

## **Chapter One**

### **The Beginnings of Mankind: Genesis 1-11**

It's no exaggeration to say that there are no writings more important for the proper understanding of history and man than the first chapters of Genesis. Here is hidden the secret of man's sinfulness, that terrible mystery of evil and darkness which continually confronts us in this modern world. In this section is the key to the relationship of the sexes, the proper place of man and woman in marriage, the solution to the problem of mounting divorce rates and other marital issues that abound in modern society. Here, also, is the explanation of the struggle of life and here great light is thrown on the problems of work and leisure. In these opening chapters of the Bible is the first and fundamental revelation of the meaning of divine redemption and grace, and here the essential groundwork is laid for the understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is clear that this whole section is unprecedented in its importance.

#### **INCOMPLETENESS OF MAN**

Genesis is the book of beginnings. That is what the word itself means, and it takes us back into the very dawn of human history. It traces the story of man from his beginnings within the natural world and follows his history in a continually narrowing process down to the story of four great men of the past: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These men are not mere mythical figures of the past, but are living, breathing, flesh and blood personalities whom we can all relate to. This marvelous account preserves accurately for us not only the facts of these men's lives but the color and depth and the tone of life in their days.

But Genesis is not only history, it is also a book with a single message, and a message which can be declared in one brief statement. It reveals to us the need of man for God. That is the whole purpose of the book and as such, it strikes the keynote for all subsequent revelation concerning God and man throughout the Bible. Genesis reveals that man can never be complete without God, that he can never discover or fulfill the true meaning of his life without a genuine and personal relationship with an indwelling God.

Throughout the book this incompleteness is revealed to us in three realms--realms in which each of us personally and daily live.

*First, our incompleteness is revealed in the realm of natural relationships*, that is, the area we call the natural sciences. These consist of cosmology (the study of the universe, its origin and makeup); geology (the structure of the earth itself and its major features); and biology (the study of life in all its divisions and manifestations). These natural relationships circumscribe our lives with regard to the physical world around us, and yet within them man is seen to be inadequate without God.

*The second area is the realm of human relationships*. This would include the sciences we call today sociology, psychology, anthropology, demonology, etc. The beginnings of all these are traced in the opening chapters of Genesis and again man is set forth as inadequate to function within them without a relationship with God.

*The third area is that of spiritual relationships*, encompassing the studies of theology, philosophy, soteriology, angelology, etc. The beginnings of all these themes are explored in Genesis and yet the one message of man's inadequacy apart from God echoes throughout the book like the sound of a bell.

#### **UNIVERSALITY OF MANKIND**

Genesis opens with an awareness of the greatest material fact in all human life; a fact that we are all

subconsciously aware of almost every waking moment, that is, that we are living in a universe. We quickly become aware that we are living on a planet shared with millions of other human beings like ourselves. As we come to know more about modern science we become aware that our planet is part of a solar system. In some strange, mysterious way this mass of earth upon which we live is winding its way on a prearranged path about the sun circling continuously and precisely on schedule.

We are also told by astronomers that the whole solar system itself--the sun with all its planets--is making its way through a great whirling body of stars called a galaxy, a vast almost incredibly immense system of stars some 300,000 light years across. Then this galaxy itself is moving at incredible speed through the vastness of space in conjunction with millions (and some astronomers say even billions) of other galaxies like ours. It is precisely at that point that the Bible opens in a majestic recognition that man is part of a universe." In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

What a strange conjunction--to put all the vast heavens on one side and our tiny planet Earth on the other. But the book moves right on to tell us that man-- insignificant man--this tiny speck of life living on a minor planet in the midst of this unthinkable vast universe, is the major object of God's concern.

