

GENESIS

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING GUIDE

Part I: Chapters I-II

Prologue: From Creation to Babel

To my fellow readers of Genesis,

The Israelites called the first five books of their Bibles “Torah,” which means *teaching*.

The opening eleven chapters of the first book of the Torah—the book we call *Genesis*—has a lot to teach us about the world and who made it and why and what we’ve done with the place.

The problem is that many of us think we already know the lessons we’re supposed to be learning:

- If we’re church people, then we think because we know the basic storyline—Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel and Noah and the Flood, etc.—then we’re good to go;
- If we’re not church people, then we think we know that there’s not much of value to be learned from an ancient, unscientific, religious text.

But what if Genesis has more to teach us than we could learn in a lifetime?

What if the reason God gave us Genesis was to give us wisdom about life and how to live?

The way to learn the lessons the Lord wants to teach us is to read through the opening chapters of Genesis slowly and with an open mind. Start with the assumption that every word matters and that no detail is insignificant or extraneous. In this reader, I’ve portioned out readings for weekdays only, in what I hope is a manageable schedule. I strongly recommend forming the habit of The First15, i.e., spending the first 15 minutes of each day in silence, prayer, and scripture.

Consistency is more important than intensity.

So:

If you miss today, don’t miss tomorrow.

This Daily Scripture Reading Guide covers the first 11 chapters of Genesis, with readings portioned out over 5 weeks. Genesis chapters 1-11 are a prologue not only to the rest of the book, but to the entire Bible. The story arc begins with Creation and ends with the rebellion at the Tower of Babel. Our story is left unfinished—what will the Lord do to save and heal the Creation that he made?

For that, we’ll have to keep reading.

In the meantime, I’ve written brief commentary to go with each day’s reading in an attempt to help you understand and appreciate what you read. If my commentary is helpful to that end, great. If it isn’t, skip it and just focus on the words of the scripture instead!

Let’s go.



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Asbury Church
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MONDAY, AUGUST 22
GENESIS 1:1-5

THE FIRST DAY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

There is one God, and he made everything.

There is nothing that God did not make. In ancient times people worshipped sun, moon, stars; in modern times we worship sex, money, success. This is foolish, because everything we can see has been created and is therefore not worthy of worship; only God should be worshiped. If you worship something created rather than the Creator, it will not go well with you. To worship something is to make it your source of strength and hope; that which you most admire—that’s what you worship. **What or whom do you need to put in its appropriate place in your life?**

And what this God does is bring order out of chaos.

When God begins to create, note that the Bible starts to describe God working, not with literal nothing—absolute non-being, which is impossible for humans to understand, both then and now—but with the basic building blocks of reality—a wild waste, a deep churning chaos, a swirling ocean of the blackest night. Even in the Bible, the true beginning of everything is shrouded in mystery. So here, it’s not that there is *nothing* but rather that what’s there is *unformed*. It’s like saying you are in the middle of nowhere—the something that’s there has not yet been turned into anything useful, so we call it nothing. God takes the wild waste of chaos and begins to make it into something. God’s activity is always to bring order out of chaos—think of the healings of Jesus, who brings order and stability into crazed, wild minds. God takes messes and brings meaning out of them. **What mess do you need to ask God to make into something meaningful?**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23
GENESIS 1:6-8

THE SECOND DAY

⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so.⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Once you see the pattern in Genesis Chapter 1, you’ll never unsee it: God creates through separation (and it’s a separation of increasing complexity):

- Light from Dark;
- Waters from Waters;
- Waters from Land;
- Land from Plants
- Etc.

It’s elegant in its simplicity and power.

When God begins to create, all that’s there is a watery mess of nothingness—chaos. So, after he creates Light on Day One, God begins to bring order to the waters of chaos, and he does so by first separating the waters into upper waters—“sky” or “heavens”—and lower waters, which (we learn on Day Three) are covering the land. He separates the waters above and the waters below with a “firmament”—a strange Hebrew word that means a hammered-out, flat, hard thing. (Think huge manhole cover or piece of hard glass, like a gigantic car’s windshield.) So, the ancient Israelites believed that the sky was this hard firmament which got its blue color from the waters above it. From time to time, the firmament’s windows would open and would release the waters above onto the land below (which is uncovered on Day Three)—in other words, rain.

