

Chapter 1

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Creation To The Tower of Babel



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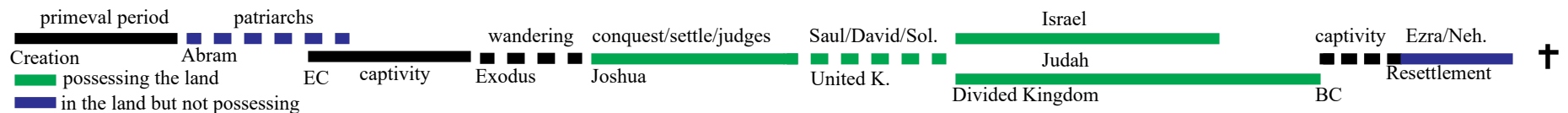
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Our Method of Study

We will consider each period from three perspectives.

Historical information and context

- Dates
- Customs and cultural practices
- Geography
- Archaeology
- Major historical events
- We consider *periods of time* between significant historical events. Like creation to Adam’s sin, Adam’s sin to Noah, etc.

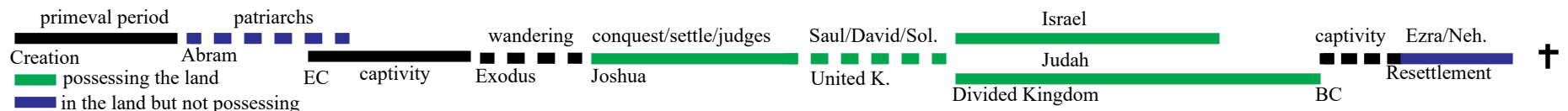
Theological

- What do the works of God and the words of God during a period of time reveal about important subjects?
- God’s nature
- Man’s nature
- The meaning of key words; atonement, covenant, sin, etc.
- It is important that we not impose our subjects on the Bible, but that we listen to the subjects it focuses our attention on.

Typological

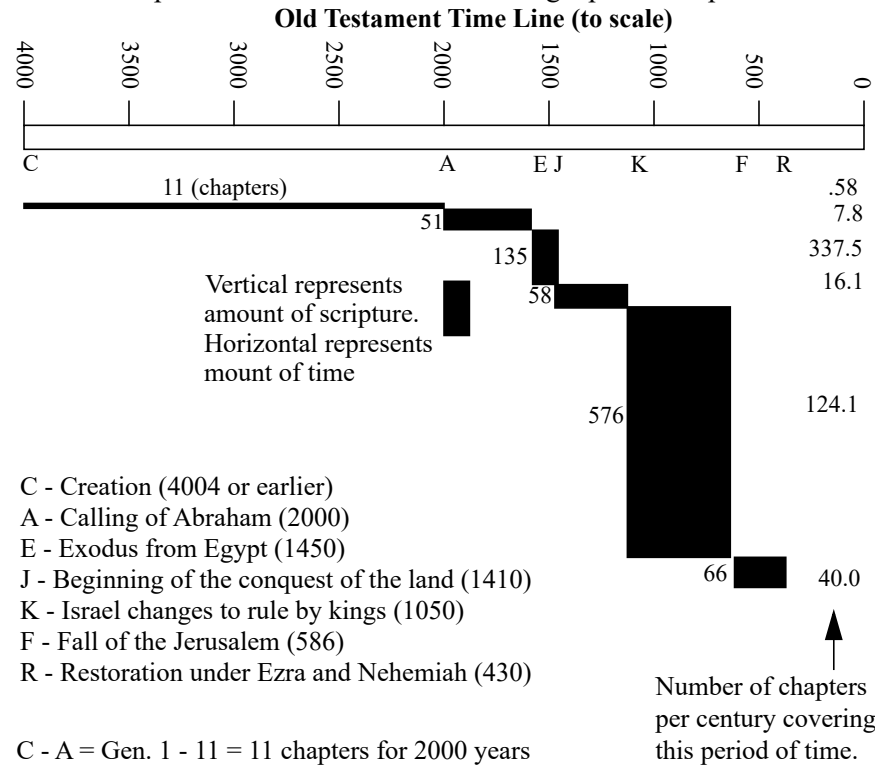
Here I admit that our method of study is influenced by the teaching of the New Testament. It alerts us to the fact that the entire History of Israel and all Old Testament Scripture was preparatory for the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. Many events (brazen serpent), persons (Moses), places (Eden), and institutions (priesthood) were designed by God to help us correctly understand the person and work of Christ. This feature of the OT is referred to as types and shadows based upon the New Testament’s use of these terms in Romans 5:14, Col. 2:16-17, 1 Pet. 3:21 and Hebrews 8:4-5, 10:1.

Jesus taught that the OT is about Him. *These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*



Old Testament Time Awareness

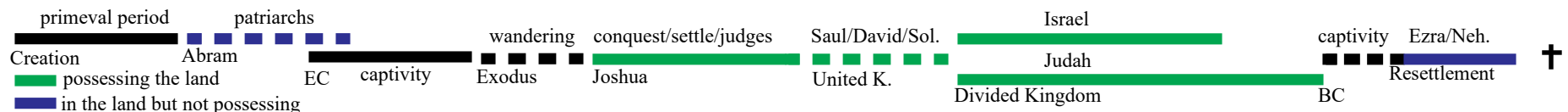
When we begin reading the Bible it is difficult to get a sense of time since some chapters cover thousands of years and others cover only a decade or even fewer years. The chart below helps give you a sense of time and the amount Scripture which is devoted to covering a particular period.



- C - Creation (4004 or earlier)
- A - Calling of Abraham (2000)
- E - Exodus from Egypt (1450)
- J - Beginning of the conquest of the land (1410)
- K - Israel changes to rule by kings (1050)
- F - Fall of the Jerusalem (586)
- R - Restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah (430)

- C - A = Gen. 1 - 11 = 11 chapters for 2000 years
- A - E = Gen. 12 - Ex. 13 = 52 chapters for 650 years
- E - J = Ex. 14 - Jos. 1 = 135 chapters for 40 years
- J - K = Josh. 2 - 1 Sam. 10 = 58 chapters for 360 years
- K - F = 1 Sam. 11 - 2 Ch. 36 & prophets & wisdom = 576 chapters for 464 years
- F - R = Dan., Est., Ezr., Neh., Hag., Zec., Mal. = 66 chapters for 156 years.

The time line below presents the ten major periods of Israel's history. Our goal in this study is to become familiar with each of these periods and when reading anything in the OT to be able to place it in the right period.



The Pentateuch

The term "Pentateuch"

The term Pentateuch means five scrolls. The first five books of the Old Testament; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy make up the Pentateuch.

Other terms for the Pentateuch

The Jews call these books the *Torah* (Hebrew), meaning instruction. In English torah is almost always translated as *law*. This likely follows the Greek translation used in the Septuagint, *nomos*.

The Pentateuch is also referred to as, "The Law of Moses".

The Jews attributed a greater authority to the Law of Moses than the rest of Scripture.

When was the Pentateuch written and by whom?

Though repeatedly challenged during the last two centuries the Jews have always believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch during the time of the Exodus and completed it prior to his death with the book of Deuteronomy (Ex. 31:18, 32:16, Deut. 31:9- 13, 24-26).

Jesus attested this belief by making statements like, *But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him*, (Mk. 12:26, see also Lk. 16:29-31, 24:44, Jn. 5:45-46, 7:19, 23).

This means that the early history recorded in Genesis was written looking back at least 2,500 years and the Patriarchs 500-600 years.

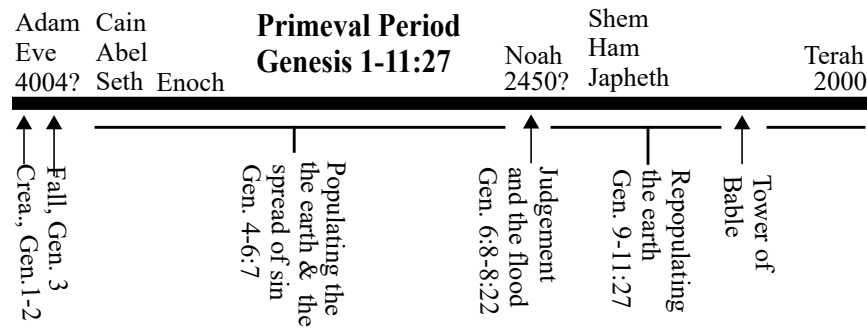
Historical, Theological and Typological significance.

Though we may fault the Jews for attributing greater authority to the Pentateuch than the rest of Scripture it is indispensable for Christianity. Right views (non-idolatrous) of God, man, Christ and His work cannot be formed in one's mind and faith without the history, theology, and typology given to us in the Pentateuch. Jesus understood this and His statements like, *all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses ... concerning Me*, demonstrate His thinking. (Lk. 24:44, see also Mt. 5:17, Jn. 3:14, 5:46, Rom. 1:2). Nor can the rich NT terminology surrounding Christ's atonement be understood.

Creation to the Tower Of Babel - Overview

Major events during this period

- Creation and man’s probation (Genesis 1-2), 4004
- Man’s disobedience to God, the fall (Genesis 3)
- Populating the earth and the spread of sin (Genesis 4-6:7), 2450
- God’s judgement, Noah, and the flood (Genesis 6:8-9:29)
- Repopulating the earth and the tower of Babel (Genesis 10:1-11:25)
- These events are spread across a period of at least 2000 years.



The Creation - Genesis 1-2 - History

Why was Genesis written?

From Joshua 24:14 (see also Eze. 20:16, 23:1-4) it is clear that some (many?) Israelites had adopted Egyptian myths and practices during their sojourn in Egypt. This would include polytheistic accounts of creation. Genesis proclaims that one, benevolent, holy, and personal God is the Creator. It is not difficult to show that each creation day sweeps away numerous “gods of nature” of the Egyptians and other ancient civilizations.¹

But the news is even better. This one creator God is the God of *their fathers* and has made covenant promises to them. As God formed Israel into a nation He gave them a record of their history so they could begin to understand Him and His relationship to them.

Further, in the plan of God, we can now see that Genesis has an even

broader purpose. It informs *us* of God’s relationship to *all mankind* and His intentions to bless the world. It is part of those Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ (2 Tim. 3:15) and it warns us that we need to seek our Creator.

Dating the creation

Ussher’s chronology² sets the date for the creation at 4004. This date is derived from biblical genealogies. It assumes that there are no gaps (i.e. generations left out) in the genealogies. This assumption appears to be incorrect. Thus 4004 is the latest possible date. If we accept modern scientific dating methods for biological material it leads to much earlier dates as man-made artifacts date to thousands of years prior to 4000. These dates relate to the beginning of mankind, not necessarily the age of the earth. These are, or can be, two different questions. However the language of Genesis one appears to assume its original readers would have thought of six 24 hour (solar) days from the creation account.

Where was Eden? And the garden in Eden?