One of the marvels of the Bible is that it uses language that communicates with people of the most primitive and limited understanding. while at the same time it has significance and is inexhaustible in its meaning to even the most erudite and learned of men. It addresses itself with equal ease to all classes of mankind. This universality is evident in the phrase "the heavens and the earth." That has meaning for a savage in the jungle when he simply perceives the land on which he lives and the sky over his head. He would describe it as "the heavens and the earth." On the other hand, a modern astronomer looking out into the far reaches of the universe through a great telescope would also use the phrase, "the heavens and the earth." Thus the Bible consistently remains true to the most complex discoveries of science at the same time retaining a simplicity of statement that the most uneducated can understand, even though it is not the intention of the Bible to be a textbook on science.

God has deliberately made the physical universe to reveal and manifest an inner spiritual reality. There is a direct correspondence between the two. This correspondence between the outward physical reality and its invisible spiritual counterpart is fundamentally the reason why "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Since the world is made for man it constantly reflects truth to him. This is, without doubt, why Jesus found the world of nature such an apt instrument to teach men spiritual realities, as His parables reveal.

Dr. F. A. Filby, senior lecturer on inorganic chemistry at an English technical college, has put this very accurately: "The material world is designed to produce parallels--parables--of the spiritual. There is indeed a spiritual law operating in the natural world and God put us on a planet where light is separated from darkness for our spiritual education as well as for our physical needs. There is a spiritual as well as a physical reason for the pattern of creation, and he who divorces science from true religion will never be able to come to a real understanding of the world."

Granting this to be true, then the first truth God would suggest to us, manifested in a material universe all around us, is that there is a heavenly as well as an earthly life. There is a difference between the heavenly life of God and the earthly life of man. The supreme subject of the Bible will be how to move from the level of earth to the life of the heavens. This difference is declared by Isaiah where God says, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (55:8,9). That is the great truth with which, symbolically, the Bible begins.

## **THE CREATION**

We have seen that the greatest observable fact known to man is the existence of the universe, "the heavens and the earth." To this, verse 1 links the greatest fact made known by revelation: the existence of a God who creates. There is thus brought together at the beginning of the Bible a recognition of the two great sources of

human knowledge: nature (including human nature), discoverable by the five senses; and revelation, which is discoverable only by a mind and heart illuminated and taught by the Spirit of God. Both of these sources of knowledge originate with God and each of them is a means of knowing something about God and man. The scientists who study nature are searching ultimately for God. One great Christian scientist declared, "I am thinking the thoughts of God after him." That is an excellent way to describe what science basically is doing. So also those who seek to understand the Bible are likewise in search of God. Nature is designed to teach certain facts about God, but revelation is designed to bring us to the God about whom nature speaks. The two are complementary and are not contradictory in any sense.

Verse 2 adds the information that the earth began as a planet covered by an uninterrupted ocean which was itself wrapped in darkness. Revelation says that it was "formless and void," that is, without life. There was no land, there were no promontories, nothing to catch the eye. It was simply one great, vast deep of water covering the whole world with no life in it. With that picture science fully agrees. But revelation as a key factor that many scientists do not acknowledge. Revelation says, in addition, "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." God was at work in His universe interacting and interrelating with it. Notice that in these verses of the first chapter there is a moving toward order out of disorder and form out of formlessness. Something comes out of nothing. God is moving. The Spirit of God is producing an intended end. He brings light out of darkness, shape out of shapelessness, form out of formlessness.

The first step God took, according to the record, was to create light, "'Let there be light'; and there was light." Light as we know now is absolutely essential to life of any sort. Without light there can be no life. With the advent of light we are now ready for the record of the six days of creation. Each of the days, except for the seventh, includes an evening and a morning and each, except for the seventh, records a progressive order of creation.

How are we to view these days? Are they 24-hour days, constituting one literal actual week, or do they represent long and indefinite ages of time as science would claim today? It is my conviction that the controversy which has endlessly raged upon these questions has been largely responsible for missing the real purpose for which God gives to us this first chapter of Genesis. It should be clear to anyone upon reading the passage that the chapter does not focus upon the question of time. Important as this may seem to us it is not the focus of God, and if we center upon it we shall miss the point that He intends to make. God is moving toward a goal which He has clearly in mind from the beginning and toward it all the physical universe is moving. The steps God takes to accomplish this goal are recorded as several great creative acts occurring in certain progressive stages which logically succeed one another. It does not all happen at once. God did not bring the world and the universe into being with a snap of His fingers or with one sentence from His lips. He chose to do it in stages and these stages are very clearly evident throughout this passage.