Now, we “know” that the sky is not hard, and that the space beyond our atmosphere is not actually liquid, but Genesis is not trying to provide what we might call a “scientific” understanding of reality, but a moral and theological understanding (which I believe is more valuable anyway, but that’s a topic for another day). **So, think about it:**

the amazing thing about the universe is not only that it exists, but that it has a form and a shape and is intelligible—it has meaning. That’s what God did—he made something out of nothing, and gave it a meaningful order. Today, no matter where you are in the universe, the laws of physics still apply. That consistency and intelligibility doesn’t have to be there, but that’s how God made things to be.

Today, he still does that. Why not pray that God makes this day meaningful to you?

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24
GENESIS 1:9-13

THE THIRD DAY

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

As we read yesterday, on the Second Day God separates the upper waters from the lower waters, but the day ends with the lower waters still covering what will turn out to be the land. On the Third Day, God commands all of the lower waters to be gathered into one place; the gathered waters are called “seas,” and the exposed ground is called “land.” Imagine holding in your hands a plastic basin, halfway filled with water, and then tilting it slightly so that the water moves toward one end of the basin, leaving the other end high and dry. This is what’s happening here on Day Three.

Then, once the dry land has been uncovered by the waters, God commands it to be fruitful and it begins to produce seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees. The reason the seeds and fruit are specifically mentioned is because these sorts of plants can continue to reproduce

and perpetuate themselves on their own, without requiring cultivating by humans.

Jesus told his followers to “consider the lilies.” I wonder today if we should take him literally and really contemplate the flowering plants and fruit trees (or their produce) that will come across our paths today.

If you come across an apple or an orange or a rose today, really *look* at it and then praise God for it. It will be good for your soul to do so.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25
GENESIS 1:14-19

THE FOURTH DAY

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

The sun (and with it the moon and the stars) is not created until Day Four. But, how can this be, since we’ve already had light and morning and evening since Day One (not to mention plant life since Day Three)? Isn’t the sun required for these things to take place? Ancient peoples knew more from personal experience about the sun, the moon, and the stars than we do—the movements of the heavenly bodies were part of their intimate, daily experience, whereas we spend very few nights of our lives out of doors—and they certainly understood that you can’t have morning and evening without the sun. The strange detail of God waiting to create the sun until Day Four is yet another indication that Genesis 1 is not trying to give us scientific knowledge as to how things were created, other than to say that God is clearly the cause and Creator of everything. *Rather, one of the things*

Genesis 1 is trying to tell us is that nothing in all of creation is divine, and therefore nothing in all of creation should be worshipped. The sun has been worshipped widely since the earliest days of humanity; Genesis 1 makes it clear that such worship is foolish idolatry: only God is worthy of worship. The sun is powerful, and God gives it the responsibility to rule the day, but nevertheless the sun is *created* just like everything else there is, seen and unseen.

I doubt very much that any of us literally worships the sun, but I am certain that many of us struggle with idolatry, which is the sin of thinking that the things God made (money, sex, power, possessions) are more important to our lives than God himself.

One way to avoid that mistake today: give God thanks for what you see.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 26 **GENESIS 1:20-23**

THE FIFTH DAY

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

The ESV translation lets us down a bit in its translation of Day Five. In v. 21 in our translation, we read of “the great sea creatures” However in Hebrew, the text is much more evocative—it literally speaks of “sea monsters.” Why does this matter? You and I know that what ancient peoples called “sea monsters” are only the marvelous and mysterious creatures that God put in the deep seas—whales and the like. The Israelites were not a seafaring people, and were terrified of the Deep, but even ancient mariners had only the briefest of glimpses of these majestic animals. The nations surrounding Israel spoke of dark powers at work in the seas and sacrificed to the sea monsters to keep them safe on their maritime voyages.

How foolish, says Genesis 1—everything in the seas was made by God, even the sea monsters. Don’t worship the sun, and don’t worship the sea monsters, says the Bible.

God is so creative: He even made the whales!