Likely in southern Mesopotamia. “Mesopotamia” is a word coined by early Greek historians and means “land between the rivers”, referring to the Tigris and Euphrates. Modern day Iraq encompasses much of this area. Genesis 2:8 reads, *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.* Four rivers are mentioned, Tigris, Euphrates, Pishon, Gihon, Gen. 2:11-14.

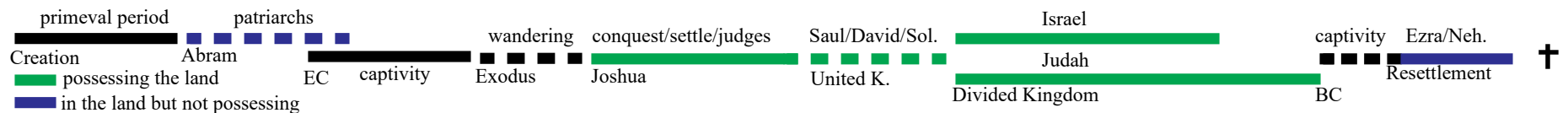
Other geographical references

The references to the rivers Pishon and Gihon may refer to two other ancient waterways in southern Mesopotamia.³ There is little certainty regarding the location of Havilah and Cush. Though there is a son of Cush named Havilah.

Are there other ancient creation accounts?

Yes. Keep in mind that the book of Genesis was written around 1500. Pictographic writing was in use prior to 3000 and Sumerian cuneiform was being written from 3000.⁴ Significant ancient civilizations (cities, city-states, law-codes, art, music, houses, domesticated use of animals, agriculture, extensive man-made irrigation systems, commerce, international trade, militarization) had developed prior to the

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calling of Abraham. All people, sooner or later, think about “first things”.

The Egyptians had at least three accounts of creation. The “Memphite Theology of Creation” composed several centuries before Abraham to justify Memphis as the ruling city in Egypt. The Egyptian “Book of the Dead” and “A Hymn to Amon-Re” also contain brief accounts of creation.⁵ From Mesopotamia there is the work known as the “Enuma Elish” (named after its first phrase meaning, “when on high”).

Though some similarities between these accounts and the Genesis record can be pointed out, a reader is first impressed with the unique features of the biblical account, especially the exalted monotheism versus gods that know no moral principles.⁶

The Creation- Genesis 1-2 - Theology

Although the first two chapters of Genesis read basically as a narrative, they are filled with knowledge about God and man. The intent of the



Location of early civilizations - Mesopotamia - Land between the rivers

author was clearly to say a lot about God and man in contrast to the polytheistic ideas that surrounded Israel. Since this is a “survey” study we can only highlight these revelations.

God is distinct from His creation

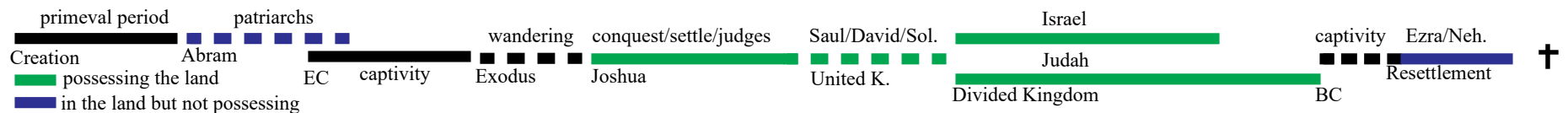
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). The beginning referred to is that of the heavens and the earth, not

God. We also notice that God, Elohim, *directly* creates the heavens and the earth and mankind. He uses no intermediaries or lesser gods.

God speaks the heavens and earth into existence

The formula, *and God said*, lays a foundation for setting apart God’s words from the words of all others. Only He can speak or command and His intention be instantly actualized. Those who witnessed Jesus’

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authority over demons recognized this Divine element in Jesus' commanding, *And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"* (Lk. 4:36).

The Hebrew verb bara, "to create"

"Hebrew *bara* is a key word, being used six or seven times in the creation account. This word has God as its only subject in the Old Testament, and no mention is made of the material out of which an object is created. It describes a way of acting that has no human analogy. Only God creates, as only God saves."⁷

God fashioned the creation for man

One cannot read this narrative without seeing that God is "building and making ready" an ideal place for man to live. The scene opens with a description of a place very inhospitable to man, *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep*, (Gen 1:2). Each successive day brings major improvements. Finally, when all (except man) is created, God creates man, blesses him, and says, *See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food* (Genesis 1:29). This is elaborated on in chapter 2, *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed*. The garden is then described in the most pleasant of terms and trees are not only good for food but they are pleasant to the sight (Gen. 2:8). There is also perfect harmony between man and the rest of creation.

Man is distinct from the animals

Note the repetition of the statement, *and God created or made ... according to its kind*, seven times (not counting the statement's application to plant life). Then comes the statement in verse 26, *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* The according to its kind pattern ends when we reach the final part of God's creation, mankind.

The imagery used in Genesis 2:7, that the Lord *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*, further sets Adam apart from all other creatures. There is a communication of

Divine life to him, which is not possessed by the other creatures.

Man is created in the image of God.

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27).

The threefold use of *bara* (create) and stating twice that we are made in God's image signals that this is the climax of the creation account.

The statement that man is created in God's image ultimately only has meaning if we know what God is like. True we can try, with some success to work the equation backwards, that is, we can know what God is like by looking at ourselves, since we are made in His image. This method would yield better results if we were still in the condition Adam and Eve were when God first created them! But we are not as Genesis 3-11 will show us. A brief look at the "gods" of the ancients will verify that "working the equation backwards" leads to idolatry of virtually every conceivable kind.

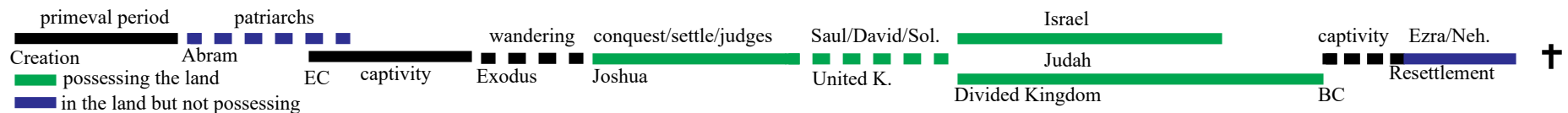
We may know what our Creator is like because he has revealed Himself in His Word and His Son. Man was created as a glorious creature with significant capacities reflecting God's capacities. However God possesses these capacities in an infinite degree, whereas we possess them in a limited measure. God made a creature that was like Himself, none of the animals represented what God is like, but man did.

Lists have been made pointing out the ways we are made in the image of God. One list includes; moral aspects, spiritual aspects, mental aspects, complex abstract language, creativity, a complex of many emotions, significant complex relationships, our having dominion over creation.⁸

We are not animals, though we have often degraded ourselves to behaving like them and government funded education has immersed our children for generations in the idea that we basically are. The climax of the creation account in Genesis chapter one stresses the distinction between us and all created animals. Then in chapter 2 the same truth is taught by Adam naming *all* of the animals and not finding any that could be a helper *comparable to him*.

The significance of the truth that every human being, regardless of age, gender, physical condition, bears the image of God cannot be

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overstated. In a sinful world, deny this truth and classify man as an animal, and only evil results. Every sinner finds innumerable reasons why he should be exalted and served before others. Encourage such a one to believe that his fellow men are only animals and he will find abundant reasons for exploiting them to satisfy himself.

Creation of man as male and female

God created mankind with two distinct genders, male and female. Both reflect the image of God. *In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them* (Gen 1:27). Woman was taken out of man thus she is comparable to him but not identical to him (Gen. 2:21-23). Men and women do have differing *roles* but were created as ontological equals. Regarding their roles later Scripture makes it clear that the order of their creation was intentional and significant (1 Tim. 2:12-13, 1 Cor. 11:8-9).

Definition and purpose of marriage

Marriage is the union of one man with one woman for the purposes of companionship, dominion of the earth, and procreation. *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him"* (2:18). *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth"* (1:28).

Man's relation to the creation

Man, male and female, were given authority over the creation to fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion over all creatures (see above). Also, in the garden man had a special role, *Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it* (Gen. 2:15).

Probation

God gave one prohibition to Adam. *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Though Adam had tremendous freedom he was still subject to God's will regarding whatever God saw fit to command him. He was under God's authority

and there would be serious consequences if He disobeyed.

The name of the tree is theologically "pregnant". Man is to live by faith, belief and obedience, in what God says, His Word. He cannot attain *true* knowledge apart from God's revelation and it is evil to seek such knowledge apart from God and in ways God has forbidden.

God's names Elohim and Yahweh

We will discuss God's names as we encounter them in Scripture.

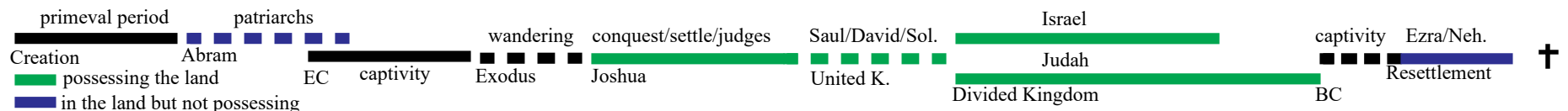
Genesis chapter 1 through 2:3 uses Elohim exclusively. It can mean "god" or "gods".⁹ We should understand that the name is not exclusively a "Bible", i.e. Israelite term. Elohim is a plural form. A common explanation of the plural form is that it emphasizes majesty or intensity. If intensity is meant the idea is that Elohim is the all competent God, all powerful and all knowing.

Some have seen Trinitarian overtones in Genesis 1:1-2, but especially in 1:26, *Then God said let Us make man in Our image*. Another approach (to the plurals of *Elohim* and the *Us* and *Our*) is that the plural "Us" and "Our" refer to the idea of a royal court.¹⁰ Elohim is used approximately 2000 time referring to God in the Old testament.

Chapter 2:4 introduces God's personal name, *Yahweh*, revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14-15, 6:3). *This is the history of ... in the day that the LORD [Yahweh] God [Elohim] made the earth*. We will discuss the meaning of this name in a later chapter. However it should be noted that God's use of *Yahweh* distinguishes Himself from all other gods just as your personal name distinguishes you from all other people.

Yahweh is a *revealed* name, not an idea created from natural (general) revelation. Revealing one's personal name opens up the possibility of intimacy and relationship. Our English translations, following the LXX, commonly translate *Yahweh* with the phrase *the Lord*. Since lord is a title in English this translation loses the *personal nature* of what is occurring. This is why most translations introduce a means, like LORD (lower case capitals), to enable the English reader to know *Yahweh* has been used.

Deut 10:17 illustrates the use of the two names. *For the LORD [Yahweh] your God [Elohim] is God [Elohim] of gods [Elohim] and Lord of lords*. Reading this text with the personal name retained is helpful. *For*



Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords. Yahweh is used approximately 6000 time in the Old Testament.

The Transcendence of God

A moments reflection on the creation will lead to questions like, “how powerful, wise and brilliant must the being be Who can command such things into existence?” The creation in which man lives has always had this effect upon man as Paul states in Romans 1:20, *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.* This affect has only been heightened by modern science as we have discovered both the complexities and immensities of the *heavens and earth* in which we live. God is infinite. Infinity and a causeless cause are things we can think about, but cannot grasp.