Each of the days of creation include an evening and a morning and the evening comes first. This suggests a period of incompleteness moving toward completeness, of gradualness coming at last to completion. Furthermore, let us remember that these physical things which God makes are reflections of an inner greater reality. God made the physical universe to reflect spiritual realities so that as we look around us and observe and assimilate with our senses we are constantly to be reminded of the great things that are to take place within us in the invisible kingdom of spiritual truth.

If this be the case then Genesis I becomes a kind of table of contents, if you like, for the rest of Scripture. It introduces in physical symbolism the great themes which will be amplified throughout the rest of this amazing book. In other words, there are great lessons which God has deeply etched in nature in order to remind us of corresponding realities in our lives which the physical processes around us are designed to picture. Let us go through the creative days from this point of view and we will see what I believe to be the real point of this passage.

Day one describes the creation of light and darkness. The light is said to be good and the darkness by definition is not good. Both these words, light and darkness, are used subsequently in Scripture to picture good and evil. There is good in the universe but there is also that which is "not good," which is darkness. Thus a fundamental fact we must continually bear in mind is that throughout our lives we will need to discern between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error. We are reminded of it every day and night.

On day two we learn of the firmament which separates the waters below from the waters above, and this firmament is called heaven. Physically this is a description of the creation of the atmosphere around the earth which supports great quantities of water in evaporated form :- above the earth and separates it from the oceans below. This ocean and sky, divided asunder, picture for us the - reality of human physical life (elsewhere frequently symbolized by water), and a subsequent heavenly life. There is a life now and a life to come and one passes into the other. Human existence is not complete when this earthly life is fulfilled. The two levels of human existence are tied together with invisible but very real links and one merges into the other as oceans, by evaporation, move into the waters of the air.

It is striking that it is the forgetfulness of these two facts, revealed in the first two creative days, that is the root cause for the violence and moral decline of our day. Men no longer seek to distinguish between good and evil between light and darkness. Though every 24 hours these reminders come to us, we continually blind our eyes to them and seek to blur these distinctions. It is also increasingly evident that men no longer want to think about the life to come. We want everything now. Instant happiness! That is what the world is seeking. We do not wish to anticipate a future or to prepare for a life to come. But we must remember that this present earthly life will find its culmination and fulfillment only when the intended lessons are learned here below and then all God's great provisions for man will be available to him. That is what God is teaching us in the first two creative days.

Day three is a different kind of day from the first two. It is a double day in which there is first the emergence of the land from the oceans and second, the first appearance of life upon the earth in the form of plants, trees and vegetation. As we have seen, on the physical level this is but a manifestation of a parallel spiritual and moral reality. We are to learn that human life on earth between the period of birth and death is itself divided, pictured by the land rising up out of the oceans. Thus, there will be land which is capable of producing fruit surrounded by vast oceans which are incapable of doing so. The truth God wants us to learn from this is that there is an old humanity which by nature is incapable of bringing forth what God desires, but there is also a new humanity, called out of the old, which will be capable of producing the fruit God envisions. In the second part of the day, that fruit actually appears and is pronounced by God to be good. It appears in three divisions: general vegetation, seed bearing plants, and fruit trees. Perhaps this reflects the divisions of the apostle John who describes Christians as "little children, young men and fathers" (see I John 2:13). At any rate, this fruit is pleasing to God and is a result of the activity of the Spirit upon the barren waters of humanity.

Day four describes the creation of the sun and moon and the stars, and the placing of them as lights and signs to govern the seasons of earth. The sun clearly pictures Jesus Himself (called in Matt 4:2 "the sun of righteousness") as the light of the world; and the moon, reflecting the brightness of the sun and shining in the darkness of the night, is a symbol of the church shining in the moral darkness of this world. The stars are used repeatedly in Scripture as symbols of individuals who shine with great moral influence upon others.

