# Answers from GENESIS

**History of Creation**

n the beginning God created the heavens
and the earth.
The earth was without form, and void; and
kness *was*[a] on the face of the deep. And the
irit of God was hovering over the face of the
ters.
Then God said, "Let there be light"; and
ere was light.
And God saw the light, that *it was* good;
nd God divided the light from the darkness.
God called the light Day, and the darkness
e called Night. So the evening and the morn-
ng were the first day.
Then God said, "Let there be a firmament
in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the
waters from the waters."
Thus God made the firmament, and di-
vided the waters which *were* under the firma-
ment from the waters which *were* above the
firmament; and it was so.
And God called the firmament Heaven. So
the evening and the morning were the second
day.
Then God said, "Let the waters under the
heavens be gathered together into one place,
and let the dry *land* appear"; and it was so.
And God called the dry *land* Earth, and
the gathering together of the waters He called
Seas. And God saw that *it was* good.
Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth
grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit
tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind,
whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth"; and it
was so.
And the earth brought forth grass, the herb
that yields seed according to its kind, and the
tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed *is* in itself
according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.
And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.
Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;
and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.
God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.
God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,
and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was* good.
So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
Then God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of the heavens."
So God created great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, according to their kind, and every winged fowl according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.
And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."
So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.
Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, according to its kind"; and it was so.
And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.
Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all[a] the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
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."
And God said, "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.
"Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it




# Want to order a free subscription to *VT?*

The simplest way to order a subscription is to go to our home page (VerticalThought.org) and fill out the subscription form. If you don't have access to the Web, send your name, address and birth date to: ***Vertical Thought***, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.

United Church of God, an International Association — Preaching the Gospel, Preparing a People

This web-booklet is a re-print compilation of a series of articles written for *Vertical Thought* magazine (www.VerticalThought.org), a publication from United Church of God, *an International Association* (www.ucg.org). If you have any comments about this article, or vertical-thinking questions we can help you answer, please send them to info@VerticalThought.org.

*About the Author: Mario Seiglie is a father and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Garden Grove, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii.*

# Answers From Genesis, Part 1

*Understanding how God made things in the beginning can help us understand things now.*

Many people have asked basic questions about the origins of things such as:

• "Who or what is God?"

• "What is the origin of the universe?"

• "How did life come to be?"

All these questions, and many more, are answered in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, which means *origin*. Here we receive God's answers about many important questions—and from Someone who was there! So let's go to this, the first book in the Bible, to find its answers to commonly asked questions.



**When Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," who is God?**

In this first verse, we are introduced to the majestic Creator God who made the entire universe—*including us*. The term for God in the original language is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is a plural term that can also have a singular meaning.

In John 1 we see why the term God can mean one or more persons. Here we read: "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the Word was *with* God, and the *Word was* God … And the *Word became* flesh and dwelt among *us* … the only begotten of the *Father*, full of grace and truth" (verses 1, 14, emphasis added throughout).

Thus the term *God* applies to God the Father or God the Word (who later became Jesus Christ)—or both. They can therefore act separately or together. Notice how in Genesis 1 *God* can be referred to by a *singular* personal pronoun, "*He* made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16). Or God can be referred to by a *plural* personal pronoun: "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

Both the Father and the One who became Christ were involved in creation—the second acting on behalf of the first. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God … has in these last days spoken to us by His Son … through whom also He made the worlds." We thus see that God the Father created the universe *through* the preincarnate Jesus Christ (see also Ephesians 3:9).

**Does the description in Genesis 1:1 fit with scientific explanations of the universe?**

Yes, it does. Many scientists, through numerous lines of evidence, have come to accept the "Big Bang" theory of the universe in which the universe has a starting point. This indicates that *nothing* physical existed previous to that instant. According to this model, the universe is now expanding from that initial moment and even the background radiation from the original "explosion" can still be detected.

George S. Johnston sums it up well: "The book of Genesis has held up well under the scrutiny of modern geology and archaeology. Twentieth-century physics, moreover, describes the beginning of the universe in virtually the same cosmological terms as Genesis. Space, time and matter came out of nothing in a single burst of light entirely hospitable to carbon-based life. A growing number of chemists and biologists agree that life had its origin from clay templates … I would say all this is a curious development for Darwinists" (*Reader's Digest*, May 1991, p. 31).