MONDAY, AUGUST 29 **GENESIS 1:24-31**

THE SIXTH DAY

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

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

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

In Genesis 1, something is “good” when it is fit for its purpose and able to function properly, or when it is complete. Therefore, the seas are not declared good on Day Two because God isn’t finished with them until Day Three, when, after they are gathered together and the dry land has been uncovered, he declares them good.

On Day Six, after God has created everything, we read:
“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” [1:31]

All of creation is “very good” because every part works together—it is complete. I like how Umberto Cassuto puts it:

“An analogy might be found in an artist who, having completed his masterpiece, steps back a little and surveys his handiwork with delight, for both in detail and in its entirety it had emerged perfect from his hand.”

—Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1: Adam to Noah*, p. 59

However, man himself is NOT specifically declared good after his creation on Day Six. Why? Because he is not yet complete or fit for his purpose.

I would like you to reflect on what Leon Kass has to say about this. It is dense, but worth it.

“A moment’s reflection shows that man as he comes into the world is not yet good. Precisely because he is the free being, he is also the incomplete or indeterminate being; what he becomes depends always (in part) on what he freely will choose to be. Let me put it more pointedly: precisely in the sense that man is in the image of God, man is not good—not determinate, finished, complete, or perfect. It remains to be seen whether man will become good, whether he will be able to complete himself (or to be completed).

“Man’s lack of obvious goodness or completeness, metaphysically identical with his freedom, is, of course, the basis also of man’s moral ambiguity. As the being with the greatest freedom of motion, able to change not only his path but also his way, man is capable of deviating widely from the way for which he is most suited or through which he—and the world around him—will most flourish.

“The rest of the biblical narrative elaborates man’s moral ambiguity and God’s efforts to address it, all in the service of making man ‘good’—complete, whole, holy.”

—Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, p. 39

Now, go back and read that long quotation again. It’s important.

It is precisely our freedom that makes us incomplete. Unlike all the other creatures, we are free to choose good or choose evil, and, left to ourselves, we will inevitably make the wrong choice. We are not yet fit for our purpose, i.e., to rule over the earth and to reflect God’s image.

The rest of the story of the Bible is about how God plans to complete humanity and make us fit for glory.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 30

GENESIS 2:1-3

THE SEVENTH DAY

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

The keeping of the Sabbath made Israel distinct, but the Creation account tells us clearly that the Sabbath day actually precedes Israel: there is a Sabbath from the very beginning of everything.

The Sabbath does not depend on a celestial calendar; the cycles of the moon or the stars have no bearing on the Sabbath: it just comes every seven days, no matter what.

On the Sabbath, the people of God rest, because God rested, and when the people of God rest, they are showing with their lives that they trust God to provide for them. Every seven days there is a reminder: God provides, and he can be trusted.

And what Genesis tells us is that this rhythm *is built into the very structure of Creation itself.*

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31

GENESIS 2:4-14

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Man is created out of the dust.

Today, we know how to specifically identify the various components that make up a living body—carbon and hydrogen and oxygen, etc.—but the Bible’s ancient words still suffice: we are made of dust.

It’s not what our bodies are made of, however, that gives them life; what gives us life and sustains our lives is the breath of God himself.

Every time you take a breath, you are receiving God’s breath. Yes, the air you inhale contains oxygen, but oxygen alone won’t make a dead body live—it’s God’s Spirit that does that.

This is why praise is therefore such an appropriate act: when we praise God it is the very breath we receive from God that makes our praises possible. God gives to us, and then we give back to him.

Take time today to breathe. And praise God for it.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

GENESIS 2:15-25

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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.”

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

¹⁹Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

What is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is deciding for oneself,

independently, what is right or wrong in one's own eyes.

In the middle of Eden, therefore, the man and the woman face a choice: obey the Lord God and trust and accept that what the Lord God says is good or bad *is* good or bad—and thereby receive fruit from the Tree of Life!—or else decide for themselves what is good or bad—and thereby find themselves cut off from the Tree of Life. Later in the Bible in the Book of Judges, this deciding for themselves will be described as “doing what is right in their own eyes.”

You can see how this choice had to be present in Eden: since God made man free, man was free to trust God, or not. Man was free to obey, and free to disobey.

He made his choice.

(And so have we all.)