The fifth day describes the creation of birds flying in the heavens above the earth and great living creatures that swarm through the waters of the seas. Since the atmosphere above depicts the heavenly kind of life and the waters, as we have seen, are a picture of unregenerate humanity, this created day symbolizes to us the possibility of living triumphantly in either an alien or a hostile environment. Both birds and fish are used symbolically of believers in the Bible. The spiritual life is alien to natural man but by the redemption of God he can "mount up with wings like eagles" (Isa. 40:31). The world is a hostile environment to him but he can learn to live in it as effectively as a fish learns to swim in the sea.

## **MAN'S UNIQUENESS**

There is a sense of heightened anticipation as we come to the sixth day of creation, for it is on this day that man makes his appearance. This sixth day is parallel in some respects to the third day in that it is also a double day. It has, as do all the days, an evening and a morning, and during the first part of the day God created the land animals--from the larger beasts (called "the cattle") to the creeping things, including the world of insects, reptiles, etc. It is quite obvious that all this is aiming toward the creation of man and is in exact accordance with the fossil records. Man makes his appearance last in the order of life. But there are some distinctive things said of him that are never said of any of the animal creation.

First, God holds a divine consultation about Him saying, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). This divine conversation clearly is the first hint given to us that God consists of more than one person. This revelation is given only in connection with the emergence of man upon the earth for only man can understand and enter into an experience with a triune God and is seen also as the link between God and the rest of His creation. The first man, Adam, is a mediator between God and the animal world just as later the last Adam (Jesus Christ) will be seen as the mediator between fallen man and God. The first Adam was made to reign over the world of nature as the last Adam also makes it possible for those who are in Christ to reign in life through Him as Paul puts it in Romans 5:21.

The key phrase about man as created on the sixth day is the "image" and "likeness" of God. That image is found not in man's body or his soul, but in his spirit. For, as Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria, "God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). But what is godlike about our spirit? If the spirit is made in the image of God, then it can do things that God can do but no animal can. Three things are suggested throughout Genesis I which God alone does: first, God creates; second, God communicates; and third, God evaluates, pronouncing some things good and others not good. It is here that the image of God in man appears. Man can create. Inventiveness clearly marks him off from the world of beasts. Further, man communicates as no animal can possibly do, sharing ideas which affect (and infect) others. Finally, man is the only creature that has a moral sense, recognizing some things as good and others as bad, feeling the impact of conscience upon his own actions. Thus, man shares the image of God.

However, though he has retained the image, he has now lost the likeness of God. Image is the capacity to be godlike, but likeness is the proper functioning of that capacity. Adam, formed by the creator, stood before God as a spirit dwelling in a body and exercising the functions of a soul. He had the ability to be creative, to communicate, to make moral choices, but he not only had that ability, he was actually doing it. He was exercising the function of God-likeness. The secret, as we learn from the rest of Scripture, lay in an inner dependence that continually repudiated self-confidence.

The seventh day is clearly quite different from all the preceding six. It is a day without an evening or a morning. There is no movement within, no advance from incompleteness to completeness. It is, instead, a day characterized by rest; God ceased from His labors, intending it to be a picture of what is called later in Scripture "the rest of faith." Hebrews 4:10 declares "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His."

Here is pictured a revolutionary new principle of human behavior on which God intends man to operate, and which was His intention from the very beginning of history. It is from this principle that man fell and it is to this in Jesus Christ that he is to be restored. It is the principle of human activity resting upon an indwelling God to produce extraordinary results. The weekly observance of a Sabbath day is but a shadow, Paul says in Colossians 2: 17, of this principle of activity, resting upon God's willingness to work in and through what we do. He who learns to labor on those terms is keeping the Sabbath as God intended it originally to be kept.

