



# BEGINNINGS...

## GENESIS 1-11



STUDIES 1-9  
Bible Studies : Term 3 : 2019

# GENESIS

## ‘In the beginning God ...’

As human beings we all seem to be, almost inordinately, interested in beginnings and ending. Where did you come from? Where do you go? How did this ‘thing’ come into being? How did this end? In our, just ended, series on 1 John we started out with “That which was from the beginning ...” and came to the end with the assurance that “we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is true God and eternal life” (The ending that has no ending)

In this series of studies we look to the very opening chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1-11. Here we see the literal ‘genesis’ of all things, the very beginning as God, by his word, creates, out of nothing, all that there is and places mankind, made in his image, in the midst of a perfect creation. Then we will see the marring and defacing of that work and that image as sin enters and spreads and we will marvel at the God who, all along, has a plan to bring humanity, and His creation, back to Him and to the eternal life that 1 John spoke about.

Throughout these there is much for us to learn about the world we live in, the Lord God we serve, our environment, our fellow human beings, our neighbors and ourselves.

May God grant us his grace (demonstrated throughout these chapters) so that we can ‘read, mark, learn and inwardly digest\*’ what he is saying to us and so live lives in better service to Him.

Greg Holmes - July 2019

*\*From the Book of Common Prayer, 1662, Collect for 2nd Sunday in Advent*

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### ***THE STUDIES***

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Sun 28 Jul	<b>1</b>	<i>Genesis 1:1-2:3</i>	<i>The World</i>	8
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### **References:**

- Charles, J. Daryl (Ed), *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Peabody, Hendrikson, 2013)
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- Wenham, G.J. "Genesis" in Carson, D.A., France, R.T, Motyer, J.A., Wenham, G.J. (Eds) *NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY : 21st Century Edition* (LEICESTER, IVP, 1994)
- And the Mark Dever sermon on Genesis at <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/>
- The outline of Genesis on the Bible Project website.  
<https://thebibleproject.com/all-videos/>

*Again highly recommended.*

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### PLEASE NOTE :

It is probably worth my while explaining what I attempt to do in these 'notes'. My first work on them is to ensure that you can actually answer the questions. It is easy to ask questions that no-one is able to interpret. I then attempt to give some thoughts of my own on each question and then to bring to bear materials from my reading on the topic. Sometimes these are direct answers to the questions but, also sometimes, they are extra, I hope, relevant ideas.

It proves impossible in these studies to delve into all of them and I would encourage all people who lead or indeed do the studies to look more widely than the questions and allow Jesus' words to speak to our minds, hearts and lives.

This is a vitally important section of the Bible, not the least because it lays so many foundations for what the LORD is doing in world. These studies, as I reflect on them, to some extent only scratch the surface. I would recommend studying these chapters with the help of one of the commentaries listed in the question booklets.

### THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES

#### ***LISTEN TO THE STORY***

It is good to read the passage for the week at the start of each study. These passages vary somewhat in length. You can decide for yourself whether you want to read the genealogies aloud or not.

#### ***EXPLAIN THE STORY***

These look at the basic ideas in the passage. I would recommend that each week you do these simply to get the flow of the text and its important points.

#### ***EXPLORE THE STORY***

As the heading suggests, these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

#### ***LIVE THE STORY.***

As 1 John constantly reminded us we need to walk the Christian life in obedience and love. These Questions seek to get us to think about this.

*We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' or 'impact' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly think about the impact the passage has on us.*

***Please note that my answers below are not the only 'correct' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.***

*These Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.*

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### Some Background Thoughts:

In many ways these chapter represent some of the most controversial chapters in the Scriptures about which Christians, many of whom hold a high view of the Bible as God's word, disagree on some (much) of the detail.

First the chapters raise the thorny issue of Bible v Science\*. As far as I have been able I have kept to an agnostic point of view on these issues in the Bible Studies, focussing on the text and its meaning for its original readers and for us.

That said it is important to stress that these chapters are not a scientific textbook and only incidentally cross over into science. The passages are primarily concerned with why and who rather than what and how.

It is also very easy to let the issue of Science v Theology cloud helpful interpretation and application of the text.

Important to all of this is the nature of the creation of man and the nature of the fall. The passages from 3:6 on record the spread of sin among humankind and its pervasive influence. This brings God's judgement in speech, then his acts of judgement combined with the element of grace on each occasion except in Chapter 11 where we have to wait for Chapter 12 to begin the story of ultimate grace which in the end works itself out in Jesus death and resurrection.

Image, Rest, Salvation and Judgment on sin, seem to me to be the major themes.

From time to time I have used the word 'story' in relation to the various narratives in these chapters. This is in no way intended to infer anything about the historicity of the events it is used simply because this is the way these incidents are told.

Remember, at all times, that this is God's word revealed to us for the purpose of "... teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And so it applies to us right now and should effect the way we live our lives here in Kiama this day, this week, this month ...

*\* Possibly the most thorny of these issues is the nature of the 6 days. If you want to read more about this I can heartily recommend the John Lennox book "Seven Days That Divide the World" for a worthwhile attempt at a balanced view. For material on a literal six 24 hour days see [www.creation.com](http://www.creation.com) or for another view the work of Hugh Ross at [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org) is interesting. Also "Reading Genesis 1-2 : An Evangelical Conversation", J. Daryl Charles (Ed) (Peabody, Hendrikson, 2013) gives a number of perspectives.*

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### Genesis, Book Of (Selections from the New Bible Dictionary article.)

#### I. Outline of contents

a. *Pre-history: the creation record* (1:1–2:3)

b. *The story of man* (2:4–11:26)

His creation and Fall (2:4–3:24); his increasing numbers (4:1–6:8); the judgment of the Flood (6:9–9:29); the rise of nations (10:1–11:26).

c. *The story of Abraham* (11:27–23:20)

d. *The story of Isaac* (24:1–26:35)

e. *The story of Jacob* (27:1–36:43)

f. *The story of Joseph* (37:1–50:26)

A technical analysis may also be based on the 10 occurrences of the phrase (or its equivalent), 'These are the generations of ...'. \*'Generations' (Heb. *tôlêdôt*) means 'begettings' or 'genealogical records'. This phrase is used with reference to the heavens and the earth (2:4); Adam (5:1); Noah (6:9); the sons of Noah (10:1); Shem (11:10); Terah (11:27); Ishmael (25:12); Isaac (25:19); Esau (36:1); Jacob (37:2).

#### III. The place of Genesis in the Bible

Genesis is the Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption. Gn. 1–11 may be regarded as the prologue to the drama, whose first act begins at ch. 12 with the introduction of Abraham. At the other end of the drama the book of Revelation is the epilogue.

The prologue is cast in universal terms. God made all things (ch. 1). In particular, he made man, who became a rebel and a sinner (chs. 2–3). Sin became universal (ch. 4), and being rebellion against God is always under divine judgment, exemplified in the story of the Flood (chs. 6–9). Even after God had demonstrated his displeasure by an act of judgment in the Flood, man returned to his rebellion (ch. 11). Yet always God gave evidences of grace and mercy. Adam and Eve were cast out, but not destroyed (ch. 3); Cain was driven out but 'marked' by God (ch. 4); mankind was overwhelmed by the Flood but not obliterated, for a remnant was saved (chs. 6–9); man was scattered but allowed to live on (ch. 11).

That is the prologue which paints the background for the drama which is about to develop. What was God's answer to the universal, persistent sin of man? As the drama proper opens in Gn. 12 we meet Abraham, the first stage in God's answer.



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### IV. Genesis and historicity

It is extremely difficult to obtain independent evidence as to the historicity of Genesis, since many of the narratives have no parallel in non-biblical literature. This is especially difficult for Gn. 1–11, though easier for Gn. 12–50. It should always be remembered that much in the Bible is beyond scientific investigation, but notably those areas which touch on faith and personal relations. The areas on which one might ask for evidence in Genesis may be summarized as follows:

#### *a. The creation*

#### *b. The origin of man*

The Bible asserts that God made man. It does not allow that there was any other source for man's origin. It is not possible, however, to discover, from Genesis precisely how God did this. Scientifically, the origin of man is still obscure, and neither archaeology nor anthropology can give a final answer as to the time, place or means of man's origin. It is safest for the Christian to be cautious about the subject, to be content to assert with Genesis that, however it happened, God lay behind the process, and to be content to await further evidence before rushing to hasty conclusions.

#### *c. The Flood*

There is no final evidence here either as to the time, the extent or the cause. There were certainly extensive floods in the area from which the Patriarchs came, and the ancient Sumerians had a detailed account of a great flood in the ancient world. There are no serious reasons, however, for accepting the suggestion of Sir Leonard Woolley that the flood at Ur, which left a deep deposit of silt revealed by his excavation, was in fact the result of the Bible Flood.

### V. Genesis and theology

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the primary value of Genesis, as indeed of all Scripture, is theological. It is possible to devote a great deal of time and energy to all kinds of incidental details and to miss the great theological issues. For example, the story of the Flood speaks of sin, judgment, redemption, new life. To be occupied with details about the size of the ark, and with problems of feeding or of the disposal of refuse, is to be concerned with side-issues. While God's revelation was largely in historical events, and while history is of tremendous significance for the biblical revelation, it is the theological significance of events that is finally important. Where corroborative evidence of the Genesis narratives is lacking, the theological significance may still be discerned.

*J.S. Wright*

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### Study 1: GENESIS 1:1-2:3

### **Beginnings: The World**

#### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Gen. 1:1-13	Gen. 1:14-25	Gen. 1:26-2:3	John 1:1-3	Psalms 19

Longman: "As is typical throughout the Hebrew Bible, a third-person, unnamed, omniscient narrator presents the story. The narrator knows what people are thinking and also what they are doing when alone. Indeed, the narrator depicts creation even before the emergence of human beings. While there is no explicit connection made, when one reads Genesis as sacred literature, the impression of the reader is that one is getting a divine perspective on the events and the characters."