The rest of the Bible is the story of what the Lord is going to do to bring us back to Life.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

GENESIS 3:1-7

THE FALL

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, **3** but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it

was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **7** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

I'd like to slow down today and look closely at the Fall of Man. Let's work our way through it.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.”

What do we know about the serpent?

- He was made by God;
- He is a beast, i.e., not a man;
- He is wise. The other times the Hebrew word “arum” is used in the Bible, it has a positive sense, like “prudent” or “clever.” Here, the serpent is using his wisdom to undermine the harmony of God's creation.

So, who is the serpent? Some kind of spiritual being who is in rebellion against God. Putting together what we learn from the rest of the Bible, we learn the serpent is the devil, who is some kind of fallen angel.

We are totally free in our actions, and totally accountable for our actions. But it is also true that there is a dark power that tempts and trips and teases us into making the wrong choice. Who among us has not felt it? If you have ever given over to sudden, snarling rage, for example, you know exactly what I'm talking about: you made the choice to be angry, but there was also a strong pull towards anger, as if something were urging you on.

He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

Notice how the serpent insidiously flips around what God actually said.

Rather than focusing on ALL the trees that God gave the man and the woman, the serpent draws her attention to the ONE tree that's forbidden.

Whenever we focus on what we lack rather than on what we have, we are imitating the devil's voice, so to speak.

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

The serpent's work is already bearing fruit:

Although the woman correctly states that God gave the humans the trees in the garden for food, note how she nevertheless focuses on the prohibition, and even intensifies it; God, as far as we know, has not forbidden them to *touch the fruit*.

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

As we will shortly see, it is literally true that they do not drop dead the exact temporal moment when they eat from the tree, but it is the case that their innocence immediately dies, and, once lost, can never be regained. And, because they are now cut off from the Tree of Life, literal death inevitably follows. The serpent cleverly mixes in just enough truth to bait the woman.

The devil is a liar. Don't ever believe what he says.

And here's the other thing: the man and the woman already are like God. What do we read on page one of the Bible?

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

So, the serpent tricks the woman into forgetting what God has already given her, namely his own image.

See what's at stake when you focus on what you lack rather than on what you possess? You end up totally forgetting the most important things about you.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

Although God's prohibition was as clear as possible, the woman decides that she knows best and reaches out and takes and eats the fruit. She is "wise in her own eyes."

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

I'm convinced that passivity is the primal temptation of men. (I'll have a lot more to say about this idea in the future.)

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

They were beguiled by the serpent's prediction that they would become god-like, but the only result of their sin is their awareness of their own shame.

Sin always works that way: promises the world, but delivers woe.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 GENESIS 3:8-13

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

It's risky in our current cultural climate to comment publicly on the differences between the sexes, but I guess I'm in a foolish mood, because that's exactly what I want to do. See, I still hold onto the shocking belief that men and women are different: not different in value or intelligence or courage or any other virtue, but nevertheless different in more ways than just our physical bodies.

For example, I think men and women usually face different temptations. This is not to say that men always face certain temptations and women never face those same temptations, but that usually this is how things are.

That being said:

I think passivity is the primal temptation in the heart of man.

In Eden after the Fall, the man tries to pin the blame on the woman, and then onto God:

“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Now, blame-shifting and a refusal to take responsibility is certainly a part of human nature (the woman doesn't hesitate to claim the serpent tricked her), but I'm wondering if passivity is more often found on the male side of the species than the female.

Think about a problem in your family, or the family next door: my suspicion is that, more often than not, a passive male in the family is the root of that problem.

Passivity can take two equal and opposite forms:

- the obvious form—lazy, unmotivated, weak-willed;
- but it can also take the opposite form: controlling, domineering, violent.

Both forms are the two sides of the same passive coin.

The opposite of passivity is responsibility.

The modern concept of “toxic masculinity” is often focused on the second form passivity takes: control, domination, violence. See, a passive man places himself in the center of his world and demands that everyone else meet his needs in the way he wants them met. This passivity often takes the form of violence and coercion, but it is still

passive, since it's about his refusal to take responsibility for himself and his anger that the world won't work the way he wants it to.

The opposite of passivity is not domination, but responsibility. Responsibility is not controlling, but loving.