Chapter 2 finds man walking in the Garden in communion with God, functioning as a spirit living within a physical body and manifesting the personality characteristics of the soul. At this point, God gives him a research project, to investigate the animal world in search for a possible counterpart to himself. God knew that man would not find what he was looking for but in the process man discovered at least three marvelous truths.

First, he learned that woman was not to be a mere beast of burden as the animals are, because that would not in any way fulfill his need for a helper and companion.

Second, it became evident that woman was not to be merely a biological laboratory for the producing of children. This is what the animals use sex for, but that was not sufficient for Adam's needs. Sex in mankind, therefore, is different from that among the animals.

Third, Adam learned that woman was not a thing outside himself--she is not something to be used at the whim of man and then disposed of. Women are to be helpers, fit for him, corresponding to him.

So, in a remarkable passage we are told that Adam fell into a deep sleep and God took a rib and from it made a woman and brought her to him. This period of Adam's unconsciousness strongly suggests what modern psychology also confirms, that the relationships of marriage are far deeper than mere surface affection. They touch not only the conscious life, but the subconscious, even the unconscious as well.

Chapter 2 ends with a marvelous statement of the principles God intends for marriage. The first and most fundamental is that marriage involves a complete *identity* of the partners. The two are to become one. This is not an immediate act of magic happening during or immediately after a wedding, but takes place as a couple lives together, blending their psyches, merging their lives, and creating a single history.

The second principle is that of *headship* which marks the role of man as the leader in determining the direction in which a home should go and the woman's responsibilities to support and sustain that leadership. The third factor emphasized is that of *permanence*. Men and women are to cleave to one another--he is to stay with her and she with him, because marriage is a permanent bond. The fourth factor is revealed in the verse, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." This speaks clearly of openness and free *communication*.

## MAN'S LIMITATIONS

In chapter 3 of Genesis we have the explanation for over 100 centuries of human heartache, misery, torture, blood, sweat and tears. Remove this chapter from the Bible, and the rest of it is beyond explanation. But the most striking thing about it is that we find ourselves here. The temptation and the fall are reproduced in our lives many times a day. We have all heard the voice of the tempter and felt the drawing of sin and we all know the pangs of guilt that follow. This is why many have called this story a myth. In one sense this is true. It happens continually because it did actually happen once to our original parents and thus we, their children, cannot escape repeating it.

Many biblical scholars feel that the tempter in the Garden was not a snake, but a "shining one" which the Hebrew word means. Snakes were undoubtedly created to represent the punishment that fell upon this being when he brought about the fall of man by his cunning and his deceit. It is clearly the devil, in his character as an angel of light, who now confronts the woman in the Garden of Eden. His tactic with her is to arouse desire. First he implanted in her heart a distrust of God's love, "Has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1). Next, he dares to deny openly the results that God had stated will occur, "You surely shall not die" (v. 4), he says. Then he clinches his attack with a distorted truth, "God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." All the devil wishes to do is to leave Eve standing before the fruit, hanging there in all its luscious fascination, tantalizing her, offering her an experience she never dreamed would be possible.

Now the mind comes into action. Without Eve's realization she has already experienced an arousing of her emotions so that she longs for the tantalizing fruit before her. Thus, when her mind comes into action it can no longer do so rationally. Already the will has secretly determined to act on the facts as the emotions present them and thus the mind can only rationalize. It must twist the facts so that they accord with desire and the result was that Eve took the fruit and ate.

But there was still hope for the race. Adam had not yet fallen, only Eve. A battle has been lost, but not the war. But in the innocent but ominous words, "she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (v. 6), we face the beginning of the darkness of a fallen humanity--what the Bible calls "death" immediately follows.

The first sign is that Adam and Eve knew they were naked. This is the birth of self-consciousness, and the immediate result is an attempt to cover up, which is the invariable psychological reaction of mankind to self-exposure ever since.

The second mark of death is the tendency to hide. It reveals the fact of guilt--that inner torment we are all familiar with which cannot be turned off no matter how hard we try.