#### **Listen to the Story.**

##### **Read Genesis 1:1-2:3**

Longman: "The book of Genesis is, as the name implies, a book of beginnings: the beginning of the cosmos, the beginning of humanity, the beginning of Israel. In narrative terms a beginning leads to a middle and to an end. The book, in other words, is ultimately not to be read isolated from the rest of the Pentateuch, the Old Testament, or finally the Christian canon as a whole."

#### **Explain the Story.**

- 1. Who or what is there at the beginning of this passage (v1)? At the end (2:2-3)?**

At the beginning there is nothing but God.

God creates the universe (the heavens and the earth) out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)

Most commentators accept that v1 represents a heading and a description of the creation of the universe beyond earth.

1:2-2:3 then focuses in on the creation of the earth.

Kidner: "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. The passage, indeed the Book, is about him first of all; to read it with any other primary interest (which is all too possible) is to misread it.

The opening expression, *In the beginning*, is more than a bare note of time.



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*The variations on this theme in Isaiah 40ff. show that the beginning is pregnant with the end, and the whole process present to God who is First and Last (e.g. Isa. 46:10; 48:12). Proverbs 8:22f. reveals something of the Godward side of this beginning of creation; John 1:1-3 is more explicit; and the New Testament elsewhere at times reaches back behind it (e.g. John 17:5, 24) into eternity."*

### 2. How does God make things?

The emphasis here is that God makes things by his word – he speaks and it is so.

So creation is out of nothing, by his word (*ex nihilo-per verba*)

Kidner: *"The simple phrase And God said precludes some far-reaching errors and stores up a wealth of meaning. These eight specific commands, calling all things into being, leave no room for notions of a universe that is self-existent, or struggled for, or random, or a divine emanation; and the absence of any intermediary implies an extremely rich content for the word 'said'. This may not be at once apparent, for we ourselves know what it is to order things to happen. But our commands, even at their most precise, are mere outlines: they rely on existing materials and agencies to embody them, and the craftsman himself works with what he finds, to produce what he only knows in part. The Creator, on the other hand, in willing an end willed every smallest means to it, his thought shaping itself exactly to the least cell and atom, and his creative word wholly meaningful."*

### 3. In what order is creation presented? This chart from Andrew Reid's commentary may help.

v1	
<u>Realms/Form</u>	<u>Inhabitants/ Use</u>
Day 1: <i>Light (day and night)</i>	Day 4: <i>Lights in Heaven</i>
Day 2: <i>Water and Sky</i>	Day 5: <i>Fish and Birds</i>
Day 3: <i>Land and Vegetation</i>	Day 6: <i>Animals and Humans</i>
Day 7: God Rests	

Longman: *"The message is clear everything that exists, animate and inanimate, comes from God and depends on God."*

### Explore the Story.

#### 1. Note where the word 'create' is used in the passage. What does this tell you?

Note the following verses:

*1:1 In the beginning God **created** the heavens and the earth.*

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21 So God **created** the great **creatures** of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

1:27 So God **created** man in his own image, in the image of God he **created** him; male and female he **created** them.

The word for create is 'bara' and it is quite distinct from the word for 'made'.

It seems that here it draws attention to the creative God at the point that:

In v1 everything begins.

In v 21 sentient life begins.

In v27 human life begins.

This then draws attention to the fact that mankind is not simply another animal but a special creation which is further emphasized by the 'in his own image' language.

Kidner: "*The meaning of created (bārā'; cf. 21, 27; 2:3, 4) is best determined from the Old Testament as a whole (including this chapter), where we find that its subject is invariably God, its product may be either things (e.g. Isa. 40:26) or situations (Isa. 45:7, 8, RSV), its companion verbs are chiefly 'to make' and 'to form' (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7), and its precise sense varies with its context, which may emphasize either the initial moment of bringing into existence (Isa. 48:3, 7: 'suddenly', 'now') or the patient work of bringing something to perfection (Gen. 2:1-4; cf. Isa. 65:18).*"

### 2. What is the pinnacle of creation in this account?

Man is the pinnacle of creation. He is the one that is in God's image, the one that God gives specific responsibilities to, the one who is to rule over the creation and it is after his creation that God declares it 'very good'(1:31) and 'complete' (2:1).

Kidner: "*Let us make man. In both the opening chapters of Genesis man is portrayed as in nature and over it, continuous with it and discontinuous. He shares the sixth day with other creatures, is made of dust as they are (2:7, 19), feeds as they feed (1:29, 30) and reproduces with a blessing similar to theirs (1:22, 28a); so he can well be studied partly through the study of them: they are half his context. But the stress falls on his distinctness. Let us make stands in tacit contrast with 'Let the earth bring forth' (24); the note of self-communing and the impressive plural proclaim it a momentous*

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*step; and this done, the whole creation is complete. Vis-à-vis the animals man is set apart by his office (1:26b, 28b; 2:19; cf. Ps. 8:4–8; Jas 3:7) and still more by his nature (2:20); but his crowning glory is his relation to God.”*

*Kidner on v27: 'The words male and female, coming at this juncture, have far-reaching implications, as Jesus made plain when he coupled them with 2:24 to make the two sayings the twin pillars of marriage (Mark 10:6, 7). To define humanity as bisexual is to make each partner the complement of the other, and to anticipate the New Testament doctrine of the sexes' spiritual equality ('all one', Gal. 3:28; 'heirs together', 1 Pet. 3:7b; see also Mark 12:25). This is reaffirmed in Genesis 2:18–25, together with their temporal inequality (cf. 1 Pet. 3:5–7a; 1 Cor. 11:7–12; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13), and again in 5:1, 2.'*

### **3. Look at John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15. What do these verses tell us about Jesus and Creation?**

Note also Revelation 3:14.

These New Testament verses tell us that Jesus was there and was involved in the creation. A timely reminder of the fact that Jesus is not created (as some that 1 John was dealing with said) but that as a person of the Trinity he was there and active in the very beginning.

*Longman: "Christians read the story of creation through the prism of the fuller revelation of the New Testament, which also celebrates God as the creator of all that exists (Eph 3:9; Rev 4:11; 10:6). The New Testament, though, bears witness to the triune nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and informs Christians that Jesus was involve in the creation of the cosmos: ..."*

### **4. What is the 'end' of creation (2:2)?**

Rest

Not that the there is no end formulation (there was evening and there was morning the ?? day) for the 7<sup>th</sup> Day.

*Kidner: "But God's rest was pregnant with more than the gift of the sabbath: it is still big with promise for the believer, who is summoned to share it (Heb. 3:7-4:11). As G. von Rad has well said: 'The declaration mounts, as it were, to the place of God himself and testifies that with the living God there is rest ... Even more, that God has "blessed", "sanctified" ... this rest means that' the author 'does not consider it as something for God alone but as a concern of the world. The way is being prepared, therefore, for ... the final, saving good.'<sup>18</sup> The formula that rounded off each of the six days with the onset of evening and morning is noticeably*

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*absent, as if to imply the 'infinite perspective' (Delitzsch) of God's sabbath."*

Reid: *"The God we see in Genesis is a worker. His work is energetic, joyful, innovative and creative. The results of his work are good. Nevertheless, the purpose or goal of that work is not more work but rest – a seventh day of rest."*

### Live the Story.

#### 1. What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

Much ink has been spilt over this.

Suffice it to say in the first instance that there is something of God in all of us. – We wear his image in some way.

Sailhamer: *"Second, throughout the previous narrative each creature is made "according to its own kind" (l'mînāh). But the account of the creation of humankind specifically notes that the man and the woman were not made "according to their own kind." Rather, they were made "in [God's] image" (b'šalmēnû). They are not merely like themselves, they are also like God; they share a likeness to their Creator."*

One, I think, helpful idea is that just as Ancient Near Eastern Kings would leave statues of themselves (images) in strategic places in the territories they had conquered, so God leaves images of himself to rule over his creation.

Kidner: *"Among the implications of the doctrine we may note that on the Godward side it excludes the idea that our Maker is the 'wholly Other'. Manward, it requires us to take all human beings infinitely seriously (cf. Gen. 9:6; Jas 3:9). And our Lord implies, further, that God's stamp on us constitutes a declaration of ownership (Matt. 22:20, 21)."*

#### 2. So how should we view our role in the creation and in relation to other men and women?

To use the old word for it, we are given dominion over the earth – all of it.

But in keeping with the idea of being God's image in the world this means we are to care for it and use it wisely for we don't own it God does. In other words we are stewards of the creation.

(Should start some discussion.)