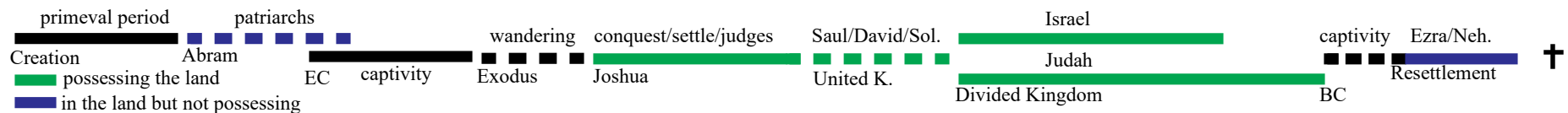
The Immanence of God

Since God is so beyond us, He is so “other”, there has been a tendency to think that we can have nothing meaningful to do with Him. Or better, that He cannot have anything meaningful to do with us. However the same creation account shows that this infinite God is very near and involved with Adam and Eve. He speaks to them, they understand Him! He blesses them. They are given tasks to do. He presents Eve to Adam. The scene is one of familiarity. Adam and Eve did not think this a strange situation. They were made in God’s image and this made such a meaningful relationship possible.

The Creation - Genesis 1-2 - Typology

Here we have an advantage and blessing over the original readers of the book of Genesis. We are much further into God’s plan than they were and we have a complete Old and New Testament. We live in the age of fulfillment of many (not all) of the Old Testament types and shadows.

We must use some caution so we do not find types and shadows where none exist. A cautious approach is to pay attention to those Old Testament events, persons, places and institutions that God actually invests with future significance. These are explicitly pointed out in Scripture. The creation account contains at least 4 such types.



God resting on the seventh day

God resting on the seventh day and setting it aside for special use, and in later Scripture naming it the Sabbath (rest day) was a type to be ultimately fulfilled in Christ when He gives His people rest from all their labors and sufferings in this life. This type is developed progressively throughout Scripture. The Israelites, after being delivered from slavery in Egypt, are commanded to keep the Sabbath (rest day) as a remembrance that Yahweh is the God who gave them rest by redeeming them from Egypt (Deut. 6:15). Joshua leading the conquest of the land and the people being settled without fear of their enemies was the Lord giving rest to his people (Jos. 1:13,15). But these earlier Sabbaths were not the fulfillment of the type and the author of Hebrews states that the rest Israel achieved under Joshua in the land looked forward to a more perfect rest, only achieved in Christ (Hebrews 4:1-10). Col. 2:16-17 makes it clear salvation apart from works of the law in Jesus Christ is the ultimate rest and that the Sabbath was *a shadow of things to come and the substance belongs to Christ.*

The tree of life

In the original creation Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. But when sin entered their access was denied. Yet as God’s plan unfolds mankind will once again be granted access to the tree of life as shown in Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14. That access was regained by the Son of God. The tree of life is a type of Christ. The only way to have eternal life is to by faith eat of Christ, to live off of Christ (John 6).

The garden in Eden

The term *eden* means luxuriance or pleasure. The garden in Eden was a special place where God’s presence was known and Adam and Eve communed with God. We could say it was a utopia. Though not explicitly stated it was a *holy* place since it was filled with God’s presence. We know this because once Adam and Eve became sinful they were driven out of the garden. They were driven out of the immediate and familiar presence of God.

Marriage

9. From later Scripture (both OT and NT) we see that marriage serves

the purpose of illustrating the relationship between God and His people. Throughout the Old Testament Israel, in covenant relationship with Yahweh, is represented as being Yahweh’s bride. This figure continues into the New Covenant regarding the relationship between Christ and His church. Christ covenants with her to be her husband and she his bride. In doing so He has committed to fully give of Himself for her good and blessing. She also covenants to be faithful to Him only and respect and obey His authority.

Unanswered questions

The theology and typology of the first two chapters of Genesis answers many questions. However, there are plenty questions left unanswered. Since God is good we can be confident that He has made known to us what we need to know, what is good for us to know now. It is mistaken at best, and rebellion at worst, to complain about or disbelieve those things He has revealed because He has not revealed everything. This is true regarding the entire Bible. It’s worth repeating what I said in the introduction. It is important that we not impose our subjects on the Bible, but that we listen to the subjects it focuses our attention on. Persistently trying to answer unanswered questions, or not believing what is revealed because some questions are not answered, is to impose our subjects on the Bible.

The Scriptures that God has given are sufficient for us as 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches. However, that does not mean all our questions are answered or that we, in this life, can see the whole picture. D.A. Carson gives a helpful illustration of what we are experiencing.¹¹ We are putting together a puzzle piece by piece but we have never been given all the pieces! This is why it is mistaken (and futile) to try to make Scripture answer all the questions. At each stage of redemptive history God has given more pieces, but not all. That remains true today. We have more pieces than all of the previous periods, but we too do not have all the pieces. Only in the age to come will we have access to all the pieces! More revelation, perhaps the greatest?, is yet to come.

The Fall - Genesis 3 - History

The author of Genesis ended chapter one with the statement, *then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.* And he ended chapter two with the statement, *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.* Also man is on probation, he is not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These statements set the stage for what is now explained in chapter 3. The world we live in is almost nothing like what’s been described in chapters 1-2. What happened? And what is the explanation for death? Chapter 3 answers these question. These are questions that all mankind of every age have pondered. Things are not as they ought to be. We know, we feel such, and humanity has always known and felt that something is grievously wrong.

How long were Adam and Eve in the Garden before they sinned?

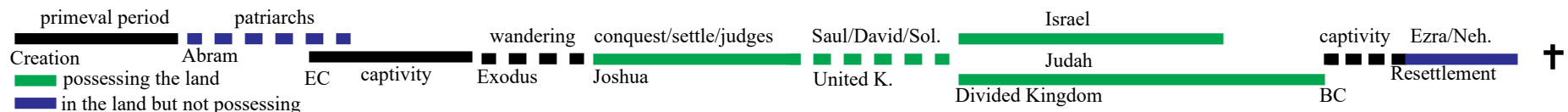
Genesis 3:8 may indicate that they had been in the garden long enough to become accustomed to hearing *the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.* They had produced no children nor had they eaten of the Tree of Life.

The Serpent

The temptation of Eve came through the serpent. Was the serpent Satan or was he one of the creatures which God had made and was used by Satan? Likely the latter (Gen. 3:1). It also seems that the serpent as originally created was not a snake as we know snakes today. The serpent going on its belly (Gen. 3:14) was the result of God’s curse.

Adam, Eve and the fall as historical events

Genesis 2:4 says, *This is the history [literally generations, Hebrew toledot] of the heavens and the earth when they were created,* and then gives a detailed account of the creation of Adam and Eve. And Adam’s genealogy is given in chapter 5. The book of Genesis is structured around the giving of genealogies. Notice 5:1, 6.9; 10.1; 11.10; 11.27; 25.12; 25.19; 36.9; 37.2. There is no indication that Adam, heading a genealogy, should not be viewed as all the other (i.e. historical) genealogies given in the book. And Eve is named the mother of all living (3:20).



New Testament authors repeatedly refer to the events of the fall and Adam and Eve as historical events; 1 Ch. 1.1, Mt. 19.3-9, 23.35, Hb. 11.4-7, Jn. 8.44, 1 Co. 11.7-12, 2 Co. 11.3, 1 Ti. 2.13-14, Jude 14, Ro. 5.12-19, 1 Co. 15.20-23, 42-49.

The Fall - Genesis 3 - Theology

To say that the account of the temptation and fall is theologically pregnant is an understatement. I can here only list with the briefest of comments what we learn from this account.

No history given of the voice behind the serpent

We know very little regarding how the serpent originally appeared to Eve. Neither does the account explain the origination of the evil voice behind the serpent. Whoever he is, he is opposed to God’s intentions for the man and woman. And he lies profusely about God. It will require later Scripture to identify this being. Some consider the oracle against the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14, to whom the term Lucifer is applied, to be a reference to Satan. Others consider the oracle against the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:12 also to be a reference to Satan.

The origin of evil in the earth

The Old Testament uses the Hebrew term *raah* to refer to evil in two senses, moral evil (disobedience to God) and suffering and calamity. Our consciences bear witness to the first and our life experience bears witness to the second. Genesis 3 explains the origin of both. Man is responsible for the origin of evil, not God. God sets the world up “very good”. Man reeks the havoc. We are not victims of capricious, imperfect gods.

The Fall

Eve is persuaded to follow the serpent and ignores God’s command and warning. Adam we are told did similar but by listening to the voice of his wife. In both cases God’s voice is ignored and tragedy ensues. Judgements fall upon the serpent (3:14), Eve (3:16) and Adam (3:17). Death enters the very good creation and even the ground is cursed (3:17).

This view of the origin of evil is unique from the surrounding ancient near eastern religions. In those religions evil is usually the fault of the gods themselves. Either they are of a mixed “moral character” themselves or some of the gods are good and others are evil. Man bears some responsibility for evil, but the gods share in this responsibility also. The theology of Genesis 1-3 totally repudiates these views.

The immediate aftermath of the Fall

God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins (3:21) and expels them from the Garden (3:24). To ensure they do not now eat of the Tree of Life, he blocks the entrance to the Garden with Cherubim and a flaming sword.

Definition of Sin

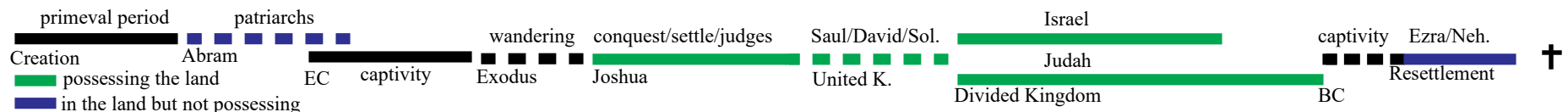
Though the terms sin, iniquity and transgression do not appear in Genesis chapter 3 the theology of chapter 3 establishes how these terms, used hundreds of times in later Scripture, are to be understood. Sin is first primarily an act of opposing our human will and action against God’s will. Genesis 1-3 *assumes* God has every right to command the man and expect obedience and punish the man for a failure to do so. The Elohim and Yahweh of Genesis 1-3 is the undisputed lawgiver.

Are there other accounts of how evil entered the world?

Yes. Other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts testify to the universal sinfulness of mankind and offer some explanations. These accounts state that mankind was evil from his creation. “The ancient understanding of sin reflected in these accounts puts all the blame for sin on the poor workmanship of the gods, so the gods should not expect too much from mankind. The biblical account, on the other hand, puts the blame for sin and evil on mankind who were originally sinless but given the ability to choose evil and reject God.”¹²

It is also clear that God is just. He does not expect man to “read His mind” and then punish him if he doesn’t get it right. No, He clearly communicates to man what is expected and warns of the consequences of disobeying His command. We learn that it is *knowledge* that makes man responsible and the God initiates to ensure that man has a knowledge of His will.

