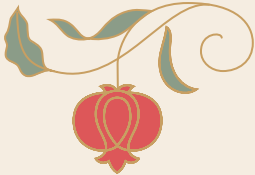
Following the Civil War, Lottie's sister Edmonia left for China to serve in foreign missions, and Lottie joined her in 1873. She turned down a marriage proposal from Confederate army chaplain Crawford Toy when Lottie discovered that his Christian faith did not match her own. Choosing to be a single, female missionary, she said, "Why should we not . . . do something that will prove that we are really in earnest in claiming to be followers of him who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor?"¹

When Lottie first arrived at the northern China port of Tengchow, she struggled to view the Chinese people as equals, but as she learned their language and customs, she developed great respect and love for them. As a result, her effectiveness as a missionary and evangelist increased, and in 1885, she went deep into the Chinese countryside as an evangelist.

Lottie pled with her Southern Baptist denomination to fund and send more dedicated missionaries to reach the 472 million Chinese who did not know Jesus. She wrote to the Foreign Missions Board saying, "Please say to the [new] missionaries they are coming to a life of hardship, responsibility, and constant self-denial."² She became a mentor and inspiration to new missionaries, including Martha Foster Crawford (see p. XXX).

Today, Lottie Moon is a symbol of missionary zeal for Southern Baptists, and every year, churches take up the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Missions. Like Abram, God called Lottie to leave her ancestral home and everything she knew to travel to a foreign land. Like Abram, she obeyed in faith. And just as God made Abram a blessing, he made Lottie a blessing—to the nations and generations yet to come.

¹"Lottie Moon," IMB website, <http://imb.org/who-was-lottie-moon>.
² David Platt, "Lottie Moon: The Long Shadow of a Tiny Missionary Giant," July 23, 2018, <http://imb.org/2018/07/23/lottie-moon-story>.



IS THE BIBLE GOOD FOR WOMEN?

Is the Bible good for women? For some Christian women, the question seems ridiculous. Of course, God's Word is good for women. But for others, the question hits at tender places. Perhaps a Christian leader in your past misused Scripture against women. Or you read a story like Dinah's (Gn 34), Hagar's (Gn 16; 21), or the woman accused of adultery by her husband (Nm 5), and wonder how God's written Word is good for women when so many biblical stories about women do not seem to be consistent with his love, mercy, and justice. We must understand the long story of Scripture—and its resolution in Jesus Christ—to make sense of the many shorter hard stories along the way, and that takes work.

Scripture begins with God making a good, fruitful, harmonious world, the crowning creation of this world being man and woman, created in his image to rule over it (Gn 1–2). The woman was, of many things, created to be a “helper” (Hb ‘eyzer, 2:18) for the man as they cultivated the garden of Eden, exercised benevolent dominion over God's good creation, and immortally inhabited the world according to God's guidance and instruction. (As “helper” is a term God's people use for God himself throughout Scripture, one could argue it is one of many ways women image God in this world (Ex 18:4; Pss 10:14; 27:9; 30:10; 40:17; 46:1; 54:4; 63:7; 94:17; 118:6–7; Heb 13:6).)

Her husband with her, the woman was approached by a deceptive serpent who tempted her to not only question God's Word and character, but become like God, knowing both good and evil (Gn 3:1–6). The woman and her husband succumbed to the lies and temptations of the serpent and acted against God's loving instructions (3:1–7). The result of this sin? The fall of man: guilt, shame, hiding behind makeshift coverings, agricultural and biological resistance to their fruitful endeavors, and the introduction of sin and death that would ravage the world (Gen. 3:7–24). Where they once knew only the glory of immortality, harmony, and fruitfulness, they now knew the grimness of mortality, discord, and toil.

Yet in the middle of all these terrible results of the fall, God promised One who would come to reverse all that went wrong—someone born of a woman who would crush the head of the serpent and eventually regenerate the world back into a blessed, incorruptible state (3:15; cp. Is 65:17–19; 2Pt 3:13; Rv 20:2; 21:1–4). Sin may have entered the world through the woman, but so would the Savior!

Scripture then *describes* things that happened after the fall of man as God moved his plan along to bring the One who would crush Satan and set the world right. It also *prescribes* things for God's children to do and obey. It is important to read the stories of women in Scripture after the fall with the correct lens. The stories of Hagar, Dinah, Jephthah's daughter, and the concubine in Judges 19 all point to the great fallen problem of mankind. Without King Jesus leading them, “every-one did whatever seemed right to him” (Jdg 21:25). Apart from God's standard of righteousness, even God's children participated in horrible evil guided by their own warped sense of right and wrong. The proper resolution for these stories is ultimately found in Christ, in whom we see God's standard of righteousness toward women stooped and shamed by society. He removes shame and condemnation, restores dignity, and gives eternal purpose to their lives.