Also consider (Johnson, D.E. ESV Expository Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation) *"To please God by taking him at his word for things we cannot*

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*see, we must resist the attention-hoarding demands of the visible. At creation, God's unseen word brought about all that our senses now perceive, and the Son's powerful word still sustains his universe (Heb. 1:3). The primacy of God's speech over our sight still stands. Trust that truth, and act in its light. God will be pleased."*

*Reid: "What is the thing that overwhelms you at every turn as you read the passage (Genesis 1)? Surely it is the fact that God speaks. God is not hidden and inaccessible but known and accessible in his word. He is the speaking, communicating, relating God. And in Genesis 1 we are told how life is to be lived before this God. Life in his world is not a hit and miss affair. Life is shaped by the God who speaks. The message is clear. If we want to know how to live life in this world then we need to firstly be listeners to his word. Being created, formed, shaped and guided by the word of the living and true God is the core of life in this world."*

*And remember: Longman: "Christians, however, live in the time when the shadows of the Old Testament give way to the reality which they anticipate – Jesus. As Augustine famously stated, The New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed."*

**For Next Week: Genesis 2:4-25.**

### Study 2: GENESIS 2:4-25

#### **Beginnings: Man**

*A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 2:4-9	Genesis 2:10-17	Genesis 2:18-25	Psalms 8	Revelation 21:1-14

**Listen to the Story.**

**Read Genesis 2:4-25**

*Sailhamer: "Chapter 2 should be read as an integral part of the first chapter."*

*Kidner: "Man is now the pivot of the story, as in chapter 1 he was the climax. Everything is told in terms of him: even the primeval waste is shown awaiting him (2:5b), and the narrative works outwards from man himself to man's environment (garden, trees, river, beasts and birds) in logical as against chronological order, to reveal the world as we are meant to see it: a place expressly prepared for our delight and discipline. It is misleading to call this a*

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*second creation account, for it hastens to localize the scene, passing straight from the world at large to 'a garden ... in the east'; all that follows is played out on this narrow stage.*

*Throughout the section, to the end of chapter 3, the rare, almost unique, double name the Lord God (Yahweh Elohim) adds its own impressiveness to the story and establishes the unity of the two terms, the personal name and the title, which will dominate the Old Testament."*

### **Explain the Story.**

#### **1. Note 2:4. Why is this story being told again? What is the point?**

Just as there was a change of focus from Genesis 1:1 to 1:2 so now there is another change of focus.

We are now going to look at the process as it specifically relates to mankind.

This was depicted generally in chapter one – now the focus is more specific.

Reid: *"These chapters [2-3] provide an introduction to the rest of Genesis (and the whole Bible!) and a background for it. We will find that the people we hear about throughout Genesis are like the people we find here. Not only that, but the goals God will set for these people will be shaped by the incidents here."*

#### **2. How was man made? Where was he placed?**

Man was made from the dust of the earth and the breath of life was breathed into his nostrils by God.

He is placed in the Garden.

Longman: *"The creation of Adam while affirming the fact that humans are creatures like all other animals (dust) also have a special relationship with God and a dignified status in God's creation (the breath of God)."*

#### **3. What was the one rule in the Garden?**

There was one rule, it was stated clearly and it was easy to understand:

*"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

Sounds simple enough, doesn't it.

Kidner: *"In the context, however, the emphasis falls on the prohibition rather than the properties of the tree. It is shown to us as forbidden. It is idle to ask what it might mean in itself; this was Eve's error. As it stood, prohibited, it presented the alternative to discipleship: to be self-made, wresting one's knowledge, satisfactions and values from the created world*



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*in defiance of the Creator (cf. 3:6). Even more instructive is the outcome of the experiment; see on 3:7. In all this the tree plays its part in the opportunity it offers, rather than the qualities it possesses; like a door whose name announces only what lies beyond it."*

Kidner: *"The full implications of the warning, thou shalt surely die (AV, RV), will slowly unfold to the last pages of the New Testament. ... it may be pointed out that these words do not necessarily imply that man was not naturally mortal. God 'alone has immortality' (1 Tim. 6:16, RSV), and the presence of the tree of life in the garden indicates that if man is to share the boon it must be an added gift. As R. Martin-Achard has put it: 'Before the Fall, between Adam and death, which is part of his natural lot as an element in his human heritage, there stands the Living God; His presence is sufficient to ward death off ...'."*

#### **4. What problem was Adam perceived to have had? What was the process used to solve it and what was the solution?**

God perceives that Adam is alone and that that is not good (given that everything is working towards being 'very good' Genesis 1:31).

He needs a suitable helper.

The process toward the proper solution is that Adam is introduced to the animals and that he gave names to them. Quite obviously none of them suit.

So God creates out of the same stuff as Adam a woman.

Sailhamer: *"Westermann's statement regarding this narrative aptly describes its purpose: "Genesis 2 is unique among the creation myths of the whole of the Ancient Near East in its appreciation of the meaning of woman, i.e., that human existence is a partnership of man and woman""*

Wenham (NBC): *"The charming tale of God creating Eve out of Adam's rib and then presenting her to him as if at a wedding sums up beautifully many of the key biblical ideas about marriage. Here and in 1:27-28 we have God's standard for relations between the sexes set out. Whereas 1:28 emphasized the importance of procreation, 2:20-24 explores the nature of companionship within marriage. First, husband and wife complement each other. Suitable helper would be better be translated 'helper matching him', i.e. supplying what he lacks. She is his missing rib. Matthew Henry commented on God's choice of a rib to create Eve, 'Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his*

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*heart to be beloved.' Perhaps this reads a little too much into the rib, but it expresses well the biblical ideal of marriage."*

Longman discussing marriage: *"Significantly, marriage is not here defined as including childbearing as an essential component. Marriage is leaving, weaving, and cleaving, but not necessarily heaving in childbirth. ... An implication of this insight is that sex is God's gift to married couples regardless of whether or not it issues in childbirth. God loves his human creatures to enjoy marital sex; it is his good gift to them."*

### Explore the Story.

#### 1. What was Adam placed in the garden to do?

He was to work it and to take care of it.

Longman: concerning *"his assignment to 'take care' of the garden. The verb 'take care (shamar) elsewhere is often translated 'guard.' ... God charged Adam to protect the garden, but from what or whom? Genesis 3 will answer that question ...."*

We note: Longman: *"That work precedes the fall. Even if Adam and Eve did not sin, humans would still have to work."*

#### 2. What specific trees are mentioned? Why?

Verse 9 *"In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*

These will play an important role in the next chapter.

#### 3. What point is the last verse (2:25) making?

Kidner: *"... there is, in God's true pattern, perfect ease between them (25). But it is the fruit of perfect love, which has no alloy of greed, distrust or dishonour; it was understandably an immediate casualty of the fall (see further on 3:7), and the chapter ends with a pointed reminder of our vanished concord."*

Wenham (Word): *"'They were not ashamed.'" The Hebrew root בוש "to be ashamed" does not carry the overtones of personal guilt that English "shame" includes. Perhaps then it might be better to translate here, "they were unabashed" or "they were not disconcerted." They were like young children unashamed at their nakedness."*

#### 4. Look at Revelation 21 and 22. What links and parallels can you see to Genesis 1 and 2?

*"The biblical story begins with the creation of all things and ends with the renewal of all things" (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 3)*

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Longman: *"The final two chapters of the Bible describe the new Jerusalem. This consummation takes us back to the opening chapters of Genesis. It involves a return to origins, only better, as represented by the fact that two trees of life are planted on the opposite banks of the river that flows through the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:2)."*

### Live the Story.

1. **Genesis 2:23 has been called 'the first ever love poem'. What does it say about human relationships?**

For discussion

Longman: *"The word play on woman and man in English reflects the wordplay in Hebrew where the ishshah was taken out of the ish."*

2. **In Genesis 2 we see the relationships between God and Man, Man and Man and Man and the creation at their perfect best. Discuss?**

Discuss

Longman re v 25: *"They had nothing to hide, so they could stand before each other without clothes. This openness is more than physical and sexual, but also indicates their lack of emotional, psychological, and spiritual shame. Genesis 2 thus ends with an emphasis on the harmony between humanity and God and thus among humans and with the creation itself"*

Reid: *"These three relationships – with God, with the environment in which God placed them, and with other humans – characterise human existence. The essence of human existence is relationships. Moreover, the last statement from Genesis 2:25 tells us that these relationships are good and unclouded by sin. There is no need to cover up here, because there is nothing to cover, nothing of which to be ashamed."*

Longman: *"... the creation accounts provide profound perspective on the nature of God, our selves and the world. Genesis 1 (and 2) imparts to its readers a worldview which affects the way they believe, think, and act."*

### For Next Week: Genesis 3.

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

### Study 3: GENESIS 3

#### **Beginnings: Sin**

##### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 3:1-7	Genesis 3:8-15	Genesis 3:16-24	Romans 5:12-19	1 Corinthians 15:29-22; 42-49

Reid: *"Harmony gives way to discord and mutual trust to suspicion."*

##### **Listen to the Story.**

###### **Read Genesis 3:1-24**

Longman: *"Nothing in the previous chapters prepares us for the appearance of the serpent in 3:1"*

##### **Explain the Story.**

###### **1. Like in the movies list the cast of this chapter in order of appearance?**

The serpent.

The woman.

Her husband

The Lord God

(Adam)

(Eve)

It seems to me significant that the Man and Woman do not have names in the account until after God speaks. Perhaps this stresses more their identification with humanity in general rather than their individuality

###### **2. What is the character of the speech of the Serpent, the Woman, and her Husband?**

The Serpent is a tempter and a liar.

Kidner: *"The tempter begins with suggestion rather than argument. The incredulous tone – 'So God has actually said ...?' – is both disturbing and flattering: it smuggles in the assumption that God's word is subject to our judgment. The exaggeration, Ye shall not eat of any tree (RV, RSV, rightly), is a further and favourite device: dangled before Eve it will draw her into debate on her opponent's terms."..." After the query, the flat contradiction: Ye shall not surely die (AV, RV). It is the serpent's word against God's, and the first doctrine to be denied is judgment."*

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

Longman: *"The vocabulary of God in Genesis 2 indicates freedom and blessing. The vocabulary of the serpent in Genesis 3 indicates prohibition and restriction."*

The Woman begins as an apologist for God (attempts to defend him) but adds the bit about touching the tree.

Kidner: *"Eve is duly drawn, and by adding neither shall ye touch it she over-corrects the error, magnifying God's strictness (she was to have many successors)."*

She later is quick to blame the serpent for her failure.

Her Husband does not speak (he simply takes the fruit and eats) until he blames the woman (and by implication God) for what has happened.

Longman: *"We should remember that Adam was charged to guard/protect the garden (2:15). Right from the start, when the serpent first appeared, Adam should have been right there commanding this creature to get out of the garden."*

### **3. Where did God find them? What does this tell you about their relationship to Him?**

God confronts them when he is 'walking' in the Garden. God's relationship with them seems almost casual and intimate and positive up until this point.