I don't know any woman personally who wants to be controlled by the various men in her life, but at the same time I don't think I know a single woman personally who doesn't want the men in her life to exercise more *responsibility*.

I think one of our social problems—part of the so-called “Crisis of Masculinity”—is that men in our culture are forcing women to carry a double load of responsibility—the woman's own responsibility, as well as shouldering the man's responsibility, too. Don't misunderstand: I'm not talking about gender roles in the household or things like that. Rather, I'm talking about the basic responsibilities that human flourishing requires:

- accepting the idea that no one owes you anything;
 - believing that nothing in life comes without a cost;
 - understanding that the most important relationships require sacrificial commitment;
 - knowing that delaying gratification is a necessary habit that leads to a flourishing life.
-

For reasons I don't understand, women seem more ready than men (broadly speaking) to accept those hard, necessary responsibilities and to move forward. This is not to say that women don't also struggle with passivity, but just that passivity seems to be more of a fundamental temptation in the hearts of men.

Taking responsibility, of course, means that you can't point fingers at another person: it is only about you, and your choices, reactions, and results. Where are you failing to take responsibility?

Or, I guess I should say: where am *I*?

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
GENESIS 3:14-24

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,

cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’

cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

²⁰ The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of
all living. ²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife gar-
ments of skins and clothed them.

²² Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one
of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and
take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” ²³ therefore the
Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground
from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of
the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that
turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

What does this mean?

God is here saying that a child of the woman will one day defeat the
serpent, though he will be wounded in the process.

In other words, it’s a messianic prophecy: it is exactly what happens
with Jesus, who defeats Evil by being crucified.

SO GREAT! Thank you, Jesus!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 **GENESIS 4:1-16**

CAIN AND ABEL

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain,
saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” ² And again,
she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain
a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the
Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of
the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had
regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had
no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

⁶ The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face
fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do
well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you
must rule over it.”

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field,
Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said,
“I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰ And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your broth-
er’s blood is crying to me from the ground.

¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its
mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you
work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall
be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

¹³ Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.
¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Why doesn't the Lord have regard for the offering of Cain? This is the question that every modern reader of Genesis immediately asks when we read the Cain and Abel story. The answer? We're not given one. I think the author of Genesis deliberately wants to keep that information from us. Why? Well, because sooner or later in life we will find ourselves in the place where we feel as if the Lord is not showing us favor and we won't understand why. “I've done everything right but I'm not seeing God bless me the way I want.” What do we do then?

When God is not favorably disposed to his offering, Cain shows murderous rage and jealousy towards his brother Abel. Cain wants his offering to gain favor with God, and when it doesn't, his anger is the anger of a prideful man who feels he has been humiliated; it is the anger of an entitled man who doesn't get what he wants.

The irony of the Cain and Abel story is that, after the murder, God shows his character by being merciful to Cain.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 **GENESIS 4:17-26**

¹⁷ Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.

¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²² Zillah also

bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:
“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
²⁴ If Cain's revenge is sevenfold,
then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.”

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” ²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Lamech, who collects women as property, brags that he is more vicious and violent than anyone else.

Genesis 4-11 describes what Martin Luther King, Jr., called a “descending spiral” of violence: you hit me, and then I hit you back harder.

The only way out is sacrificial love. The only way to break the cycle is grace—to give your enemy not what he deserves, but grace.

With whom can you break the descending spiral today by showing grace?

P.S. From where did Cain get his wife? Short answer: the Bible doesn't tell us. Longer answer: either it was his sister (remember Genesis 4-11 is what happens when people do what is right in their own eyes), or there were other people created that we didn't hear about.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 **GENESIS 5:1-32**

ADAM'S DESCENDANTS TO NOAH

5 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created

them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.

³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

⁶ When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

⁹ When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.

¹² When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died.

¹⁸ When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died.

²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

²⁵ When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.

²⁸ When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son ²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.” ³⁰ Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Thus all the days of Lamech were 777

years, and he died.

³² After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

With the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve, things look promising. But, a few chapters later, we read of the intense evil of man and of God’s plan to destroy wicked humanity with The Flood. Why? What happened?