The third mark of death at work in human life is the beginning of blame--the passing of the buck from Adam to

Eve and from Eve to the serpent. Behind both excuses is the unspoken suggestion that it is really God's fault. Thus man attempts to turn guilt into fate and make of himself a mere innocent victim suffering from a breakdown in creation for which God is responsible.

The fourth mark of death is the divine establishment of the limits of life: pain, sweat and death. Adam and Eve must learn the hard cruel facts of life lived apart from dependence upon God. At this point of repentance, God then clothes them with animal skins as a picture (as all animal sacrifices are, a kind of kindergarten of grace) to teach us the great truth that ultimately it is God Himself who bears eternally the pain, the hurt and the agony of our sins. This is followed by banishment from the garden, not as we so often imagine, to keep man from coming to the tree of life, but as the text specifically states "to guard the way *to* the tree of life" (v. 24). There is a way to the tree of life, but it is no longer a physical way. In the book of Revelation, we are told that the tree of life is for the healing of the nations (see Rev. 22:2). It is surely to this that Jesus refers when He says, "I am the way." Spiritually and psychologically (in the realm of emotions and mind) we are to live in the presence of God because a way has been opened back to the tree of life.

We can thus summarize chapter 3 in the process it follows: beginning with temptation; followed immediately by death; leading to repentance and grace taken by an act of faith; and resulting in a public acknowledgment on God's part of acceptance; and ending at last in healing.

In chapters 4 through 11, relating early human history, we also see the underlying threads of all human society for all time. Without doubt there was a real Cain, there was a genuine 40-day deluge, there was a solid gopherwood ark and there was an actual tower of babbling confusion. There is no need to question the historicity of these events, but they are recorded so as to teach us graphically the principles on which man has built his society and the inherent flaws in those principles.

History, as we know it, is the chronicle of man's progress from the use of the primitive ax to machine guns, napalm and nuclear explosions. It is the story of wars battles and the bloodshed of mankind. The key to this 20 centuries of dilemma actually lies in the story that took place at the dawn of history--the story of two brothers: Cain and Abel.

The focus of the story is in the two offerings which these brothers brought to God. It is clearly indicated that there was a prescribed time for the bringing of an offering and a prescribed place for the offering of it; but Abel's offering of a lamb is accepted and Cain's offering of grain is rejected. Surely the commentators are right in indicating that God's reason for rejecting Cain's offering was that it was a bloodless offering and, therefore, could not take away sins, for "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). But it is not clear that Cain understood that.

What is clear is that Cain was angry at God's action, and when given opportunity to repent refused to do so. Thus, when later opportunity finds him in the field with his brother, Abel, Cain's jealousy takes over and the murderous ax rises and falls and Abel sinks to the ground with a smashed skull, murdered by his brother's hand. Thus the roots of human warfare are seen to lie in the jealous and envious spirit in the heart, in the unwillingness to forgive and forget and the ease with which we utter Cain's contemptuous words, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The blood of Abel cries from the ground for justice and God answers by cursing the ground in which Cain took such great pride and joy. Cain has lost his green thumb; the ground will no longer release its fruitfulness to him and he will therefore be forced to wander from place to place as the crops fail wherever he goes. To protect Cain from excess punishment, God set a mark upon him. It is not a mark of shame, as many interpret it, but a mark of grace by which God is saying, "This man is still my property; he is guilty, he is a murderer, but he is still mine, and don't forget it in your dealings with him."

## **EXPANSION OF CIVILIZATION**

The next element we trace in Genesis is the beginnings of culture, or civilization, and especially the part city life plays in the shaping of human society. To Cain is born Enoch, who builds his city on ground that is yet red with the blood of Abel.

The city Enoch builds is certainly a most imposing one. Within it are found all the ingredients of modern life: travel, music and the arts, the use of metals, the organized political life, and the domestication of animals. These things look impressive, but they are all built on shaky ground. Polygamy appears with Lamech and his two wives. Violence and murder are justified on the grounds of self-defense. The state begins to replace the family as the focus of human interest. The trend toward urban over rural life is evident and increasing toleration of sexual excess appears.