Longman: *"The author uses gripping storytelling in order to communicate important theological truths. These truths are not that God is limited in understanding or has legs; this figurative language is used to teach us that humans have placed a huge barrier between themselves and God by their rebellion against him."*

### **4. In general what is the character of God's 'speech'?**

First it is enquiry, then he speaks in Judgment with hints of grace.

Kidner: *"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."*

It is important to note throughout Genesis 1-11 that God while he does speak in judgment, he just as often offers his grace, his undeserved favour, to his human creation. Thus we see in character of God, his just hatred of sin, and his love for and faithfulness to his human creation which culminates in the coming of Jesus.

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

### Explore the Story.

1. Note below the consequences for the Serpent, Adam, Eve, and the environment.

Longman: *"But God himself is not deceived. All three actors are culpable; therefore, God will punish each one in turn in a way that radically affects the future of the world."*

Serpent	Adam	Eve	Environment
Cursed On belly Enmity Crushed head	Painful Toil Return to the dust	Increased pain in child childbirth Desire for husband. Ruled over.	Ground is cursed

Longman: *"Though they did not immediately die in a physical sense, there was spiritual death upon eating. That is, there was a rupture between God and his human creatures. But even in the physical sense, death at that very moment, to use Paul's later words, 'entered' (Romans 5:12) the world."*

2. Note verses 15, 21 and 20. What does this show us of the character of God?

In v15 we see the beginnings of God's action to reverse the ultimate effects of Adam and Eve's actions.

Kidner: *"There is good New Testament authority for seeing here the protevangelium, the first glimmer of the gospel. Remarkably, it makes its début as a sentence passed on the enemy (cf. Col. 2:15), not a direct promise to man, for redemption is about God's rule as much as about man's need (cf. Ezek. 36:22, 'not ... for your sake ...'). The prospect of struggle, suffering and human triumph is clear enough, but only the New Testament will unmask the figure of Satan behind the serpent (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9; 20:2), and show how significant was the passing over of Adam for the woman and her seed (cf. Matt. 1:23; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:15). The latter, like the seed of Abraham, is both collective (cf. Rom. 16:20) and, in the crucial struggle, individual (cf. Gal. 3:16), since Jesus as the last Adam summed up mankind in himself."*

Longman: *"In the conclusion to this enmity, we see the ultimate victory of the latter over the former. In this, we see that the bad news for the serpent is ultimately good news for the woman and her offspring. The victory, though, comes at a cost. In the wording of the NIV, the serpent will strike the heel of the seed of the woman, but he will crush the serpent's head. The damage to the seed of the woman is significant, but pales in comparison to what appears to be the*



## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

*demise of the serpent. IF the crushing is done by the foot of the seed of the woman, we are likely to understand that the injury to the heel comes in the act of crushing the serpent's head."*

God's gracious love to his creation is shown in his provision of clothing more adequate than 'leaves'

(Note that this requires God to enter the creation and kill an animal to get the skins.)

*Kidner: "God is meeting immediate rather than ultimate needs, for both are his concern. The coats of skins are forerunners of the many measures of welfare, both moral<sup>B4</sup> and physical, which man's sin makes necessary. Social action, now delegated to human hands (Rom. 13:1-7; Jas 2:16), could not have had an earlier or more exalted inauguration."*

Further the name of Eve implies that Adams race will live on and even in Eve's punishment there is the fact of childbirth which speaks of a future.

### **3. Read Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:29-22; 42-49. What does God do to undo the consequences of sin?**

To put it very simply he sent Jesus.

*Longman: "Jesus death on the cross is not just for our individual redemption, but is for the restoration of human relationships. Christ's death not only creates a relationship with God, but also allows us to have meaningful relationships with other people." (Note Ephesians 2:14-15*

### **Live the Story.**

#### **1. Reflect on the nature of Sin. Do you take sin seriously enough?**

For discussion.

Our society tends to reduce sin to 'naughtiness' which totally ignores its nature as rebellion against the Lord God.

*Reid: "These verses show us the reality of the world under sin. Because of sin, the woman who was made for the worship of God will so often turn to the worship of a man. Because of sin the man who was made for the worship of God will so often turn to the worship of work. Rather than find fulfilment in God they will search for it among the created order."*

*Longman: "The point is that by eating of the fruit Adam and Eve actually partake in evil. They also assert their own moral independence from God. In essence, through their act, they say to God, 'we will not allow you to define what is right and what is wrong, but we will make our own ethical judgments.'"*

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

Longman (quoting Walton): *"Humanity was supposed to continue God's process of moving the cosmos from mon order to order. With the failure of humanity all creation was stuck in the ripple effect of sin and the disorder it brought."*

### 2. What is your big temptation?

For discussion.

Perhaps a starter for the discussion could be reflection on the sort of temptations the world puts in front of us.

People might then be more confident to speak of their own struggles.

Remember 1 John 1:8-10

**For Next Week: Genesis 4.**

## Study 4: GENESIS 4

### **Beginnings: Murder**

#### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 4:1-8	Genesis 4:9-16	Genesis 4:17-26	1 John 3:11-15	Exodus 3:11-15

Reid: *"In Genesis 4-11 we see an increasing avalanche of sin and subsequent judgment by God. What becomes clear is that the large bulk of humanity has no inclination to set things right and that even those who would like to, have no ability to do so."*

#### **Listen to the Story.**

**Read Genesis 4:1-26**

#### **Explain the Story.**

### 1. What now happens with Adam and Eve outside the Garden?

Adam and Eve have two sons.

Cain first and then Abel.

Note the acknowledgment of 'the LORD'

(When the NIV has LORD in capitals it translates Yahweh the covenant name of God. (See Exodus 3:13-15.)

Longman: *"Eve recognises that on a human level this birth was the result of her sexual intercourse with Adam ('Adam made love to [lit. knew] his*

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

wife Eve), it was also the result of divine grace (lit. with the LORD,) but the NIV captures the sense by translating 'with the help of the LORD')."

### 2. What happens between Abel and Cain?

First they make offerings to the LORD. Abel's is accepted, Cain's is not. Then Cain submits to temptation and kills Abel.

Longman: *"What a contrast with Jesus. While Cain shed the blood of his brother, Jesus shed his blood for those who 'were still sinners' and 'God's enemies' (Romans 5:8,10 see vv6-11)."*

### 3. What is Cain's punishment? What protection is he afforded?

God confronts Cain and he is 'cursed'.

The ground will not longer yield crops, he is to become a wanderer.

As an act of grace God puts a 'mark' on him so that he will not be 'randomly' killed.

### 4. What are we told about Cain's family?

Cain marries and has children.

They initiate a number of things in the world.

But the sinful attitude continues – note v23-24.

We are also told that Adam and Eve have another son Seth

## Explore the Story.

### 1. Why is Abel's sacrifice accepted and Cain's not?

A matter of much speculation.

It seems to me that it is implied that Cain had not given of his 'best.'

Kidner: *"It is precarious to claim that the absence of blood disqualified Cain's gift (cf. Deut. 26:1–11); all that is explicit here is that Abel offered the pick of his flock and that Cain's spirit was arrogant (5b; cf. Prov. 21:27). The New Testament draws out the further important implications that Cain's life, unlike Abel's, gave the lie to his offering (1 John 3:12) and that Abel's faith was decisive for his acceptance (Heb. 11:4)."*

Longman: *"In a word, Cain offered the ordinary and Abel the best, and of course the quality of their offering reflects the condition of their hearts."*

### 2. What is the reason for Cain's sin?

Jealousy, envy, arrogance.

Note that the Lord warns him of the temptation. But he 'gives in.'

### 3. What is the LORD's role in this entire chapter?

The LORD is:

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The one worshipped.

The acceptor of worship (and rejecter)

He warns his servants

He punishes his servants

He protects his servants

He multiplies his servants

Primarily, we note that He is involved in His creation. He has not washed his hands of it. He still has a purpose for what he has made.

Kidner: *"God's concern for the innocent (10) is matched only by his care for the sinner. Even the querulous prayer of Cain had contained a germ of entreaty; God's answering pledge, together with his mark or sign (the same word as in 9:13; 17:11) – not a stigma but a safe-conduct – is almost a covenant, making him virtually Cain's gō'ēl or protector; cf. 2 Samuel 14:14b, AV, RV. It is the utmost that mercy can do for the unrepentant."*

### 4. One writer on these chapters speaks of the "Spread of Sin, Spread of Grace". What evidence do you see of this in this chapter?

The spread of sin is obvious.

And God's grace is also evident in his protection of Cain and in the birth of children.

### 5. What is the last sentence all about?

I am not sure.

Longman: *"The exact significance of this phrase is difficult to delineate."*

Though Kidner notes: *"The final note, then began men ..., is of twofold interest, recording the first shoot of spiritual growth since Abel and the first disclosure of the name Yahweh (the Lord). In Genesis it is one of various divine names on people's lips, but still a mere name, not yet revealing any of God's characteristics as other terms did (e.g. El 'Elyon, 'God most high'). In this sense God was not made 'known' by the name Yahweh until he gave content to it in the message at the burning bush (Exod. 3:13b, 14; 6:3)"*

## Live the Story.

### 1. Note Philippians 4:18. As Christians what are acceptable 'sacrifices'(offerings)?

Ralph Martin on Philippians 4: 18 *"The language used to describe their gift, as a fragrant offering, is taken from the Old Testament (Gen. 8:21; cf. Exod. 29:18; Lev. 1:9, 13; Ezek. 20:41), and is a reminder to us that all sincere Christian service which entails sacrificial and self-denying cost not*

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*only promotes the cause of Christ and strengthens the hand of God's servants, but it is an act of worship in which God takes pleasure."*

2. Jealousy, arrogance and envy are persistent taskmasters. What should we do about them in our lives?

For discussion

For Next Week: Genesis 5:1-6:7.