-11- Temptation



Satan’s first step is to entice us into questioning the truthfulness of God’s word. God spoke clearly to Adam, and Eve also knew what He had said. Satan also tried to create doubts in her mind as to the goodness or “reasonableness” of God’s commands. He also tempted her into trying to be something God never created her to be, to be like God knowing good and evil. Only God can accurately and fully define good and evil. For us to desire to or attempt to is arrogance of the first order. Satan succeeded to get her thinking about everything except what God had said (see 3:6)! Contrast her forgetting the word of God during her temptation and Jesus’ constant asserting what God has said during His temptation!

Adam bore the most responsibility

God had given the command to Adam (2:16-17). Adam was to tend the Garden and to the lead and protect his wife. He failed to do both. His position of responsibility is made clear in the account by the fact that their eyes were not opened *until* Adam ate of the fruit. He could have refused to eat and the damage would have halted. Furthermore when the Lord came to the Garden He came looking for Adam (3:9).

God judges sin and sin brings serious consequences

God curses the serpent and sovereignly alters the relationship between the woman and the serpent such that they now become enemies. This was a mercy to Eve but the damage has already been done (3:14). The serpent, sometime in the future, will have his head bruised or crushed by one of the woman’s descendants (see typology discussion below).

Adam and Eve were not cursed as was the serpent. However their sin resulted in consequences related to their specific roles. The woman was created with the ability to carry and bear children. Her pain and difficulty in fulfilling this role is now greatly multiplied. She also was to be a helper to her husband and follow his leadership. This relationship will now be strained, she will want to rule over him instead, nevertheless he will rule over her (3:16).

Adam has to bear the shame that the ground is now cursed because of him. It will now yield thorns and thistles, nothing edible here. The amount of labor Adam must expend just so he and his wife can have

enough food is greatly increased. He will have to labor and sweat in order to put daily food on their table. And there’s no “retirement” for Adam, he will toil like this *until* he returns to the dust (3:17).

Adam and Eve, though given dominion over all the creation and tasked with subduing it (1:28), have in a great measure lost their dominion.

Sinning, rebelling against God’s authority, brings major consequences into our lives and the lives of others.

An accurate sketch of human experience in our fallen state

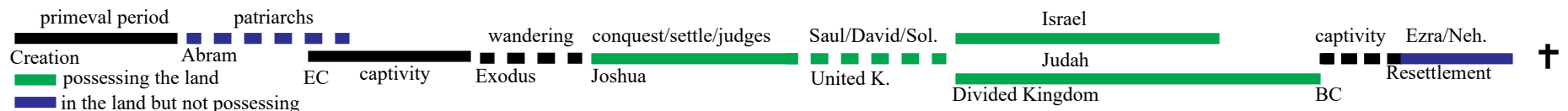
Though the idyllic conditions described in Genesis 1-2 seem unreal to us, we find the experiences related in Genesis 3 all too real. We immediately relate to the fractured relationship between ourselves and God. We understand the feeling of fear when we are first confronted with the fact that God is “looking for us”, as Adam and Eve were afraid and hide themselves amongst the trees of the Garden. The relationship between husband and wife is immediately broken, the shifting of blame from ourselves to others begins, the shame represented by being naked without a covering is experienced, the pain of childbirth and the thorns and thistles associated with all our labor - all of these things become our *common* experience. With a minimum of words Genesis 3, written 3,500 years ago, accurately describes “our real world.”

The Fall - Genesis 3 - Typology

In reference to the definition of typology given in the introduction there are no *explicit* types begun in Genesis 3. However Genesis 3 contains two significant references which should be understood as promises that find their fulfillment in Christ. By these promises Adam and Eve are given hope that sometime and somehow in the future the evil that has now come into their world will be undone.

The serpent will be defeated by the seed of the woman

When Genesis 3:15 was originally given it was not possible to determine if seed, or offspring, should be understood as a plural or singular. But what is clear is that, although the serpent initially defeated Eve, Eve will ultimately win the final round through one of her



descendants who will give a fatal blow to the serpent - his head will be bruised or crushed. Eve will participate in the defeat of the serpent. This conflict will result in the woman's seed being injured, but not fatally - his heel will be bruised (3:15). The Lord said this much to Adam and Eve, indicating that the serpent, whoever he is, will be defeated. As God's plan unfolds we ultimately learn that the Seed of the woman to which the Lord was referring is the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

From God's words to Eve Adam understands that they will not immediately die and actually they will have offspring. He is believing God's word! Thus he names his wife Eve *because she was the mother of all living* (3:20). "Eve sounds like the Hebrew for life-giver and resembles the word for living." ¹³

How are we to understand "the seed of the serpent"?

This is obviously not referring to generations of little snakes descending from the serpent. All human beings descend from Eve. Her descendants will contain two groups of people. The seed of the serpent refers to all those persons whom the "voice behind the serpent" (Satan) has led to persist in rebellion against God. The seed of the serpent follow his influence, they follow his "word" instead of God's. Jesus' statement in John 8:43-47 illustrates the seed of the serpent.

Cain is the first seed of the serpent. His rejection of God's word is as Jesus described regarding the Pharisees, *they were not able to hear His word* (Gen. 4:6-7). History from this time forward will be marked by hostility between these two seeds, the [godly] seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

God slays animals to cloth Adam and Eve

Though Adam and Eve made coverings of fig leaves for their nakedness the Lord knew that these were inadequate to protect them or give them a sense of security regarding their nakedness. He graciously makes tunics for them from animal skin.

"Since the tunics are made of skin, implicitly it took the shedding of blood, the offering up of life, to provide the needed kind of covering. As such the probable death of the animal foreshadows the death of Christ and his imputed righteousness that adequately covers our

shame." ¹⁴

Populating The Earth, Spread of Sin- Genesis 4-6:7 - History

Here we are considering the period of time from Adam and Eve being driven out of the garden until the time that God decides to bring a universal judgement. This is a period of at least 1,600 years.

Adam and Eve bear children, Cain and Able (4:1-2)

Adam and Eve are dwelling in Eden, but not in the Garden. They bear children. Cain becomes a tiller of the ground and Able a keeper of sheep.

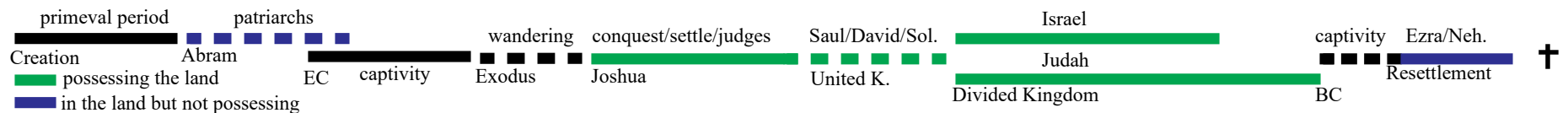
Cain Murders Able and is cursed by God (4:3-16)

Cain and Able bring tribute offerings to God (see below) and God accepts Able's offering and rejects Cain's. Cain becomes enraged, refuses to heed God's warning and invitation to do right and murders Able. When confronted by God he refuses to repent. God curses him and drives him out of Eden, out from the presence of God. God does not institute capital punishment at this time and mercifully protects Cain from others who may try to take vengeance on him and kill him.

The descendants of Cain, Lamech (4:17-24)

Cain settles in the land of Nod east of Eden and five generations of firstborn sons are traced down to Lamech (Adam > Cain > Enoch > Irad > Mehujael > Methushael > Lamech). Cain builds a city and names it after his son Enoch. Cain's descendants are credited with developing cities, domesticating livestock, creating music and musical instruments, and they become skilled in making all kinds of tools with iron and bronze. In spite of all this "God imaging" creativity there is no record that any of Cain's descendants were godly. The record ends with Lamech who represents a progressive hardening in sin. He took two wives (contrary to God's intent for marriage, Gen. 2:24), killed a young man even though his life was not threatened, and then boasts to his two wives, in song, regarding the matter, and issues a grossly unjust vendetta against any who would harm him.

It is interesting to note that Lamech knows of the curse that the Lord had placed on anyone who would have killed his distant father, Cain, from six generations back (4:24). This is evidence that a strong oral



tradition exists. The genealogy of Cain ends with Lamech’s evil boast. This appears to have been the intent of the author to end with Lamech to show that Cain, the first murderer, has an evil line, and his last mentioned descendant was also a murderer.

The descendants of Seth (4:25-26)

Are all the seed of the woman seed of the serpent? Abel is no more. There appears to be no godly seed among Cain’s descendants, at least according to the record given. The mother of all living is blessed with a third son. She named him Seth and exclaimed, *for God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed* (4:25). And Seth has a son whom he named Enosh, and we are told that *then men began to call on the name of the LORD* (4:26). The record informs us that there are some in Seth’s line that are not seed of the serpent. How many we do not know but two notable men mentioned are Enoch and Noah (see below).

Adam’s Genealogy - Adam to Noah (5:1-32)

Genesis chapter 5 gives us Adam’s genealogy from Seth, Adam’s third son, to Noah. Adam lived 800 years after Seth was born and had other sons and daughters of whom we know nothing. The genealogy is summarized below. The first number is the father’s age when the descendant was born, the second is the father’s age at death.

Adam (130, 930) > Seth (105, 912) > Enosh (90, 905) > Cainan (75, 910) > Mahalalel (65, 895) > Jared (162, 962) > Enoch (65, 365) > Methuselah (187, 969) > Lamech (182, 777) > Noah (500, 950) > Shem, Ham, Japheth.

Two things stand out to the modern reader. The large ages before the firstborn sons were born (and it is an assumption that this genealogy traces firstborns from Seth to Noah) and the large life spans. Various explanations for these ages have been proposed. The most common being that the pre-flood conditions of the earth were vastly different from what our biological systems experience today. Recorded life spans after the flood rather quickly diminish to what we consider normal today.

However the Genesis record is not the only ancient record giving extremely long life spans. The Sumerian king list, dating to approxi-

mately 2000,¹⁵ which records the reigns of pre-flood and post-flood kings gives extraordinary pre-flood reigns of eight kings from 18,600 to 43,200 years. However, what may be more significant is that the reigns of the kings listed after the flood (the Sumerians have a flood history) are also greatly reduced, which is consistent with the Genesis record that a significant life span reduction occurred after the flood. One explanation of the extraordinary Sumerian numbers is that some different system of dating was in use.

Lamech’s (Seth’s descendent) comment regarding his naming his son Noah, reflects that at least 1061 years from the curse people still retained a clear knowledge of it (5:29).

Enoch’s life on earth was relatively short as he was singled out as one who walked with God and God took him. Since the mention of every other name in the genealogy ends with “and he died” we are safe in assuming that “God took him” means Enoch did not die but God translated him to glory (5:21-24).