But in the midst of this deterioration God has another plan ready. Adam knew his wife again and she bore a son and called his name Seth (which means appointed), and through Seth the redemptive work of God is traced in chapter 5 in a most remarkable sequence of names. There is difference among authorities as to the meaning of these names, but one authority gives an interesting sequence of meanings. *Seth*, as we have seen, means "appointed" *Enoch*, his son, means "mortal," and his son, *Kenan* means "sorrow." His son, *Mahalalel*, means "the blessed God"; he names his boy, *Jared*, which means "came down," and his boy, *Enoch*, means "teaching." *Methuselah*, the son of Enoch, means "his death shall bring"; *Lamech*, Methuselah's son, means "strength," and *Noah*, the end of the line, means "comfort."

When this is all put together, it tells the story of grace: It is appointed that mortal man shall sorrow, but the blessed God came down teaching that His death shall bring strength and comfort. The focus of the chapter is Enoch who learned to walk with God. Thus, a brilliant but wicked age ends with a single man having learned to walk in fellowship with God in the midst of a godless and violent generation.

Who are the "sons of God" who are mentioned in Genesis 6 as coming in and marrying the daughters of men and producing a race of giants? Of many explanations, the best seems to be that of Jude who suggests that these are angels who "abandoned their proper abode" (rude 6) and, presumably, took up improper dwelling places. Human bodies in Scripture are called dwelling places. This would then imply that fallen angels (evil spirits) possess the bodies of men and these demon-possessed men married women and produced a race of strange beings called the *Nephilim*. The word means "the fallen ones," and thus explains the race of giants which are frequently referred to in mythical accounts as half men and half gods. But God immediately sets a limit to their existence of 120 years during which time Noah became a preacher of righteousness. Thus, the first mark of an imminent collapse of civilization is the appearance of demonic powers which manifest themselves in open and unchecked violence. The outward wickedness rests upon a deeper corruption within--"every intent of the thoughts of his heart" (Gen. 6:5). Thus, demonic control, outward violence and inward corruption become the marks of a civilization so decayed it can no longer be tolerated.

God announces to Noah that He intends to judge the world and commands Noah to build an ark of safety which will be his means of deliverance from the coming catastrophe. When the ark is completed, Noah is invited to enter it with all his family, bringing also two of every kind of animal and seven of clean beasts. Noah demonstrated his faith by entering the ark in obedience to the word of God against the ridicule and contempt of his age.

The distinction between clean and unclean animals is an artificial distinction drawn in order to teach men a needed truth. As soon as the lesson was clearly evident in the work of Christ, the distinction disappeared. By certain functions of animals that were designated as clean, corresponding spiritual qualities which God loves are indicated; while the absence of those functions in unclean animals is intended to teach that God disapproves of their corresponding character in the lives of men. -So the flood comes with the fountains of the great deep bursting forth and the windows of the heavens opening. The whole earth is covered to the tops of the mountains and all life perishes except the handful of humans in the ark and those marine animals which could survive in the waters. The rain continues for 40 days and nights and then ceases. At the end of 150 days the waters begin to abate and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

This seventeenth day of the seventh month is the same exact day of the year when, centuries later, Jesus rose from the dead. After the exodus from Egypt God changed - the beginning of the year from the seventh month (in the fall) to the first month (in the spring) when the Passover was eaten. Jesus rose on the seventeenth day of the first month, which would be the same as the seventeenth day of the seventh month in the old reckoning

in this passage in Genesis. Thus, clearly, the emergence of Noah from the ark is intended to be a picture of the new beginning of life which every Christian experiences when he enters into the resurrection life of Jesus Christ by the new birth.

## **GOD'S INTERVENTION**

Chapter 9 of Genesis records one of the major covenants of the Bible--a covenant made with Noah, but beyond Noah with all humanity. This covenant is the basis for all human government today. It contains God's provision for the ordering of human life.