### Study 5: GENESIS 5:1-6:7

#### **Beginnings: Ongoing Sinfulness**

##### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 5:1-20	Genesis 5:21-32	Genesis 6:1-7(8)	Hebrews 11:1-6	Romans 1:18-32

##### **Listen to the Story.**

**Read Genesis 5:1-6:7**

##### **Explain the Story.**

1. What does 5:1-2 have to tell us? Why the review?

This verse brings us back to the broad view of the created order and particularly the 'progress' of man.

We are reminded again that God created man, male and female.

I think it is just a reminder that we are moving on.

Kidner: "*The opening, 'This is the book ...', seems to indicate that the chapter was originally a self-contained unit ('book' means 'written account', of whatever length), and the impression is strengthened by its opening with a creation summary, and by the set pattern of its paragraphs.*"

Sailhamer: "*The contribution of the prologue (vv. 1-3) to the overall sense of the genealogical list in vv. 4-32 is seen in the fact that it repeats several points enumerated in the previous narratives, specifically, Genesis 1. In so doing, this prologue refocuses the reader's attention to the central event of ch. 1, the creation of the man and the woman in the image of God (v. 1). In addition, the prologue connects ch. 5 to the concluding verses of ch. 4 (vv. 25-26) by continuing its pattern of "birth" and "naming" — (lit.) "and he named their name Adam [humanity]" (v. 2b).*"

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

### 2. Note the account of Enoch 5:18-24. What is different about it? Why?

Most of the other 'When ?? had lived ...' follow the formula. This adds v24. It singles out Enoch for a 'spiritual' comment. And given the strong impression that he did not die in the normal way with the lack of the expression 'then he died.'

Sailhamer: *"The author's purpose in singling Enoch out in this way is disclosed by the use of repetition. The fact of each patriarch's death is stated once. But the author repeats twice the fact that Enoch "walked with God" (vv. 22, 24). Repetition is an important means for driving home a point in a narrative. Enoch's escape from death is tied directly to the fact that he "walked with God." This phrase "walked with God" describes a life of faithfulness and obedience to God."*

Kidner: *"This astonishing paragraph 'shines', as W. R. Bowie puts it, 'like a single brilliant star above the earthy record of this chapter'. The simplicity of the repeated walked with God, suddenly breaking the formula that had begun to close round Enoch like the rest, portrays the intimacy that is the essence of Old Testament piety. This, rather than the harsh moralism popularly associated with the Old Testament, is Enoch's common ground with Noah (of whom alone this particular phrase recurs, 6:9), with Abraham the friend of God, Moses who spoke with him 'face to face', and such men as Jacob, Job and Jeremiah who wrestled with him. ....*

*The phrase God took him left its mark on the Old Testament, it seems, in two places: Psalms 49:15 (MT 16); 73:24 (where 'receive' = 'take'), both of them remarkable affirmations. As Enochs and Elijahs are rare, this hope did not easily become general; but at least twice the gates of Sheol had not prevailed."*

Longman: *"But where did God take him? The text does not say. However, since God's action toward Enoch is in response to his faithfulness, we might safely imagine that God brought him to himself. Indeed, the only other biblical character who had a similar experience was the prophet Elijah, who, rather than experiencing death, was taken by God 'up to heaven' (2Kings 2:1)"*

### 3. What do you make of 6:1-4?

This is a great mystery! I will let the commentators speak.

Sailhamer: *"Three interpretations of vv. 1-4 are commonly held. The "sons of God" are (1) angels ... (2) royalty and (3) pious men from the "line of Seth.""*



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Kidner: *"The point of this cryptic passage, whichever way we take it, is that a new stage has been reached in the progress of evil, with God's bounds overstepped in yet another realm."*

Wenham: *"In the ancient world, stories were often told of sexual intercourse between the gods and human beings; and the semi-divine offspring of such unions were held to have abnormal energy and other powers. In Mesopotamia and Canaan, divine-human marriage was celebrated in the sacred marriage rites that took place in the temples. These rites were supposed to ensure the fertility of the soil and ordinary marriages. They involved fathers dedicating their unmarried daughters for service in the temple. In practice these girls served as sacred prostitutes giving pleasure to priests and wealthy worshippers. Vs 1-2,4 describe these practices."*

And they say much, much, much, more.

Kidner: *"More important than the detail of this episode is its indication that man is beyond self-help, whether the Seth-ites have betrayed their calling, or demonic powers have gained a stranglehold."*

### **4. How does 6:5-7 relate to chapter 3? What does God decide to do about it?**

Here is noted the spread of Sin and Sinfulness

And it has not gone un-noticed.

God, who sustains and upholds his creation is ready and prepared to act.

Wenham: *"V 5 spells out the doctrine of human depravity with frightening bluntness, but similar views are expressed by psalmists, prophets, Jesus and Paul (Ps. 51:3-6; Je. 17:9-10; Mk. 7:15; Rom. 1:18-3:20). What is more, human sinfulness provokes a fierce reaction in God, a bitter indignation (his heart was filled with pain) ..."*

### **Explore the Story.**

#### **1. When you come to the genealogies in the Bible what do you do? Giving it a bit more thought, what do they tell us?**

If we are honest we mostly skip them or simply pick out names we know.

Kidner: *"This chapter serves at least three ends in the scheme of Genesis. First, it bears witness to man's value to God, by naming individuals and stages in this early human phase: each is known and remembered.*

*Secondly, it shows how the line of Seth the 'appointed' (4:25) led on to Noah the deliverer. Thirdly, it both demonstrates the reign of death, by its*

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

*insistent refrain (5b, 8b, etc.), and conspicuously breaks the rhythm to tell of Enoch, the standing pledge of death's defeat."*

BUT they are part of God's word and at the very least they remind us of God's grace in sustaining the human line.

Worth noting is the language of 'image' in v3.

Longman: *"We encounter the Sethite genealogy (begins at 5:3) again in Luke's genealogy of Jesus. Luke is intent to show that he is not only a descendant of David (so Matthew's genealogy) but that he is a part of all humanity (by virtue of his descent from Adam). ... From the vantage point of Luke 3, we can see that we are on the way to Jesus, who descended from the godly line of Seth, not the ungodly line of Cain. Interestingly, Jesus' genealogy does not simply end with Adam. Luke has more than genetic descent in mind here. Theologically, it is important that this census does not end with a statement about Christ's humanity alone. Accordingly, Luke follows 'son of Adam' with 'son of God'"*

(I used to say to kids at school in Biblical Studies, "Aren't you glad that your Mum and Dad didn't find this list of names when they were naming you!")

### **2. Some of these people live a long (long) time. What does that indicate?**

I have heard it said that it indicates that the full effects of sin ('you will surely die' 2v17) are not fully worked out in mankind yet.

Not the limitation set in 6:1 – again the effect of sin shortens human life spans.

Kidner: *"As far as we can tell, then, the life-spans are intended literally. It may be worth pointing out that our familiar rate of growth is not the only conceivable one; also that various races have traditions of primitive longevity which could stem from authentic memories. .... But further study of the conventions of ancient genealogy writing may throw new light on the intention of the chapter."*

### **3. God made, sustains and loves humankind. What is His attitude to sin?**

Note v 6. He, the LORD God is grieved (and v7), and has a 'heart filled with pain.'

Sin offends and pains God.

He now seeks to impose a Judgment – v7

### **4. Have a sneak peek at 6:8.**

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

Like in lots of the Bible there is a – “BUT ...”

Wenham: *"Nevertheless, as with earlier decrees of judgment (3:15; 4:15), there was a glimmer of hope—Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD (8)."*

### Live the Story.

1. **How do you process this sort of material? What does it tell you of God's work in your life and in the world?**

Need to discuss the 'strangeness' and mystery of it.

And the deeper implications of God's involvement in history.

And the problem of Sin.

2. **Read 6:5 again. Is this a description of our times? What should we do about it? (Note Romans 1:18-32)**

We are reluctant to say 'yes' or to add all sort of provisos but the answer really is that this IS a description of our time.

Mankind, infected by the sin of Adam and Eve, is in total rebellion against God.

Longman: *"Our sin saddens God. It does lead him to regret having created us. He created human beings morally innocent and with the ability to make moral choices and the depressing news is that humans keep choosing to rebel rather than obey."*

The world needs the good news of the Gospel.

**For Next Week: Genesis 6:8-7:24.**

### Study 6: GENESIS 6:8-7:24

### **Beginnings: Judgement**

#### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 6:8-22	Genesis 7:1-12	Genesis 7:13-24	Hebrews 11:1-7	2 Peter 2:4-9

### **Listen to the Story.**

#### **Read Genesis 6:8-7:24**

Long passage but I suspect that, unless any of us are into boat building or zoo keeping some of the detail need not concern us greatly. Except it was a 'big' boat and a 'big' zoo.

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

Kidner: *"The phrase, These are the generations, opens a new section of the book (cf. 2:4; 5:1) for which the reader's appetite has been whetted by the sudden turn of the narrative in verse 8. Here is the transition from the old world to the new, in a pattern which the New Testament finds significant for all time, both 'now' (1 Pet. 3:20, 21) and in the end (Luke 17:26ff.; 2 Pet. 3:6, 7). Sin, now at full spread, must bring forth death, and the first full-scale exercise of judgment demonstrates that with God the truth of a situation prevails, regardless of majorities and minorities. If as 'few' as eight souls are saved (1 Pet. 3:20), seven of these owe it to a single one (Heb. 11:7), and this minority inherits the new earth."*

It is worth noting before we get into the flood story that many Ancient Near Eastern documents speak of a massive flood. (see the commentaries for specifics).

### Explain the Story.

#### 1. Read 6:5-8. What difference does one man make?

Here is the 'But ...'