Leon Kass has a fascinating paragraph about the genealogy in Genesis 5, of all things(!):

“To discover the worm in the family tree, we must read with a magnifying glass—and with a timeline and a calculator. Because the text reports the lives of these antediluvians [people who lived before the flood] in sequence—chronicling each man’s birth, the number of years he lived before and after begetting his first son, his life span, and his death—the complacent reader does not notice that there is more than a half century (between the year 874, in which Lamech is born, and the year 930, in which Adam dies) during which all nine generations of human beings, from Adam to Lamech, are alive at the same time, with all their myriad descendants. Then, suddenly, in the year 930, Adam drops dead. Next, in 987 (readers can do the calculations for themselves), Enoch “was not, for God took him.” And in 1042, Seth also dies. Readers of the Garden of Eden story need no longer remain in suspense: the prophecy of human mortality (“you shall surely die”; 2:17) is, at long last, fatally—and fatefully—fulfilled. Indeed, this may well be the purpose of reciting the entire genealogy in all its numerological detail: to prepare the...reader to learn...how human beings—especially the men—react to the discovery of their unavoidable finitude. For with the death of Adam, and after nearly a millennium of “immortal” human existence, natural death has entered the human world.”

—Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, 154.

Did you catch that? If you read the genealogy carefully, you notice that all of a sudden death finally comes upon mankind. The unavoidable reality of death has been delayed for a while, but when it comes, it comes quickly, and the fear of death and the desperation it brings

may be the reason humanity turns so wicked in the next chapter, setting up The Flood.

I also find it fascinating that there is a 50 year period in which all 9 generations are alive at the same time!!

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 GENESIS 6:1-8

6 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”

⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:1-8 is a very strange and confusing passage. Some quick thoughts:

- The entire prologue of the Bible (Genesis 1-11) is about how the creatures God made rebelled against his rule, from the Garden of Eden to the Tower of Babel.
- This is the pattern of that rebellion: they “see” what they want, desire it as “good”, and they “take” it.

SEE → DESIRE → TAKE

- In the Garden, the woman sees the fruit, desires it as good, and takes it.
- In the Garden, the man and the woman wanted to become godlike.

- Here, there is a reverse rebellion: the angelic/spiritual beings God created want to cross the boundary and become united with humanity.
- The sons of God “see” the human women, desire them as “good” (the word translated “attractive” in v.2 is the Hebrew word for “good”), and they “take” them.
- It’s the same pattern of rebellion.
- A note on the “sons of God”: every time the phrase “sons of God” appears in the Old Testament, it signifies the angelic/spiritual beings that God made.
- It seems reasonable to conclude that the serpent in Genesis 3 is a rebellious spiritual being.
- Genesis 6 is telling us (in terse language) of one form the rebellion of these spiritual beings took.
- Just as God will not allow humanity to marry technological progress with human wickedness (the story of Babel in Genesis 11, which we’ll read next week), so here God will not allow the fallen spiritual beings to combine with humanity.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 GENESIS 6:9-22

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. ¹⁶ Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower,

second, and third decks. ¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them."

²² Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

"Noah did everything just as God commanded him."

Sometimes, it's just that simple.

How can you be obedient today?

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 **GENESIS 7:1-24**

⁷ Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, ³ and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴ For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." ⁵ And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. ⁷ And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸ Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹ two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰ And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on

the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹² And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³ On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. ¹⁵ They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in.

¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹ And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. ²⁰ The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²² Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

²⁴ And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

When God created the heavens and the earth, he brought order out of disorder. He separated light from dark, and the waters from the land, and fixed a boundary for the waters. Etc.

Now, with the Flood, God is *uncreating* that which he previously created:

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." [7:11]

God removes the boundaries and allows the waters of chaos to roll back in.

The question is, Why? We'll need to keep reading to answer that question.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15
GENESIS 8:1-22

8 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. ² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³ and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.

¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. ¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

¹³ In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on

the altar. ²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

²² While the earth remains,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night,
shall not cease.”

After The Flood, the Lord promises that he will never destroy the earth. I think this means that we can be certain that complete destruction will not come from outside. What the Lord does not promise, however, is that destruction might not come from *inside*.

Would the Lord permit us to destroy Creation from within?