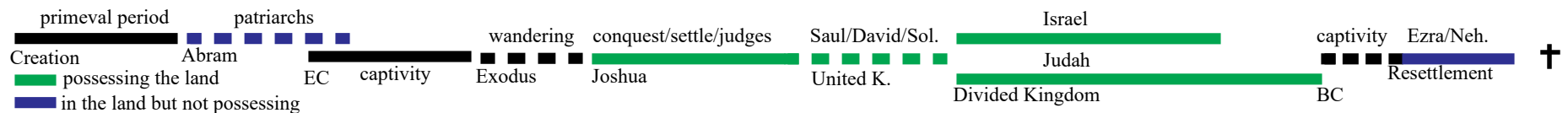
Ancient population estimates are difficult to make since we have little idea exactly what the refrain for every antediluvian (one lived before the flood), “and had sons and daughters,” means. But the record assures us that they all did. And the fact that most of them were approximately a century old before they had their firstborn sons further complicates the situation. Based on the life spans indicated a very large population could have risen by the time of the flood (at least 1600 years after creation).

I did a crude calculation with the parameters of: Each couple bears 8 children, a generation is 100 years, i.e. time to firstborn, everyone lives to age 900. At Noah’s birth (10 generations) the population would be 491,520. Six hundred years later, at the time of the flood, the population would be 2,013,265,920.

The earth and all of its inhabitants are corrupted (6:1-7)

In Genesis 6:1-7 we are given a summary of the deplorable conditions to which the human race had sunk and some explanation of how they got there. The seed of the serpent *appears* to have gained total dominance.

The speculation regarding what is meant that the “sons of God took



for themselves wives from the daughters of men” (Gen. 6:2) has always run wild. I expressed once in frustration that most people who know almost nothing about the Bible know of two texts, John 3:16 and Gen. 6:1-2! The reference should not be understood to refer to fallen angels since angels were not created with any reproductive (male or female) capacities (Mt. 22:30). However this does not rule out some form of demon possession of men, perhaps kings (rulers are sometimes in Scripture referred to as “sons of god”, or “gods”).¹⁶

The Lord sees all mankind’s depravity but decides not to immediately destroy them, *And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.* (6:3). There were giants on the earth - men of renown - not in a good moral sense. The Lord saw *that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (6:5) and *the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence* (6:11). The Lord sorrows that he created mankind and resolves to destroy man and beast from the face of the earth (6:6-7). He regrets every having created him.

A very good creation has been spoiled. Adam and Eve and their descendants, if they have gained any dominion, they have used it for evil purposes. A universal judgement is coming in 120 years.

Populating The Earth, Spread of Sin - Genesis 4-6:7 - Theology

There are a number of insights we may gain from this period of human history. Unfortunately most of the them are dark and sobering.

The rapid spread of sin among Adam and Eve’s descendants

The children that Adam and Eve bear are like them in their fallen, not created, condition. These children are not *very good*. Their first born child becomes a murderer and the first family is struck with tragedy. Though there are a few godly exceptions mentioned, evil invades the entire race to such an extent that the God’s appraisal of the situation is staggering. *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen 6:5). The words, “*every intent*”, “*only evil, continually*” leave no space for any neutrality, much less righteous-

ness. All of mankind is continually in rebellion against God. Not by accident or ignorance, but with *intent*.

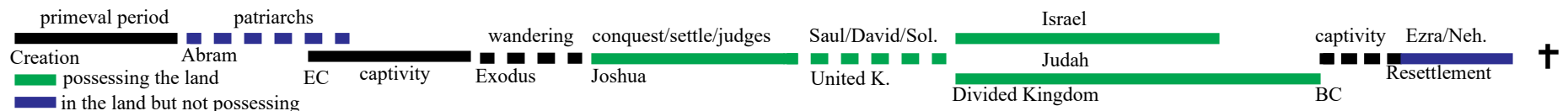
Acceptable worship, Cain and Able’s offerings

Though expelled from the Garden the “first family” has direct interactions with God and present offerings to Him. The term used here for offering refers to a tribute offering, not a sacrifice for sin. The reason God accepts Abel’s offering and rejects Cain is not found in the fact that one was “bloody” and the other not. The difference is found *in the attitude of the giver*. The author points out that Abel brought *of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions*. He selected the best from his flock, and brought the *best portions* of these animals, i.e. *of their fat portions*. Cain simply brought a portion of his produce. Without reading into the text we can see Able taking care, selecting his best, and then taking care in the preparation of the best animal by separating out the fat portions, and presenting it to God. We can see Cain just bringing what is handy and presenting it. Hebrews 11:4 sheds more light and points out a fundamental difference beneath their actions, faith.

Though there are numerous rituals prescribed in the OT it is clear from the beginning that the most significant matter in any offering *is the attitude of the worshipper toward God grounded in faith*. A true faith motivated worshipper will desire to give God the best and take care to do so. There is a big difference between acceptable and unacceptable worship. We all need to take time and care regarding this matter.

God’s representation of sin to Cain (4:6-7)

The Lord’s words warning Cain concerning sin speak volumes to us regarding the power sin exercises over us. He personifies sin as one lying at the door, i.e. crouching and ready to spring. Its desire is for Cain, it desires to rule over him, to dominate his actions. Cain is told that *he must rule over it*. Cain must oppose sin, master it. Sadly, in Cain’s case, the admonition is ignored and jealously turns to rage and rage leads to murder. Sin rules the day - and the life. The rest of the Bible’s teaching on sin’s influence over humanity is consistent with this personification given in Genesis 4. Paul personifies sin in Romans chapter five with the phrase that *sin reigned in death*. And in



Romans chapter six, until we are set free by Christ, we are described as being the *slaves of sin*. Sin is a king who reigns over its subjects and a master who holds his slaves in servitude.

Human behavior influenced by demonic activity

If the phrase sons of God in Genesis 6:1-2 refers to fallen spiritual beings (angels, demons) then we are taught that part of the explanation for the wild-fire spread of sin described in 6:2-7 is that in the fallen, post Genesis 2 world, humanity is subject to a non-human influence which encourages disbelief in God and rebellion against him. Even before the fall that influence was present in Eve’s temptation. Later Scripture gradually confirm this reality climaxing in the descriptions given in the final book of the Bible, Revelation.

Populating The Earth, Spread of Sin - Genesis 4-6:7 - Typology

There is minimal typological development during this period, but two matters stand out.

The Lord instituted animal and agrarian offerings

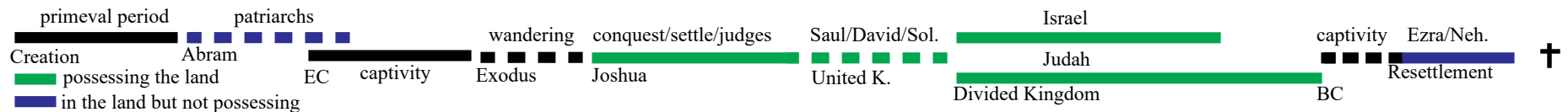
We are not explicitly told what type of offerings the Lord instituted. Instead we are simply informed of their practice in the case of Cain and Able. We can safely assume that when Genesis 4:26 states, *Then men began to call on the name of the LORD*, this would have included the offering of sacrifices in the tradition of Able’s. Thus very early the Lord establishes offerings of various kinds that were significant for mankind to pursue in order to maintain a relationship with Him. We know from later Scripture that these offerings all have reference to the Person and Work of Christ and that after Christ’s coming all these types of offerings (i.e. animals, produce) are ended. Thus we see here the beginnings of these types and shadows.

Lamech’s (Seth’s descendant) “prophecy”.

From the standpoint of any hope found in this section there is a ray shining out at the time of Noah’s birth. Lamech is given insight into the fact that through this son the effects of the curse - the driving, relentless labor required to live - will be lessened or removed. Noah *will comfort [or bring relief, rest] us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed.”*

Lamech, knowing this, names his son “Noah” which sounds like the Hebrew term “rest” (Gen 5:29)¹⁸. Here we have another indication (like the words in Gen. 3:15) that the effects of the curse will be undone through one of Eve’s descendants.

Lamech, who is at least 1000 years removed from the curse, still demonstrates a clear knowledge of it.



God's Judgment, Noah, the Flood - Genesis 6:8-9:29 - History

By Genesis 6 we reach a crisis point in human history. The earth has been populated with the seed of the serpent and the patience of God with man's wickedness is coming to an end. The entire earth will be destroyed. However God will spare one family from which He will begin again to populate the earth.

Only one righteous man left? (Gen. 6:8-13)

Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord and was righteous and walked with God. The earth was corrupt before God and filled with violence. God spares only Noah. Does this mean that Noah (and his family?) was the only godly person left in the entire human population? The record seems to assume this. The record of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which indicates that He would not have destroyed the cities if He had found even one righteous person in them, confirms this understanding.

God decides to destroy the earth by a flood (6:13)

God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth (6:13)... And behold, I Myself am bringing flood-waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die (Gen 6:17).

The building of a big box - the ark (Gen. 6:14-16)

God commands Noah to build an *ark* (Heb. *teba*).¹⁹ The term simply means box or chest. The term is also used of the basket in which Moses' mother placed him when she put him in the river (Ex. 2:3,5). *Gopher* wood is a transliteration of the Hebrew term so we really do not know what kind of trees are referred to. The "pitch" is bitumen, a naturally occurring mineral substance in mesopotamia that can be used as an adhesive or mortar between bricks. It can make a water-proof seal.

The "box" was to be 300 cubits in length (aprox. 450 ft.), 50 cubits wide (75 ft.) and 30 cubits high (45 ft.). It was to have 3 decks, a window running around the top one cubit below the roof, and a door in its

side. It is now understood that the dimensions given by God to Noah are "sea worthy" dimensions for such a vessel.

We cannot know with precision how many years Noah was building the ark. If the events of Genesis 6:3-14 occurred within the same year then Noah was 120 years building the Ark.

God establishes a covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18-22)

God established a covenant with Noah. He pledged to keep Him, his wife, his sons and their wives, and one male and female of every kind of creature, alive in the ark, when He destroyed every other living creature, man and beast, *all in which was the breadth of life*.

Seven day notice and boarding call (Gen. 7:1-9)

The Lord told Noah to begin "boarding" the ark seven days prior to the flood. Of the "clean" animals, those which would be used for sacrifice, seven were to be taken. Of the unclean one male and female pair. Obviously the Lord intends to re-populate the earth, man and beast. There will be a new start.

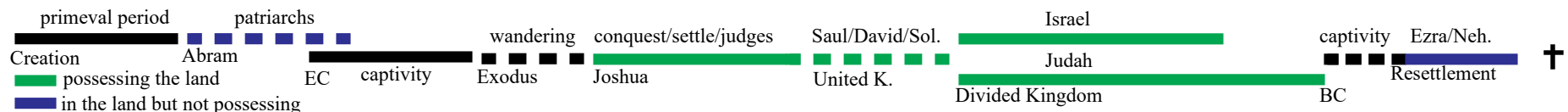
The judgement - the flood (Gen. 7:10-24)

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. The waters rose to 15 cubits above the highest mountain peaks and these sobering words are given in verses 21-23, And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth.

The earth remained entirely covered with water for 150 days.