First, nature is made to be dependable, secured by the promise of the rainbow from universal catastrophe. Then man's rule over the animal world through fear is disclosed and animals are given to man as food along with plant life

Next, human life is seen to be so sacred that only God has the right to take it, but He uses the state as His instrument and a foundation is thus laid for police work and capital punishment. Once again, the command is given to multiply and populate the earth. All this is to be lived under the constant reminder that "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21).

The strange story of the drunkenness of Noah and the curious action of his son, Ham, toward his father, followed by the cursing of Canaan and the blessing of Shem and Japheth contain much of great significance. Many scholars feel that Ham committed some homosexual act; at the very least it is clear that Ham looked upon his father in his exposed condition with a leering glance that had sexual connotations.

It is also noteworthy that Shem and Japheth would have nothing to do with their brother's lewd delight. They exemplify in action the verse in the New Testament, "Love covers a multitude of sins" (I Pet. 4:8). Literally, they covered their father and refused to look upon his shame, thus they honored their father and won the approval and blessing of God. If this is the case, then Noah knew that Ham's tolerance of perversion would break out in an intensified form in at least one of his children.

Thus, guided by divine wisdom, Noah unerringly selects the one boy of Ham's four sons in whom this perversion will find outlet and expression. So a curse is pronounced upon Canaan. That curse is not a black skin as many have mistakenly stated, but a tendency toward homosexuality which was clearly evident in the Canaanite tribes that inhabited the land of Palestine when Israel came into it, and which has broken out in human society in many places since.

In the prophetic words uttered by Noah concerning his sons, we have a key to the dispersion of mankind throughout the earth. Shem is given religious primacy and the Semitic people are responsible under God to meet the spiritual needs of mankind. It is most striking that the three great religions of earth all come from the Semitic family: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Japheth was promised enlargement and the Japhetic people are in general the peoples of India and Europe. It is largely from this family that Americans come and it is most interesting that history has recorded their geographical enlargement. The entire western hemisphere of our globe is settled by Japhetic peoples and the Indians of Asia are of the same stock.

Ham is given the role of a servant in relation to the other families of earth, but not in the sense of enslavement. The sons of Ham fulfill a servant relationship as the practical technicians of humanity. The Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Mayans, the Aztecs all were Hamitic people, and they are the great inventors of mankind.

In chapter 10 God narrows the flow of history down to the Semitic races. In chapter 11 He will narrow it still further to one man--Abraham. From there it begins to broaden out again to take in Abraham and all his descendants, both physical and spiritual. The rest of the Bible is all about the children of Abraham physically and spiritually. We have, then, in these two chapters one of the most important links in understanding the Bible.

The atmosphere of this time is one of movement, migration. People are thrusting out from a center like spokes of a wheel radiating out into the corners of the earth. One branch of the Hamitic family settled in the land of Shinar or Babylonia. They soon discovered they could invent their own materials for building and they were fired with desire to build two things--a city and a tower. A city reflects the need of man for social intercourse where the hungers of the soul can be satisfied for beauty, art, music commercial and business life. A tower, on the other hand reflects the need to satisfy the spirit of man.

Archeologists have now found that the Babylonians built great towers called ziggurats which were built in a circular fashion with an ascending spiral staircase terminating in a shrine at the top around which were written signs of the zodiac. Obviously, such a tower IS a religious building. Unquestionably there was a plaque somewhere attached to each which carried the pious words "Erected in the year to the greater glory of God." But it was not really for the glory of God. It was a way of controlling God, a way of channeling God by using Him for man's glory. This is revealed in what the builders said, "Let us make a name for ourselves."

The reaction of God is one of exquisite irony. God takes note of their unity and their creativity and comes to a startling conclusion, "Nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible to them." Thus, for man's sake, to keep him from destroying himself by ignorant ambition, God confused their language and man is scattered over the face of the earth. It is God's way of preventing the ultimate catastrophe. When man at last gets together again and under the illusion of technical ability thinks he can master all the great and intricate mechanisms of life, we will have achieved the ultimate disaster.

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