Noah makes the difference in that he is the one to, as it were, give God pause.

And thus the destruction will not be complete.

Kidner: *"The simple brevity of 8 is extremely telling after the sweeping terms of 7. Together the two verses show God's characteristic way with evil: to meet it not with half-measures but with the simultaneous extremes of judgment and salvation. Grace (8) is still sheer bounty, whether its recipient is a Noah or (cf. 19:19) a Lot. The further fact that all life is bound together is made equally plain, with man's fellow creatures sharing his doom and, as the story develops, his deliverance – a theme taken further in Romans 8:19–21."*

#### 2. How is he described in 6:9-10?

Righteous, blameless, walked with God (found favour with God v8).

Kidner: *"In a corrupt world Noah emerges not merely as the best of a bad generation, but as a remarkably complete man of God. Of the two adjectives, righteous (RV, RSV) is primarily manward, perfect (AV, RV; i.e. whole-hearted) is Godward. The phrase in his generations is not related to his pedigree (it is a different word from that of the opening clause): it could be rendered '(alone) among his contemporaries', and possibly belongs, in spite of the punctuation, to the words that follow. The final clause is matched only by the praise of Enoch (5:24), which it echoes with an added emphasis: 'It was with God that Noah walked.'"*

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Longman: *"Noah is righteous in the sense of doing 'everything just as God commanded him in regards to the flood (6:22; 7:5). Thus, God's choice of Noah was an act of grace, but Noah responded in obedience and thus becomes a model of faithful response to God (Ezekiel 13:14,20)."*

### 3. What instructions is Noah given?

First he is given fairly detailed instructions about building the ark – a big boat (with no means of propulsion) and how he is to provision it.

The ark was to be 137 metres long, 23 metres wide and 14 metres high.

Then instructions regarding populating it.

Sailhamer: *"For a wooden vessel, the size of the ark was enormous by ancient as well as modern standards. It would have been two and a half times the size of the large "Byblos-boats" used by the Egyptians during the Early Dynastic Period and would have been larger than the largest wooden ships in the modern period of sailing. ... By modern standards Noah's ocean vessel is comparable to a small cargo ship, thus still of considerable size."*

### 4. Who (what) is Noah to take with him?

His wife, his sons, their wives (8 people)

Then "Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth."

### 5. What happens 7:17-24?

It never rains but it pours – for forty days and nights.

God brings his judgement on the wickedness of the earth.

Sobering.

Sailhamer: *"Only at the conclusion of ch. 7, when the ark is safely afloat over the highest mountains in the surging flood, only then is the author ready to allow us a glance in the direction of those who did not seek refuge in the ark (vv. 21–23). Even then the author's attention to those who did not survive the flood is motivated less by an interest in what happened to them ("[they] died," v. 22) than by an interest in the reason why they perished: "Only Noah was left [wayiššā'er], and those with him in the ark" (v. 23). It is repeated four times in this narrative that they survived the flood because they did "as God had commanded" (ka`ašer šiwwâ `elōhîm,*

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7:9, 16; cf. v. 5; 6:22). The author's point could not be clearer. Obedience to God's will is the way to salvation."

Reid: "There is a return to a watery chaos such as was seen in Genesis 1."

### Explore the Story.

1. **Just to revise: What is the problem with the world? Note 6:5-7, 11-12,13.**

Wickedness, evil, corruption, violence

IN short – Sin.

Sailhamer: "The cause of the flood is tied directly to the account of the fall in ch. 3. In the fall humankind acquired the "knowledge of good and evil" (tôb wārā', 3:22). It is clear from this narrative that for the author possession of the knowledge of "good and evil" is not necessarily beneficial. Humankind was better off trusting God for the knowledge of what was "good" (tôb) than having to decide that on his own."

2. **Note the significant word in v18. Why is this important?**

This is the first use of the word COVENANT in the scriptures.

God is going to enter into a promise/ oath/ pledge/ agreement with mankind (Noah and his descendants), in short a covenant.

Kidner: "This first mention of covenant in the Bible has salvation for its starting-point (like the Mosaic covenant, Exod. 19:4, 5, and the new covenant, Matt. 26:28), but assures Noah of much more than his escape with his life. He goes into the ark not as a mere survivor but as the bearer of God's promise for the new age. The content of the covenant will be unfolded in chapter 9, and will embrace the whole company; but meanwhile it is directed to the one man through whom the many will be spared. God's will to save the family with its head (cf. 1 Cor. 7:14) is evident here, yet it waits on response: the same saving will is seen rejected in 19:12-14."

More of this when we get to chapter 9

3. **What is the element of grace we see here?**

The grace is that God saves some.

Remember that, of course, God could have literally started all over again, completely – but no – he has a 'perfect finished plan'.

4. **Who is 'left' (7:23)? What is God doing?**

Longman: "The flood story is a vivid picture of Paul's statement that the 'wages of sin is death.'" (Romans 6:23)



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Noah and his family (and all those animals).

God is acting in grace toward those humans who turn to him in belief, obedience and love (See 1 John)

Longman: *"The flood is a reversion to pre-creation conditions, what Clines calls un-creation. Indeed, the description of objects of the judgement reflects the language of all the creatures of Genesis 1 and 2, again suggesting the reversal of creation."*

...

*Not surprisingly then, we begin to encounter language that echoes language of the first creation. We move now from uncreation to re-creation. Note for instance the repetition of the creation command (Genesis 1:28) to 'multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it' (8:17)."*

### Live the Story.

1. **Note 6:22. Compare this with 6:8-9; Hebrews 11:7 and 1 Peter 2:5. What sort of example to us is Noah?**

Hebrews says he is an example of faith.

Kidner: *"Noah's entire obedience expressed entirety of faith; it is this that Hebrews 11:7 finds significant. It is also significant that God gave so crucial a task not to an angel but to a man, and one man at that; it agrees with his greater deliverance 'through the obedience of the one' (Rom. 5:19, RV). The initiative throughout is God's: hence the reiterated God commanded (cf. 7:5, 9, 16), and the eventual 'God remembered' (8:1)."*

2. **How are we saved? What does the story of Noah have to say about the nature of our salvation?**

We are saved through Jesus death for us on the cross.

The Noah story reminds us of the link between judgement and salvation.

God will not leave sin unpunished but by his grace some will be saved.

Longman, discussing Jesus' words about the flood in Luke 17:26-27, notes: *"While today some teachers and preachers seem almost embarrassed about the Bible's teaching about the last judgment, Jesus wants to warn his disciples, in the words of Paul that 'the wages of sin is death' in order to urge people to abandon their evil attitudes and behaviour and thus avoid the judgment."* And later *"The flood story not only presents a picture of the judgment of sinners but also the salvation of the righteous."* and again *"How can Noah be righteous then? Righteousness is not the same as sinlessness. A righteous person is one who seeks to be*

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*holy, but when he or she fails, then repents and asks god's forgiveness. In the time of Noah sacrifice (note Genesis 8:20) was the visible manifestation of the repentant heart, showing awareness that sin deserves death."*

And Longman, yet again: "Noah is righteous and blameless because he acknowledged his sin, sought forgiveness, and God graciously restored his relationship with him. He then lived in obedience to his God. Christians are saved by grace alone. We don't offer sacrifices because Jesus the once-and-for-all sacrifice, died in our place (Hebrews 7:27). But that is not the end of the story. Now Jesus calls us to obedience and pursuit of holiness that will please God and attract others to the gospel."

Discuss

Longman: "What is the message of the story then? Humanity grew sinful, deserved punishment, and got it, but, thanks to God, was allowed to continue."

**For Next Week: Genesis 8:1-22.**

### Study 7: GENESIS 8:1-22

#### **Beginnings: Rescue**

##### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 8:1-12	Genesis 8:13-19	Genesis 8:20-22	Luke 17:22-37	1 Peter 3:18-22

##### **Listen to the Story.**

**Read Genesis 8:1-22**

##### **Explain the Story.**

###### **1. Read v1-2. What now happens?**

The rains stop, the other sources of water dry up.

The Ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

Sailhamer: "While those in the ark may have been safe, they had not yet been saved. The author does not finish the story of the flood until Noah and his family are safely on dry ground (v. 14) and have offered a sacrifice."

Kidner: "Mount Ararat itself is 17,000 feet high; but the account says no more than upon the mountains (or hills) of Ararat, i.e. somewhere in the

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*country of that name. This is thought to be Urartu, a mountainous land north of Mesopotamia, near Lake Van."*

Sailhamer, quoting Wenham: "Wenham, has shown how the structure of the flood story centers the reader's attention on the, "But God remembered Noah") of 8:1. Particularly important is the way the structural patterns noted by Wenham help to explain the author's careful attention to the time periods of each event. Wenham points to the following pattern of "mirror-image" repetition in the use of numbers:

*7 days of waiting for flood (7:4)*

*7 days of waiting for flood (7:10)*

*40 days of flood (7:17a)*

*150 days of water triumphing (7:24)*

*150 days of water waning (8:3)*

*40 days of waiting (8:6)*

*7 days of waiting (8:10)*

*7 days of waiting (8:12)*

*One can clearly see the importance of the "7 days" in this pattern. It is the same seven-day pattern that plays a central role in the creation account of ch. 1."*

### **2. Read v5-14. What does Noah do now?**

Noah initiates a programme to discover what is happening, the extent of the flooding and recession of the waters and when it would be safe to leave the ark.

A raven and a dove get the job.

The raven keeps flying, the dove returns a couple of times and the third time the dove decides what is out there is better than that smelly old ark.

### **3. Read v15-19. What purpose is mentioned for leaving the ark? What does this remind you of?**

The purpose mentioned is to get on with the job of populating the earth, only the animals seem to be mentioned specifically but the humans would seem to be included by implication.