The waters recede and the land dries (Gen. 8:1-19)

Five months from the time the waters began the Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (8:4). The waters continued to recede for another three months and the tops of the mountains were visible. Forty days



after this Noah opened a window of the Ark. He sent out a raven which found no place to rest. Then he sent out a dove three times over one week intervals. The first time she returned and had found no place to rest. The second time she returned with a fresh olive leaf in her beak. From this Noah knew the waters had receded from the earth. The third time she did not return. Then one year and 10 days from the time the waters began, when the earth was dried, God told Noah to go out of the Ark, he, his family, and all of the animals, *Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you ... so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth* (8:16-17).

Can you imagine what the landscape looked like when they came off of the Ark?

God accepts burnt offerings that Noah offers (Gen. 8:20-22)

Once they disembarked from the ark Noah built an altar and offered all the clean animals as a burnt offering to God. God accepts the offering and on the basis of this offering He promises to never again destroy the earth as He had done.

God blesses Noah and sons, covenant with man & beast (9:1-17)

The original blessing upon Adam and Eve is now repeated upon Noah and his sons however their relationship to the animal world has been altered such that the animals will now fear man (see below). Animals also are now given to man as a source of food.

Capital punishment for man or beast that sheds man's blood is also instituted at this time (see below).

God also establishes a covenant with mankind and all living creatures, *Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth* (Gen 9:11), see below.

A new beginning (9:18-19)

Genesis 9:18-19 show a new beginning. *Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.*

A new start marred, Noah's sin, Ham's sin (9:20-29)

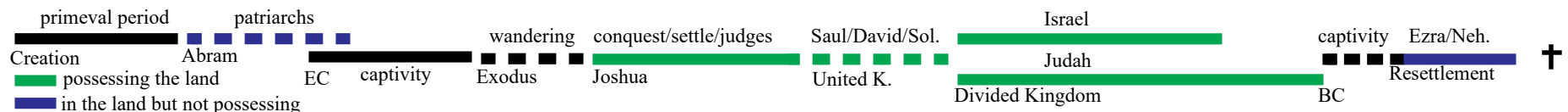
The post flood account gives many hopeful signs, God remembers Noah during the flood, He accepts the sacrifice Noah offers and promises regularity of the created order as long as the earth remains, He repeats the original creation blessings on Noah and his sons, and He initiates a covenant with man and beast to never destroy the earth again with a flood, in spite of man's evil heart.

Notwithstanding all of these "hopefuls" the author of Genesis ends the Noah account with a bleak episode that shows that the sin problem still remains. Noah began farming and raising vineyards and became drunk from the wine of the vineyard. He was also unclothed. His youngest son, Ham, discovers him in this shameful situation, but instead of protecting his father's honor he spreads his shame to his older brothers. His brothers discretely cover their father. When Noah becomes aware of what has been done he pronounces a curse upon Ham's son, Canaan, and a blessing upon Shem and Japheth.

Here again, as in the original Adam and Eve family in which sin began to get the upper hand, this "second family" is marred by sin in multiple ways, Noah's drunkenness which becomes an occasion for Ham's dishonoring his father.

Are there other ancient histories of the flood?

Yes. The ancient Mesopotamian flood accounts have significant similarities with the biblical account. A hero builds a boat and survives, the hero sends birds to survey the earth after the flood, and after humans leave the boat sacrifices are offered to the gods. Contained in the Gilgamesh epic, the story of Gilgamesh's search to become immortal, is a lengthy flood account. The Sumerian king list even includes mention of the flood as it lists kings before and after the flood. "In Shuruppak, ubar-Tutu became king and ruled 18,600 years ... These are five cities, eight kings ruled them for 241,000 years. Then the flood swept over the earth. After the flood had swept over the earth and when kingship was lowered again from heaven, kingship was first in Kish."²⁰ In one account the gods destroy the earth because its inhabitants are making too much noise and disturbing their sleep. In the Babylonian account the ship is shaped as a cube - not a sea worthy geometry for a ship. When it comes to the "theol-



ogy” of the accounts the greatest divergence is seen. In the biblical account man is destroyed because of his wickedness, yet God himself preserves mankind - it is an account of judgement and mercy. The idea of covenant between God and Noah, and then between God, mankind and beast after the flood, so central in the biblical account, is completely absent from the other accounts. Regarding these accounts A. Hoerth comments, “All sophisticated cultures would be expected to need a creation story - but not a flood story - in their ‘beginnings.’ The popularity of the flood theme can be used to argue for the historicity of the event.”²¹

God’s Judgment, Noah, Flood - Genesis 6:8-9:29 - Theology

The account of God’s judgment of mankind by means of the universal flood provides insight into the nature of God, his righteousness and his mercy. The Elohim of the flood is Yahweh and by the flood and the preservation of Noah He demonstrated that He is the God who rules over nature, man and beast. When properly understood the account is indeed fearful.

The patience of God with evil has limits

The account makes it clear that the world was destroyed because of its evil and that God does not allow evil to continue forever on the earth. *And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”* (6:3) The Lord represents Himself as striving with man so in some sense He restrained evil. The point of the additional 120 years is that the Lord is patient toward evil and not eager to bring judgment. This representation of God continues through out the Bible.

The Lord, Yahweh, judges those who commit evil

I purposely did not title this paragraph, “The Lord, Yahweh, judges evil” because in our culture such expressions have been used to leave open the idea that people are not actually punished by God. That “evil” is something separated out from man, some impersonal thing that God’s anger falls upon. But *The Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth (6:7)*. The only way to eliminate evil is to eliminate those who commit it. That’s the sobering message of this account. The superficial thinking has led to the

terribly misleading expression that, “God loves the sinner but hates the sin.” In order to represent things clearly to our culture, including this account of judgement, we may say that God destroys those who practice evil, or, God punishes those who commit sin. Ultimately this clarity is essential for a right understand of the Jesus’ death! Who, not what, was punished?

Numbers don’t decide these matters, though people think so. The attitude is, “will God destroy all of us? everyone? What Christians say cannot be true. Why God would have to destroy almost all of us!” The first six or eight pages in most of our Bibles answer these questions.

God is personal, emotions, fully involved with mankind

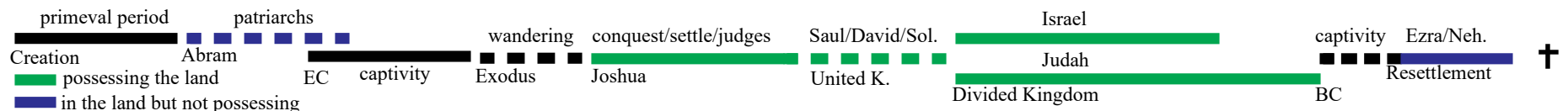
The description we find of God in Genesis 6:6-7 is of One who not only thinks but feels. One who not only knows things but is affected by what He knows. Even if these are anthropomorphisms²² they are still intended to reveal to us what God is like.

Furthermore when we realize that Genesis 6 is a history about *our* ancestors and *our* kind are we not humbled by the sight of God being grieved in His heart over what we, as a kind, have become? and do? What do we feel as we see Him being sorry that He ever made man?

There is no theology like this in the other ancient flood accounts.

Noah finding favor or grace with God and his godly conduct

Though our self-righteous generation complains loudly when it is suggested that God doesn’t save everyone, or love everyone (Romans 9:13) Scripture often defends the reasonableness that everyone will be condemned - then God’s grace is introduced with a “but”. So here, man’s wickedness is graphically set forth in verses 1-7 leading to God’s resolve to destroy man from the earth - *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*. Due to God’s grace all humanity will not be destroyed (i.e. Jer. 32:36-37, Micah 3:12-4:1, 5:1-4, Obadiah 1:16-17, Rom. 3:20-21, 11:3-4). To fully understand the relationship between God’s favor (grace) toward Noah and his righteous conduct (good works) will require additional Scripture. In verses 7-9 God’s favor is mentioned first and then we are told of Noah’s conduct. We do conclusively learn from later Scripture that ultimately grace is the cause and good works are the result. However, Scripture is not embarrassed



in the least to say that God rewards obedience and what we sow we reap. The description of Noah’s conduct should not be understood to teach that he was sinless in an absolute senses. However, *in his generations* (6:9), that is, in comparison to those around little or no fault could be found.

Lamech’s prophecy concerning his son was correct, it would be through him that mankind ultimately would find deliverance from driving labor because of the ground that God had cursed. The seed of the woman which will lead to Satan’s undoing continues.

Man’s dominion reestablished, the power of the sword (9:1-7)

God’s original intent and blessing for mankind is reasserted - *So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”* (9:1). However, man’s dominion over the earth is changed in that now animals are given to man as a source of food (compare 1:28-29 with 9:1-4) and the fear of man is put into every beast. The only restriction is that an animal must be drained of its blood - its symbol of life - before it is used for food.

God providing the animals as food for humankind shows that man and animal are distinct and created for different purposes. Mankind requires an adequate supply of food to survive and God is assuring such. Animals had previously been used for sacrifice from the earliest of times as Abel’s offering indicates. However, the entire flood account shows that man is to care for the animal kingdom as God uses Noah to preserve “every living creature”. It also indicates that God desires the preservation of all creatures He’s created - something which has not been achieved.

Human life is sacred and God requires a just reckoning. A literal translation of verse 5 is helpful - even if awkward to our way of speaking - *“Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man* (9:5). This is the *lex talionis* principle of justice applied to human life, i.e. *life for life*. The principle is spelled out more clearly in the law and more examples are given, “an eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth”. Any animal which has taken the life of a man its life must be taken by man. Man is to administer God’s justice in this matter. So also if man sheds man’s blood, man is to admin-

ister God’s justice - *“Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”* (9:6). A just civil authority is given the power of the sword, capital punishment for capital offense and God expects such displays of justice. Three times God says *I will require it*. The reason given is because *in the image of God He made man*. The giving of man the power of the sword further demonstrates God intends humankind to extend His rule on the earth. This giving of “civil” authority also *anticipates the need for it* now that the human race is infected with sin.

The Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:8-17)

God makes known His commitment to show mercy to mankind in the covenants He has initiated. These covenants are given to form the foundation of our trust in God. *People throughout the ages are brought to trust Him as they hear His commitment expressed to them in the covenants He has initiated with them*. In these covenants God graciously has bound Himself to mankind in special relationships.

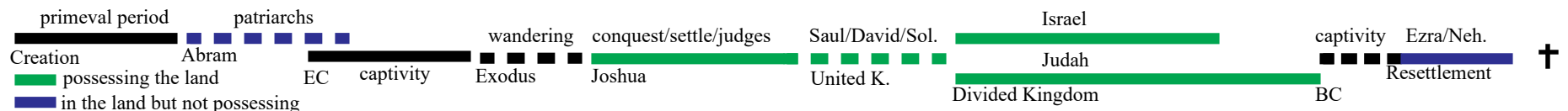
After destroying every living creature on the earth except those gathered with Noah, God initiated a covenant between Himself and every living creature for perpetual generations that the waters of the earth would never again destroy all flesh (9:15).