What about God's *prescribed* laws for dealing with man's sin? Laws in Deuteronomy and Numbers meant to restrain the kind of sin done to Dinah or Tamar and prevent false accusations against women still did not do for women all that we wish they would. The apostle Paul called those laws a tutor, restraining sin for a time, but mostly revealing humanity's inability to become righteous on its own (Gl. 3:23–24). These laws showed the need for Jesus to make things right, in our own hearts as well as the hearts of those who harm us.

When we read a passage that challenges our understanding of God's love for his daughters, it is important that we read it in the larger context of God's love, wisdom, sovereignty, and ultimate purposes in Christ as he moves in a fallen world still infected with sin. Consider Hagar as an example. Rather than reading her story as Scripture's way of *prescribing* how God wanted his children to treat women, her story should rather be read as Scripture *describing* how the nation of Israel was first formed. Hagar was an Egyptian slave, and Abraham and Sarah treated her according to the norms of the fallen Egyptian culture adjacent to them. It was the *Code of Hammurabi*, not God's forthcoming law, that Abraham and Sarah seem most aligned with in Genesis 16–21. Yet, amid all this fallen behavior, God saw (Hb *El-roi*) and heard (Hb *Ishma-el*) Hagar. God spoke to her directly and promised her a posterity that no other woman in Scripture was ever promised. Her story ends with the hopeful phrase about her son: “God was with the boy” (21:20), ultimately pointing to the coming reconciliation between Jew and Gentile in Jesus Christ. For all the hard points of Hagar's story, its beauty is revealed when we learn to place it in context of God's larger story, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God did not remove the fallen nature or behavior of the people surrounding Hagar, but he did not leave her as an orphan to figure it out on her own.

It takes work to understand the context of hard stories and how they fit in God's grand narrative—the story of the One God promised, born of a woman, who would crush Satan. It is worth doing the work of study—reading slowly, praying for clarity, understanding context, checking cross references, and so forth—to understand their place in the larger story of Jesus. Such work will only increase our faith in the God of the Bible, for his Word is truly good for women. God is worthy of our efforts to understand how.



they caused you.' Therefore, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept^a when their message came to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?^b ²⁰ You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.^c ²¹ Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children."^d And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.^a

JOSEPH'S DEATH

²² Joseph and his father's family remained in Egypt. Joseph lived 110 years. ²³ He saw Ephraim's sons to the third generation;^e the sons of Manasseh's son Machir were recognized by^{b,c} Joseph.^f

²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die,^g but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham,^h Isaac,ⁱ and Jacob."^j ²⁵ So Joseph made the sons of Israel take an oath: "When God comes to your aid, you are to carry my bones up from here."^k

²⁶ Joseph died at the age of 110. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.

^a50:17 Gn 43:30; 46:29; 50:1 ^b50:19 Gn 3:5 ^c50:20 Gn 45:7; Rm 8:28 ^d50:21 Gn 45:11; 47:12 ^e50:23 Jb 42:16; Ps 128:6 ^f50:23 Gn 30:3 ^g50:24 Gn 48:21; Ex 3:16–17; Heb 11:22 ^h50:24 Gn 13:15–17; 15:7–8 ⁱ50:24 Gn 26:3 ^j50:24 Gn 28:13; 35:12 ^k50:25 Ex 13:19

50:19–21 Joseph's remarkable response was only possible because of God's providential work in his life. He understood that although his brothers' intent was evil, God was sovereign (cp. 45:8). God used the brothers' wicked actions for a much greater purpose: to save the lives of many. God brings about his saving plan despite sin.

50:22 To live long enough to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren was a sign of God's favor (cp. Jb 42:16).

50:24–26 Joseph's final request was the same as that of his father, Jacob. It is appropriate that Genesis closes with Joseph's reminder that God is with his people, that he will protect them, and that he will

bring them to the promised land. In ancient Egypt 110 years was considered the ideal lifespan. Like his father, Joseph was embalmed until he could be buried in Canaan. Moses took his bones with him in the exodus (Ex 13:19), and Joseph was eventually buried at Shechem on the land Jacob purchased from Hamor (33:19; Jos 24:32).

^a50:21 Lit *spoke to their hearts*

^b50:23 Lit *were born on the knees of*

^c50:23 Referring to a ritual of adoption or of legitimation; Gn 30:3