Kidner: *"It is still Noah with whom God deals. The whole scheme of salvation has centred on him; his sons are beneficiaries, but not partners until chapter 9. As almost a second Adam (9:1) he steps into a virgin world washed clean by judgment, and the spectacular deliverance in the ark is*

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*seen as a mere preliminary to salvation proper, which is a new creation. The New Testament sees the flood and the rite of baptism as twin expressions of this reality (1 Pet. 3:18–22): that is, of the provision of a way through death into life."*

### 4. Read 20-22? What are Noah's first action and the LORD's promise?

One might imagine it was to stretch his legs a little and get rid of that floating feeling you have after some time on a boat and get a breath of fresh air (the ark must have been a little on the nose by then).

But the first thing recorded is his sacrifice of 'some of the clean animals and birds' (remember there were more than two of them taken onto the ark).

The sacrifice is accepted and God makes promises to Noah, even though mankind is inherently sinful.

Kidner comments on v22: *"The assurance goes far beyond 21. It does not abolish disasters, but it does localize them, so that the human family may overcome them by forethought such as Joseph's and by compassion such as Paul's (2 Cor. 8:14)."*

### Explore the Story.

#### 1. What does it mean that God 'remembered' Noah? Note also Exodus 2:24.

Kidner says it well: *"When the Old Testament says that God remembered, it combines the ideas of faithful love (cf. Jer. 2:2; 31:20) and timely intervention: 'God's remembering always implies his movement towards the object of his memory,' Cf. 19:29; Exodus 2:24; Luke 1:54, 55."*

Reid: *"The remembering of God in 8:1 is pivotal in the story and appears to operate in the same way as the word of God does in Genesis 1. God remembers and re-creation begins."*

#### 2. Why the multiple flights of the dove?

This is really a common sense approach to the problem.

Kidner notes: *"The little sequence, as von Rad points out, 'subtly lets us witness the waiting and hoping of those enclosed in the ark'. Noah's resourcefulness comes to light, and above all, in 13, 14, his self-discipline as he patiently awaits God's time and word."*

#### 3. What echoes of the creation story can you see in this passage?

There is more to come of this but we are meant to see a new creation here.

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New animals arriving on the earth (from the ark) new Mankind there as well and Gods presence along with the repetition of the 'multiply' command.

### 4. Who is the main 'actor' in this passage?

God is the actor:

It is he who remembers.

It is he who initiates the drying out.

It is he who calls Noah and family out of the ark.

It is he who commands them to multiply.

It is he who makes promises.

### Live the Story.

#### 1. 'The LORD is the God of new beginnings.' Is this statement true? Can you think of other biblical situations where this is true?

Discuss

Reid: *"The flood helps us, for it reminds us that the only thing not overwhelmed but the flood is God's commitment to his creation."*

#### 2. What does this passage have to say to us when we find ourselves in trying circumstances?

This must have been a trying experience for Noah and for his sons, wife and daughters in law.

Cataclysmic flood, confined quarters, shared with all those animals, a world destroyed. All this does not make for a stress free workplace.

Yet Noah recognises God's hand and trusts Him and Praises Him.

Remember God is in control

**For Next Week: Genesis 9:1-27.**

## Study 8: GENESIS 9:1-27

### **Beginnings: Covenant**

#### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 9:1-7	Genesis 9:8-17	Genesis 9:18-28	Hebrews 11:1-7	Romans 3:9-24

### Listen to the Story.

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

### Read Genesis 9:1-27

Longman: *"Chapter 9 continues the delineation of the covenant with Noah, beginning with the note that God blessed Noah and his sons. Blessing is one of the central themes of the book of Genesis. God created humanity and blessed it (1:22,28; 5:2). In Eden humanity had a harmonious relationship with God and each other as well as the material blessings of Eden. Such blessing was forfeited by human rebellion, but now with the judgement of the flood, humanity gets a second chance and the people of the earth begin with God's blessing."*

### Explain the Story.

#### 1. Read v1-17. Broadly what is happening here?

In the broadest of terms this is God's re-establishment of his relationship with his creation.

All living creatures are involved and God speaks of blessing (v1), demand (v5), covenant (v9) and a sign (v12).

Sailhamer: *"8:20–9:17 In the account of Noah's altar and the divine gift of a covenant, the author continues the close associations with Genesis 1. As a result of Noah's altar and offering, humanity's state before the flood is seemingly reestablished. Humankind is fallen (9:21); but through a sacrifice laid as an offering on the altar, they may find and enjoy God's blessing (8:21–9:3). As in 1:26, the focus of the author after the flood is the creation of humankind in the image of God (9:6).*

*Just as there are links between this passage and the creation account, so there are close connections between Noah's altar and Moses' altar at Mount Sinai (Ex 24:4–18). Noah's deliverance from the flood and Israel's deliverance from Egypt both bear similarities with God's work of creation. As is often true in the Bible, this work is linked to God's work of salvation. The following parallels give a sense of the verbal and thematic similarities:*

- 1. The building of the altar follows a major act of God's salvation — God's rescue of Noah from the flood and God's deliverance from bondage in Egypt.*
- 2. The altar and the offering mark the establishment of a "covenant" (b'êrit; GK 1382) with God (Ge 9:9; Ex 24:7).*
- 3. The outcome of both covenants is God's "blessing" (wayēbārek, Ge 9:1; ūbērak, Ex 23:25).*
- 4. The central provision is protection from the "beasts of the field" or "wild animals" (ḥayyat hā'āreš, Ge 9:2; ḥayyat haśśādeh, Ex 23:29) and human enemies (Ge 9:5–6; Ex 23:22).*



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5. Specific mention is made that the "earth" will be preserved from further destruction (Ge 9:11; Ex 23:29).

6. In Genesis the visible "sign" of the covenant is a rainbow in the "clouds" (be 'ānān, 9:13–17); in Exodus the covenant is marked by the appearance of the glory of God in the "cloud" (he 'ānān, 24:15) that covered the mountain.

7. Both covenants state stipulations that must be obeyed (Ge 9:4; Ex 24:3).

*These observations suggest that the author is intentionally drawing out similarities between God's covenant with Noah and the covenant at Sinai. Why? To show that God's covenant at Sinai did not signal a new act of God. The covenant at Sinai was a return to God's original promises in creation. At Sinai, as in the past, God restored fellowship with humankind and called them back. The covenant with Noah plays an important role in the author's understanding of the restoration of divine blessing. It lies midway between God's original blessing of humankind at creation (1:28) and God's promise to bless "all peoples on the earth" through Abraham (12:1–3). What all of these covenants have in common is a focus on the universal scope of the divine blessing (1:28; 9:10; 12:1–3)."*

### **2. In these verses what is reminiscent of the creation stories and what new elements are there?**

Kidner: "Although there are echoes here of the charge to Adam (1:7), sin has darkened the scene. The image of God remains (6) and man is still heaven's viceroy, but his régime will be largely one of fear (2), his fellow-creatures are now his food (3), and violence will be abroad in the earth (5, 6)."

### **3. What happens in v18-26? Of what is this reminiscent?**

This brings our minds racing back to Chapter 3 and the introduction of sin.

Here again temptation is given in to.

The consequences are vast and to some extent we continue to experience them.

### **4. Who were the sinners here? What were the results of this episode?**

Was Noah being sinful? It is tempting to see a condemnation of drunkenness here but the narrative makes no comment. However the fact that this first recorded instance of drunkenness results in a gross impropriety is thought provoking.

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Longman has a helpful, Biblical, discussion of the use and misuse of alcohol in his commentary.

Kidner: *"The loss of decency and honour which marks this first biblical story of strong drink is severer still in the second, the degradation of Lot (19:30ff.). It is not its only aspect (cf. Deut. 14:26; Ps. 104:15; Prov. 31:6, 7), but Proverbs 31:4, 5 is comment enough on the last passage, with the formidable support of Proverbs 23:29–35. The law was to make provision for vows forswearing its use, as a witness to primitive simplicity (Num. 6:1ff.), but such vows were a special vocation (see also Jer. 35; Luke 7:33f.)."*

The sinner, in the main, is Ham.

Kidner: *"the point of the story is the marring of Ham's inheritance through his flagrantly unfilial act. It is the obverse of the fifth commandment, which makes the national destiny pivot on the same point – for that commandment is not a sociological prescription (except incidentally), but a call to uphold God's delegated authority and so retain his blessing."*

Reid: *"Although we can't be sure exactly what the problem is in Genesis 9:20-27, it is clear that something terribly wrong happens that breaches relationship and propriety. On human being treats another human being very wrongly. The flood has evidently changed nothing in the human heart."*

### Explore the Story.

#### 1. What are the elements of the covenant made in 9:8-17?

Note 6:18 – Which foreshadows this.

It is with Noah and his sons – the whole family.

It gives man dominion – more forcefully than in Chapter one.

It gives permission for meat-eating.

It affirms God's image in man and the sanctity of human life.

It repeats the command to Adam to be fruitful and multiply.

It provides a sign.

Kidner: *"This first explicit covenant (if we take 6:18 to refer to this) is remarkable for its breadth (embracing 'every living creature'), its permanence ('perpetual', 'everlasting', etc.) and its generosity – for it was as unconditional as it was undeserved. For good measure, its sign and seal, a feature of all covenants, was such as to emphasize God's sole initiative, far out of man's reach. Any idea that a covenant is basically a bargain is forestalled by such an opening to the series. At the same time, the absence*

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*of any obligations laid on the recipients makes this an extreme example and, as J. Murray has pointed out, one which could produce no close bond of fellowship, since 'where there is religious relationship there is mutuality'. There is no mutuality here."*

### 2. Much is made of the rainbow (v12-17). Why?

It just occurs to me that the idea of the rainbow is driven home by the number of words devoted to it.