The gracious character of the Noahic covenant can be seen by noting that it’s foundation is in the offerings Noah presented to God just after they left the ark (8:21-25). The offerings are received by God as a soothing aroma. The grace is seen especially in that statement, *“I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;”* (8:21)

The sign of the covenant was mercifully associated with rainfall which would have terrified Noah and his descendants had God not said, *I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth*.

The Noahic covenant is the foundation for the redemptive hope of the creation that will be realized in the consummation through Jesus Christ and the resurrection of His people (Rom. 8:23).

God often (not always) associates a sign with a covenant. In this case it is the rainbow. In initiating covenants with mankind God conde-



scends to speak to us in a manner that reassures our faith. God did not need an external sign (the rainbow) in order for Him to remember to keep His promise (9:16). But the signs *remind us* that God has made such promises *and that He remembers*. We are reminded that God remembers, thereby our faith is established and maintained.

The attempt to cleanse the earth “failed”

Although there is a new start with God’s blessing Noah (9:1) and assuring all of creation of never again being destroyed by a flood (9:10), the account ends showing that mankind’s sin problem still persists, even in “righteous” Noah. The full solution to man’s wickedness has not yet been realized. Noah becomes a farmer, raises a vineyard, makes wine and gets drunk. While drunk he behaves shamefully, and in addition to this, his youngest son dishonors his father. Though God covered Adam and Eve’s nakedness Ham instead exposed Noah’s. Having heard of it Shem and Japheth cover their father without themselves seeing his nakedness. As a result of Noah’s and Ham’s sin a curse is brought upon Ham’s son Canaan. Two “seeds” are already re-appearing in mankind. Noah is the one who will give us rest (5:29) - but not directly, not immediately.

B. Waltke points out the significance of this “second fall” involving Noah. “The sin of Noah sheds light on the human plight. At one time or another most people become disgusted with what is going on in the world - the intractable problems among people: hatred, prejudice, and greed that lead to cruelty and war. The problems are insoluble because hatred and prejudice are burdens of our depraved nature and our history. Because we cannot change or forget, our nature and memory doom us. In response, the idealistic ones among us ask: ‘What if we started over? What if we expunged history and wiped the slate clean?’ The account of Noah puts the lie to that solution. Only through the second Adam and regeneration by his Spirit will the world be saved and humanity realize its dream and divine destination.”

God’s Judgement, Noah, the Flood Genesis 6:8-9:29 - Typology

Though it has often been said that the ark is a type of Christ Scripture does not develop such a theme. The only explicit typological use of the flood found in Scripture is an association between the flood and baptism.

The flood and baptism, 1 Peter 3:18-22

First Peter 3 is one of the most, perhaps the most, difficult of all New Testament passages to interpret. Peter refers to baptism as the antitype (that which fulfills the type) of the flood. It is beyond the scope of these studies to discuss possible interpretations.²³ Much hinges on how Peter is representing the waters of the flood. Are they the means of salvation or are they the means of judgement from which one is saved?

If we understand baptism to represent (among other things) the blessing of cleansing and renewal by the Holy Spirit and union with Christ, we can see a parallel with the flood’s effect upon the earth. The earth was “cleansed” from evil and re-created. Baptism represents this cleansing and re-creation that occurs when one is converted. A simpler association which is often mentioned is that the waters carried the ark and it’s inhabitants safely above the destruction of all else, though how this can be associated with baptism is unclear.

The flood judgement points to the ultimate judgement to come

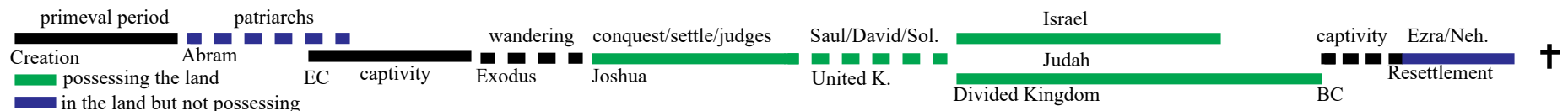
Jesus makes it clear that God’s act of judgement during the flood will be repeated, if not in an identical manner, in a similar manner. The judgement will come unexpectedly and it will be universal - all the world will be judged (Matt. 24:37- 39, 2 Pet. 3:5-7).

The recreation account points to the ultimate recreation to come

There is little doubt that the historical “cycle” of creation - populating the earth - spread of evil - judgement - re-creation is being repeated a second time and we are in the middle of it. With the re-creation after Noah, the earth has again been filled, and evil has again spread, and as it was in the days of Noah it will happen again - a universal judgement will come. However, this judgement will be followed by the creation of new heavens and earth with God dwelling with His people in Eden like conditions (Rev. 21-22).

Replenishing the earth, tower of Babel - Gen. 10 - 11 - History

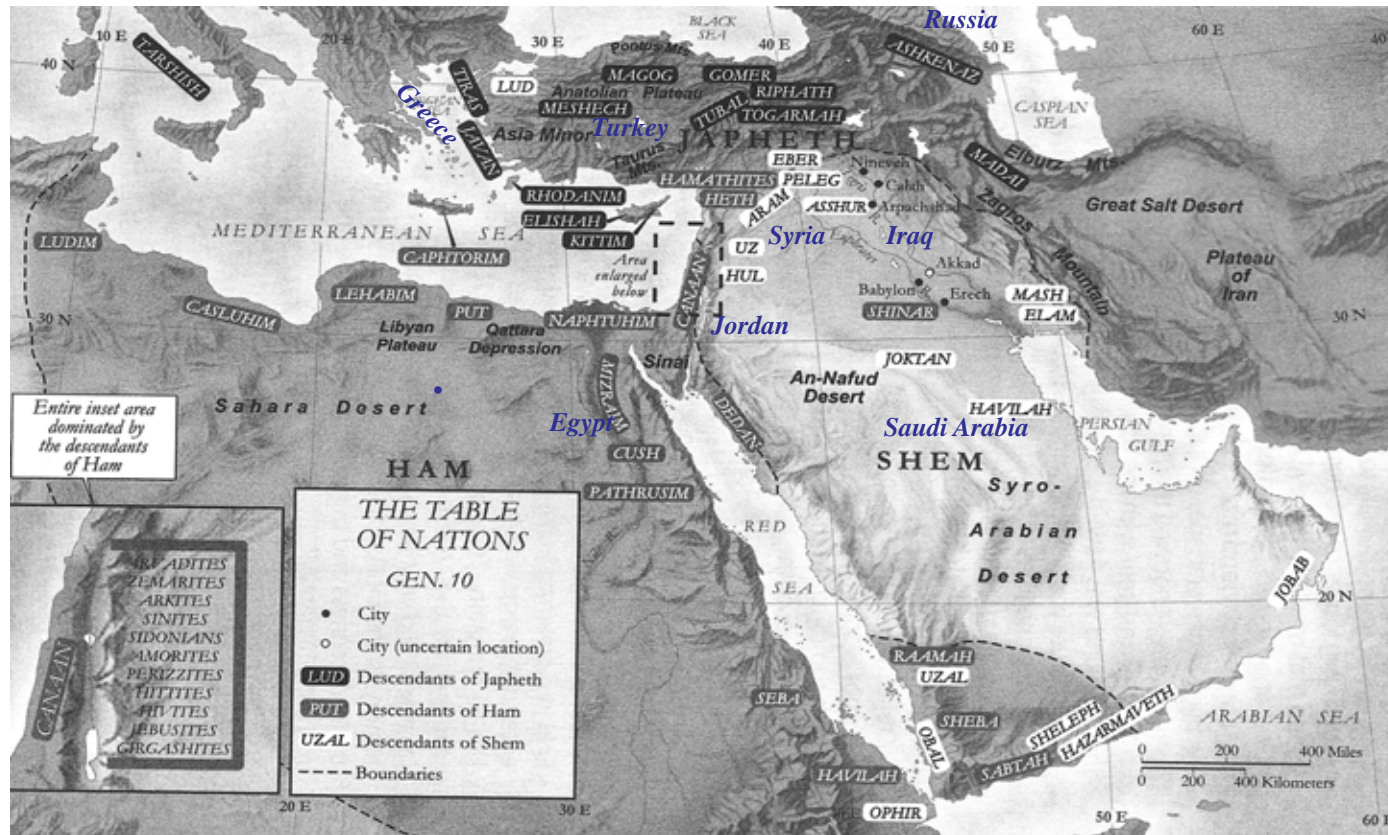
Genesis chapters 10 and 11 provide a very brief history of a period of at least 450 years from the time Noah’s family left the ark down to Terah, Abram’s father. This history, except for the tower of Babel incident, is given in the genealogies of Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.



The genealogies contain brief references to the geographic regions populated by their descendants. The genealogies are presented in reverse order, that is, beginning with Noah's last son, Japheth and ending with his first-

born son, Shem.²⁴ Genesis 10 is often referred to as the "Table of Nations" See figure below.²⁵

There are exactly 70 names referenced in Genesis 10 and this is most.

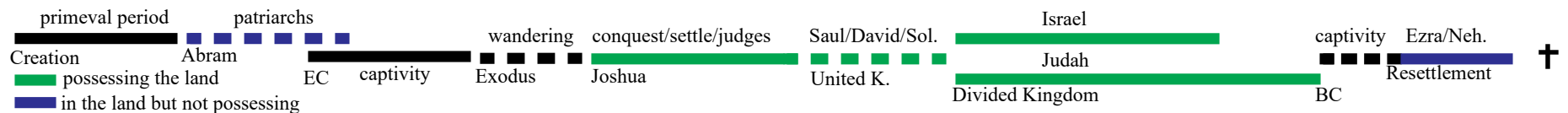


likely not coincidental. It was not uncommon for Jewish writers to arrange genealogies according to some convenient scheme to make a point, even as Matthew did with his three sections of 14 generations from Abraham to Christ.²⁶ It seems that they and their readers understood the "touch" much better than we do today. Perhaps the emphasis in Genesis 10 is simply what is said in 9:18-19 that from Noah's three sons *the whole earth was populated*. And 10:32 repeats the thought that from these (Noah's sons) *the nations were divided on the earth after the flood*. The

number seven in the Bible represents completeness or fullness and is often used accordingly. All nations are closely related - they *all* come from Noah's three sons.

The descendants of Japheth (Gen. 10:2-5)

Seven sons of Japheth are listed and then only seven grandsons, three from Gomer and four from Javan. The author then moves on to Ham. He is likely not intending to give an exhaustive list at any level of the



genealogy.

Most of Japheth’s descendants are located in areas near the north east coast of the Mediterranean sea and are referred to as the coastland peoples (10:5).

The descendants of Ham (Gen. 10:6-20)

Ham’s descendants spread over the largest geographical area. His descendants from Canaan almost entirely dominate the area called the “Land of Canaan” (see map).

In Ham’s genealogy special attention is given to Ham’s grandson through Cush, Nimrod, in the brief biographical section inserted in the middle of the genealogy (vss. 8-12). This identifies the beginning of both Babylon and Assyria as having the common founder, Nimrod. Both of these nations will play a major role in the latter centuries of the kingdom of Israel.