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
GENESIS 9:1-17

GOD’S COVENANT WITH NOAH

9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Like everyone else I know, I get excited when I see a rainbow in the sky.

“Look! Look! A Rainbow!”

But, I’m not sure I’ve ever seen a rainbow and consciously reflected that it is a sign of God’s mercy and steadfast love. Have you?

Next time I see one in the sky, I want to do better.

P.S. Note that this first giving of the law, which we read in today’s passage, includes in it the fact that every single person is equal before the law: no one’s “blood” is more or less valuable than anyone else’s.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 GENESIS 9:18-29

NOAH’S DESCENDANTS

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

²⁶ He also said,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸ After the flood Noah lived 350 years. ²⁹ All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

God wipes the slate clean with The Flood and starts over with Noah.

Unfortunately, Noah’s *potential for sin* wasn’t wiped clean, and after he begins to rebuild civilization, he foolishly gets drunk and lies “uncovered” in his tent. Seeing his father in that state, Noah’s son Ham does something shameful to him. At the very least, he doesn’t respect his father and tells his brothers about his father’s foolishness; at the most, there could be some kind of incestuous activity.

Either way, the man who was supposed to be the hope for humanity clearly isn't, and neither is his family.

Did God make a mistake? No.

Genesis 1-11 is teaching us that there is no simple fix for humanity. Even the good ones among us are susceptible to sin and foolishness.

God will have to fix humanity another way....

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 **GENESIS 10:1-32**

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

IO These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

THE JAPHETHITES

² The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵ From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

THE HAMITES

⁶ The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and ¹² Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³ Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴ Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.

¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, ¹⁶ and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. ¹⁹ And the territory of the Canaanites ex-

tended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

²¹ To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. ²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. ²⁴ Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵ To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰ The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

³² These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Three quick points about the genealogy in Genesis 10, the descendants of Noah:

1. The Bible wants us to understand that the spread of peoples over the earth is just as much part of God's plan as the creation of the animals in Genesis 1. People are of course freely choosing to move and spread out, but this is nonetheless a fulfillment of God's command that humanity be fruitful and multiply.
2. All of humanity is part of the same family, even though the different nations seem so different. Through the Old Testament, Israel will constantly come up against these nations, and the question will be "Will they treat each other as family members, or as enemies?"
3. Israel is a small nation among many, and yet it's the one God uses to save the world.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
GENESIS 11:1-9

THE TOWER OF BABEL

II Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

³ And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

The Babel story tells of humanity’s desire to save itself through technological innovation. Genesis 1-11 is a descending spiral of humanity’s attempts—and failures—to find life apart from God; Babel is the culmination.

Note that they have the technology before they have a use for it. First, they have bricks, and only then do they decide to make a city and a tower. In other words, the means drive the ends. **What a true description of our current struggles with technological innovation—we gain the power, and *then* we think of ways to use it. Just because we *can* do something, however, doesn’t mean it’s wise for us to do so.**

I predict that the great struggle for humanity in the 21st century will be a struggle over technology: either we will master our technological powers, or be mastered by them. In the Babel story, God stops the

builders before they can complete their project. Will God need to save us from ourselves in the same way?

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22
GENESIS 11:10-32

FROM SHEM TO ABRAM

¹⁰ These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. ¹¹ And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹² When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. ¹³ And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴ When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. ¹⁵ And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶ When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. ¹⁷ And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸ When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. ¹⁹ And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰ When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. ²¹ And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²² When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. ²³ And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴ When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. ²⁵ And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶ When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

TERAH’S DESCENDANTS

²⁷ Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in the presence

of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans.²⁹ And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah.³⁰ Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

³¹ Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Two quick thoughts on today's genealogy:

1. One of the purposes of this genealogy is to move the story from Noah's descendants to the family of Abraham, who will be the one the Lord will use to fix everything.
2. There is a fascinating little detail in 11:28: We're told that Abraham's family is "in Ur of the Chaldeans." Chaldea is Babylon, which we've just read about in the Tower story as a society trying to make a name for itself apart from the Lord. Babylon, in other words, is the ultimate wicked society, and it is precisely out of Babylon that Abraham comes!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

There's no reading for today. Catch up or read over what you already read. Get ready—Genesis Part 2 begins Monday!

What will the Lord do to save humanity?

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