*Kidner: "The sign (RSV; cf. on 3:14) was well suited to fulfil the prime function of all covenant-signs, which is reassurance. Like the later sign of circumcision, it was the seal (Rom. 4:11) of an accomplished fact; unlike it, this could not for a moment be thought to procure it. .... The rainbow was seen as an element in God's glory by Ezekiel (1:28) and John (Rev. 4:3; cf. 10:1), perhaps as a reminder of this first pledge of grace.... the whole tone of the paragraph is accommodated to our need of simple reassurance"*

*Longman: "But more can be said once it is realised that the Hebrew word for rainbow (qeshet) is the word for bow as in the weapon. In essence the rainbow represents the fact that God has ceased from his warfare against sinful humanity. According to Kline, we can go even further. He suggests that we should derive meaning from the fact the bow is pointed heavenward, that is toward God. In short, the sign is a self-maledictory oath. In essence, God is saying, 'if I break this promise, may I die.'"*

### 3. Why the change in 9:2-3? How are the matters in 9:4-6 related to it?

*Kidner: "Now instead of just plants to eat God gives permission to kill and eat animals.*

*The permission to eat flesh may or may not have been an innovation: possibly it was implicit before (see on 1:29, 30), and only now explicit, but perhaps it is more natural to infer with RSV that for man this was newly conceded. What is certainly a fresh development is the law on blood, which is theologically far-reaching. It at once limited man's rights over God's creatures, since their life (4) was his. The Mosaic law reaffirmed this repeatedly (e.g. Lev. 3:17; Deut. 12:15, 16). It also prepared men to appreciate the use of blood in sacrifice. Belonging to God, it could be seen as his atoning gift to sinners, not theirs to him (Lev. 17:11)."*

### 4. Note 8:21b and 6:5,12-13. Why then does 9:18-26 'surprise' us?

If encountering the story for the first time one might hope for a complete new beginning with the reasons for the flood wiped away – but no.

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Sin is inherent in man (since Adam and Eve) and it raises its ugly head again.

This side of heaven it will always be so.

### Live the Story.

1. **What do you think when you see a rainbow? Does it call these promises to mind?**

To Discuss.

Saw a wonderful almost full rainbow just a day or so ago (over Saddleback) – extraordinary. To my chagrin I pointed it out to my granddaughter, Giorgi, but did not use the teaching moment. (excuse – it was starting to pour down where we were.)

We should be more aware of these moments.

2. **Read Hebrews 11:1-7. What is Noah's example of faith? How do we follow it?**

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Discuss.

The major thing here is Noah's obedience to what seems a 'silly' command and his consistent obedience until that wine got made.

Longman: "*Genesis depicts the flood as God's judgment against pervasive and egregious (flagrant) human sin. As such, the New Testament understands it as a preview of an even more definitive judgment at the end of history when Christ returns again.*"

**For Next Week: Genesis 10:1-11:32.**

### Study 9: GENESIS 10:1-11:32

### **Beginnings: Language and Division**

#### *A Reading Guide:*

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Genesis 10:1-32	Genesis 11:1-9	Genesis 11:10-32	Acts 2:1-15	Zephaniah 3:9-20

### **Listen to the Story.**

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

Read Genesis 10:1-11:32

Explain the Story.

**1. Read chapter 10. What overall impression do you think this gives?**

This is the account of the nations as they descend from Noah and his sons.

This account overlaps with Chapter 11 which it seems to me happens, chronologically, within the process.

God is filling the earth.

Worth noting that 1 Chronicles 1:17-20 repeats Genesis 10:20-29 verbatim.

10:32 pretty much sums it up.

**2. Where have men gathered in 11:1-4 and what do they plan to do?**

(Longman: "*We first note that this passage on language is an example of profound literary artistry and intricate design.*")

Reid: "*This story is unique in the ancient world. We have other creation narratives and we have other flood narratives, but to this date we do not have any other tower of Babel stories from the rest of the ancient world. This story is special*"

However seemingly early in the piece the people have gathered on the plain of Shinar. (if indeed Babel is Babylon then it is in modern day Iraq 80 kilometres south of Baghdad)

Their plan is to use their brick making technology to build a tower for three reasons.

Reach to the heavens.

Make a name for themselves. – 'name' can be translated 'reputation'

Remain unscattered.

Longman: "*They were sinners, and bringing sinners together does not solve, but rather magnifies, the sin problem. So here their corporate efforts are to be understood as an act of rebellion against God, so God takes steps to prevent it.*"

**3. What is God's reaction to their plans? What is the result of his actions?**

God is not happy and (using the plural) decides to go down and execute judgment.

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The judgment is confused language – to make them unable to communicate with everyone else.

Which means they drift away from each other.

### 4. What is the significance of 11:27-32?

This is the introduction of the family that will carry the next stage of God's 'perfect, finished, plan' forward.

### Explore the Story.

#### 1. Why is the plan of 11:3-4 a problem for God?

Each motivation is an affront to the LORD

First they are reaching for heaven – an attempt to be like God?

Second – They want to be a 'name' – not to give praise to God

Third – They have been told to fill the earth. They seek to stay in the one area – to not be scattered.

Reid: *"In other words, the tower is a symbol of humans making themselves the focus of life and security rather than God" and "Human unity here is for the purpose of isolation and self-preservation. Such unity goes against God's expressed purpose of 'filling the earth and subduing it (1:28)'"*

God's stroke of genius (which is what you expect) is that the confusion of languages makes each of these 'aims' impossible.

#### 2. Note Acts 2:1-15 ... How does this relate to the Babel story?

This is the 'token' of the reversal of the Babel curse.

Language divisions broken down – all hear and understand the message.

Longman: *"What we see here is a veritable reversal of the confusion of language at the tower of Babel. This day is best understood as a glimpse of the consummation, the day when God's redemption come to full realization after the second come of Christ (see Revelation 21-22). This glimpse of heavenly realities should lead us to praise God and to yearn for the coming of that day. For the time being, God's people or at least some of the body of Christ continue to learn foreign languages for the purpose of effective but not perfect communication and translation."*

Kidner on the whole Babel episode: *"The primeval history reaches its fruitless climax as man, conscious of new abilities, prepares to glorify and fortify himself by collective effort. The elements of the story are timelessly characteristic of the spirit of the world. The project is typically grandiose; men describe it excitedly to one another as if it were the ultimate achievement – very much as modern man glories in his space projects. At*



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*the same time they betray their insecurity as they crowd together to preserve their identity and control their fortunes (4b).*

*The narrative captures the simultaneous absurdity and gravity of it. Even the materials are makeshift, as verse 3 remarks, yet the builders are weaker still. There is irony in God's echo of their bustling 'Go to ... Go to ...' with his own 'Go to, let us go down ...'; and the end is anticlimax: 'they left off ...' The half-built city is all too apt a monument to this aspect of man.*

*Yet it is taken seriously too. To modern ears 6b is wholly apposite: 'this is only the beginning ...; nothing that they propose ... will now be impossible for them' (RSV). The note of foreboding marks a Creator's and Father's concern, not a rival's: it is like our Lord's saying, 'If they do these things in the green tree ...' (Luke 23:31). It makes it clear that unity and peace are not ultimate goods: better division than collective apostasy (cf. Luke 12:51).*

*The end reveals the decisive hand of God in human affairs. Mutual incomprehension has admittedly its natural causes, such as the very attitudes of pride and fear expressed in verse 4 (which could be the motto of modern nationalism); but ultimately it is God's fit discipline of an unruly race.*

*Pentecost opened a new chapter of the story, in the articulating of one gospel in many tongues. The final reversal is promised in Zephaniah 3:9: 'Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord' (RSV)."*

### **3. Tremper Longman III says the repeated pattern in Genesis 1-11 is Sin – Speech– Grace– Judgment. Can you discern this in each of the episodes so far?**

The episodes so far are:

	Sin	Speech	Grace	Punishment
Fall	3:6	3:14-19	3:21	3:22-24
Cain	4:8	4:11-12	4:15	4:16
Flood	6:2,5,11-12	6:7, 13-21	6:8, 18-21	7:6-24
Babel	11:4	11:6-7	None or 10:1-32*	11:8

Note the lack of an obvious grace element in the Babel account. We will have to wait with baited breath for Genesis 12!!

Longman: "As Christians, what do we learn about God and our relationship with him from the repetitive pattern that we see in Genesis 3-

## GENESIS 1-11 - BEGINNINGS

11? Actually we learn the very same lesson that the original readers were to take from it.

We learn that we are sinners. John says as much, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8,10).

And nothing has changed in God's determination to judge sinful humanity. Christ's coming does not give sinners free passes.

However, the central message of the gospel is that God has extended the ultimate token of grace in his son Jesus Christ. John shares this wonderful news along with all the other New Testament writers. "The blood of Jesus, his Son purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7), so "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)."

\*However Longman: "And here we find the token of grace – languages. After all, God could have simply put an end to all language, effectively abolishing the possibility of human communication. ... By preserving the possibility of communication through languages God not only allows for humans to speak to humans, but also for divine-human communication.

#### 4. What overall impression does Genesis 1-11 leave you with?

For discussion.

Reid: From "the fact that Genesis 1-11 outlines the beginnings of the cosmos while 12-50 outlines the beginnings of Israel, it is clear that the writer of Genesis is interested in writing a world history rather than simply a history of a particular nation. His fundamental concern, while obviously entwined with Abraham and his descendants, is to tell us of his God's concern for, interest in, and plan for, the whole world. "

Longman: "At the end of this first major section of Genesis there is not solution to the sin problem. In God's time, he introduces something new, and that something new involves a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah."

### Live the Story.

#### 1. What have you learned about God from these studies?

For Discussion

#### 2. What have you learned about living for Christ in these studies?

For Discussion

Reid: "In one sense, then, Genesis is a start waiting for a finish, a beginning waiting for an end."

Over the next little while read Genesis 1-11 through again.