Ham’s genealogy also contains a reference to the origin of the Philistines (vs. 14) who will play a role in Israel’s early centuries (refer to time line at bottom of page).

Special attention is also given to Canaan’s descendants. Along with giving moderately precise geographical boundaries (vs. 19) it is noted that *afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.* (vs. 18). In these references to the canaanite boundaries, Philistines, Assyria and Babylon the author is setting the “scene” for the rest of the book of Genesis concerning Israel’s being given the land and her interaction with these surrounding peoples.

The descendants of Shem (Gen. 10:21-32)

Eber, a great grandson of Shem is singled out at the very beginning of Shem genealogy (vs. 21). Eber’s genealogy is not given until after the tower of Babel incident (Gen. 11:10) when Shem’s genealogy is given a second time but only tracing the direct line to Abram.

In verse 25 Eber’s two sons, Peleg and Joktan, are mentioned. Peleg’s name means, “division” and we are told *for in his days the earth was divided;* This is likely a reference viewing humanity in two future groups, babylon - from the line of Shem (through Joktan) that ends in Babylon and the other line of Shem (through Peleg) that ends

with Abram and the land God gives to Abraham.²⁷

Historical attestation to the table of nations

All 70 names in Genesis 10 become the basis for the names of ancient people groups settled in the region northwest of the Arabian sea, south of the black and caspian seas and all around the mediterranean (see map above). With the archeological research begun in the middle to the late 19th century to the present, many of these names have been attested (referred to) in other (non biblical) ancient sources. K. A. Kitchen provides a detailed listing of all 70 names indicating which ones have been attested in which millennium from the third millennium forward.²⁸

The tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9)

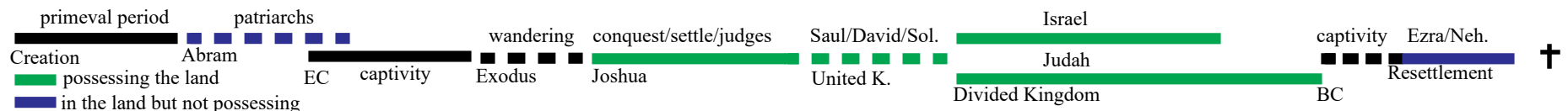
We do not know exactly where in the genealogy from Noah to Abram this incident fits. The land of Shinar refers to the southern plain of Mesopotamia. There is very little stone available in this area and structures were built with sun-dried bricks. Fired bricks would be superior to sun-dried bricks, thus they said, *“let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly”.*

The tower they began building was likely what is called a *ziggurat*. Many of these ancient structures have been found in Mesopotamia and they were associated with idol worship, usually having a temple or sanctuary of some kind at the very top. The exact intent of those mentioned here is not clear (see below).

This scene is another judgement scene. The Lord investigates (11:5) and disapproves of what is being done and introduces another limitation into the human race which brings to a halt the building of this tower *who’s top was to be in the heavens* (11:4). No longer will mankind have a common language. This was God’s means of dispersing mankind over the face of all the earth (11:8). Which was His original intent expressed in the blessing, *be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.*

The name of the city is called Babel which means “confusion” in Hebrew. Babel is a reference to the ancient city of Babylon, located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates about twenty miles south of Bagdad.

In the Bible the following terms are closely related: Shinar (region



referring to southern Mesopotamia), Babylonia (region, same as Shinar), Chaldea (region of Babylonia), Babylon (chief city in Babylonia), Babylonians, Chaldeans.

It is interesting to note that a Sumerian reference to a time when all people “spoke in one tongue” has been found.²⁹

Shem’s genealogy a second time leading to Abram (11:10-26).

This time the genealogy goes down to Eber and picks up Peleg (instead of Joktan) and goes five more generations down to Abram.

Replenishing the earth, tower of Babel - Gen. 10-11 - Theology

Human freedom demonstrates where man heads on his own

The scene given in Genesis 10 and 11 is one where mankind is multiplying and free to express himself. They are migrating westward (NKJV, NASB), examining the land, and coming up with “big” ideas and plans (11:2-4). This self-expression finds its height in the tower of Babel incident. God is pictured in heaven as having let them run wild for quite some time - almost to see what they would do. Verse 6 indicates an element of surprise on behalf of God - *and this is what they begin to do?*

God limits mankind because of our propensity toward evil

After God appraises the situation he says, *now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them* (11:6). We are quite powerful aren’t we? This could not be said of any of the animals. And what is one of the major differences between us and animals? Language, which enabled them to take on such a feat. Nothing that man proposes to do would be a problem if man was fundamentally good. But the Lord’s appraisal of man expressed in Genesis 8, *although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.* (Gen 8:21). In this case there are three imaginations of man’s heart expressed:

Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; If the tower was a ziggurat, then it had to do with worshipping or influencing the gods. Or perhaps it was an expression that we can, through our own efforts, transcend our human limitations and become like gods.

and let us make a name for ourselves, The pursuit of self-glory is one of the most universal and fundamental evil imaginations of human hearts. It is finding vivid expression in this major undertaking of all of humanity at this point in history.

lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth (11:4). They must have felt a sense of security by forming themselves into one huge city. However such an endeavor was contrary to God’s plan and command and promises. They were to *be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth* (9:1) and in the Noachic Covenant a “stable earth” having *seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer,* were assured. (8:22). They should not have feared being scattered abroad over the face of the earth.

God “comes down” to see what they are doing (11:5). Ironic since they were building a tower to reach into heaven, so they thought, but God has to come *down* to see it.

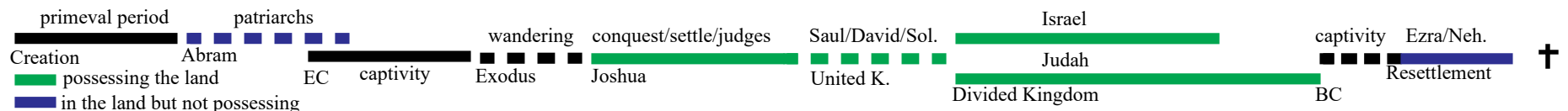
In this judgement God introduces another limitation to mankind’s ability. He makes things harder. The task of subduing the earth will be more difficult but the fulfilling of evil imaginations will also be made harder. He confused their languages, that is gave them different languages. The disruption was so great that they stopped building the city (and it’s tower we can assume) as it became impossible for large numbers of them to work in unison any longer.

This giving them different languages caused them to *be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.* (11:9)

We have here the beginning of “nations” and we don’t have to go to far back in time from our own day to find that nearly all (perhaps all) nations spoke different languages.

In the primeval period we tend to think of the flood as the greatest and severest judgement since it took the lives of all living. However the flood loss was the loss of only one generation. The judgement at Babel has affected and divided humanity from this time forward through all generations.

Genesis 11:6 use the phrase “the people” referring to them as all one. But in Genesis 10 the term “nations” is repeatedly used.³⁰ This type of “division” of humanity seems to flow from our problems with sin. It will only be cured when sin is fully and finally dealt with. Though

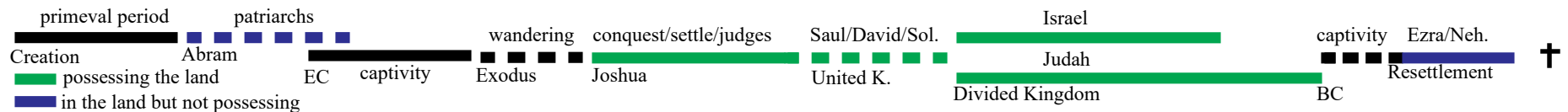


we envision a new earth populated, we do not envision it with “nations” as we now it, nor people being divided by using different languages. We expect this judgement ultimately to be rolled back, just like those introduced in Genesis 3.

Are cities inherently evil?

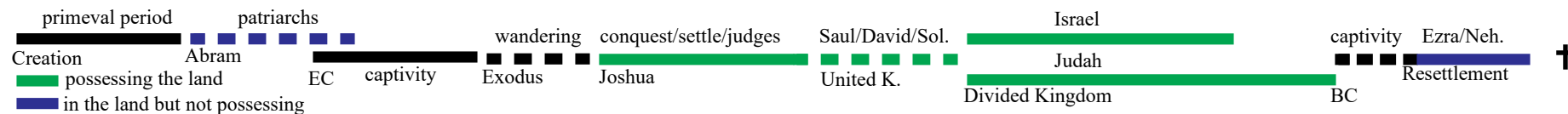
People have and still do debate this question. In the early chapters of Genesis cities do not shine in the best of lights. The first city is built by Cain which he names after his son. God frustrates the building of this city in the land of Shinar. When Abram and Lot part Lot dwells in the cities of the plain - Sodom and Gomorrah, but Abram “nomads” in the land of Canaan. It’s likely that cities are not inherently evil but repeatedly become the occasion for evil since we are sinful and we stir up sin in one another. The more sinners you have in the same place the more stirring there is!

God is able, and will, redeem even the idea of a city. He will build a “holy city”. The earthly Jerusalem, though call a holy city, has never in it’s history attained to the ideal of that expression. However, the heavenly Jerusalem which will be on the earth will attain to the ideal. Ultimately what will make the city holy is God presence in the city and a city free from all sin and defilement.



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Endnotes

1. H. Conrad Hyer, pg 101
2. Bishop J. Ussher’s chronology written in the 17th century. See comments on genealogies, A. J. Hoerth, pg. 198.
3. A. J. Hoerth, pgs. 187-188, See also K. A. Kitchen, pgs. 428-430 for a more detailed discussion..
4. Ibid., pgs. 42-45
5. Ibid., pgs. 184-185
6. W. S. Lasor pgs. 19-22
7. Ibid., pg. 23
8. W. Grudem, pg. 446
9. R. Routledge, pgs. 82-85.
10. B. K. Waltke, see pgs. 212-214 for an extensive discussion of the possibilities.
11. D. A. Carson, pg.
12. P. R. House, pgs. 24-25 gives a summary of these accounts
13. ESV marginal note on Gen. 3:20
14. B. K. Waltke, pg. 267
15. A. J. Hoerth, pg. 188
16. B. K. Waltke, C. J. Fredricks, pgs. 117-118
17. For a concise discussion of the options for understanding the phrase, “sons of God”, see W.S. Lasor, pg. 27.
18. ESV marginal note on Gen. 5:29
19. The common Hebrew terms for ship, *oniyah and onee*, are not used.
20. A. J. Hoerth, pg. 192
21. Ibid., pg. 196
22. Attributing human characteristics to God
23. See my preaching notes (or audio) on 1 Peter 3:18-22 for a detailed discussion.
24. This assumes the earlier references in Gen. 5:32, 6:10, 7:13, 9:18 are given in their birth order. In verse 21 Shem is called “the elder.”
25. Figure is from P. R. House, pg. 26, current country names added.
26. D.A. Carson, EBC, vol. 8:68-69

27. J. H. Sailhamer, EBC, vol. 2:102, n. 25
28. K. A. Kitchen, pgs. 430-438
29. A. J. Hoerth, pg. 197, n. 8.
30. D. A. Clines, pg. 70