Even without the Big Bang model, the laws of thermodynamics—fundamental laws of the physical sciences—also indicate that the universe had a beginning. The first law states that the amount of mass-energy in the universe is constant. The second law states that the amount of energy available for work is running out.

Taken together, they require that the universe had a beginning with much usable energy from which it is now running down. Both the Big Bang theory and the laws of thermodynamics are in harmony with Genesis 1:1.



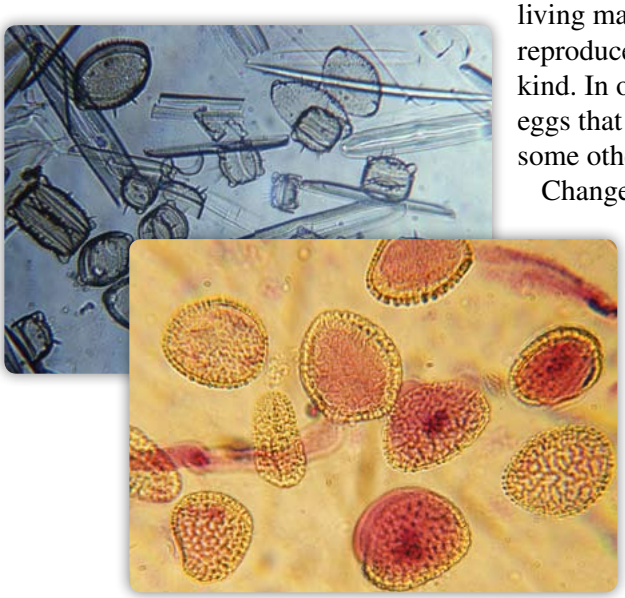
**While the New International Version of the Bible translates Genesis 1:2 to say that "the earth was formless and empty," why does it have a footnote**

*Images: NASA/ESA; United Church of God, ai*

**stating that the word "was" here could be "become"?**

The original Hebrew for "formless and empty" (*tohu* and *bohu*)—"without form, and void" in the King James Version—literally means "chaotic and in confusion." When God originally created the heavens and the earth, they were a thing of beauty.

Of the earth, Scripture elsewhere says that God "did not create it in vain [*tohu*]" (Isaiah 45:18). We read



in Job 38:4-7 that the angels shouted for joy at the sight. But we also read in the Bible that Lucifer, one of the chief angels, rebelled against God and was cast down to the earth (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:14-17; Luke 10:18).

It then appears that the earth *became* a wasteland due to Satan's rebellion, and God had to renew the face of the earth, as we read in Psalm 104:30: "You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth." The following verses in Genesis 1 reveal God raising the continents to the surface and filling them with vegetation and living creatures through six days of work.

**Do plants and animals really reproduce according to their "kind," as Genesis 1 says, or did they evolve as the theory of evolution teaches?**

Darwinian evolution, as taught in schools, claims all plants and animals evolved from tiny, primitive ancestors. This theory asks us to believe that microscopic kinds of creatures, such as amoebas, eventually evolved into fish, then amphibians, then birds, then mammals and finally human beings!

Yet this is directly contradicted by the scientific *law of biogenesis*, which has never been known to fail! It states that 1) living matter comes only from living matter and 2) living things reproduce only according to their own kind. In other words, chickens produce eggs that produce more chickens—not some other type of creature.

Changes *within* a species, which can be called microevolution, do indeed occur. But macroevolution, or the change from one animal kind to another, has never been verified in nature.

So apple trees keep producing apples, lions give birth to lions, bears engender more bears, and rabbits keep making rabbits—and plenty of them. So in this regard, science actually backs the Bible and not evolution!

**What is meant by the statement that God created man and woman in His own image?**

Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, *male* and *female* He created them."

This means that both man and woman reflect God—that is, they are like God in some ways because "we are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). Indeed, it should be noted that the first man, Adam, later begets a son in his own image and likeness (Genesis 5:1-3).

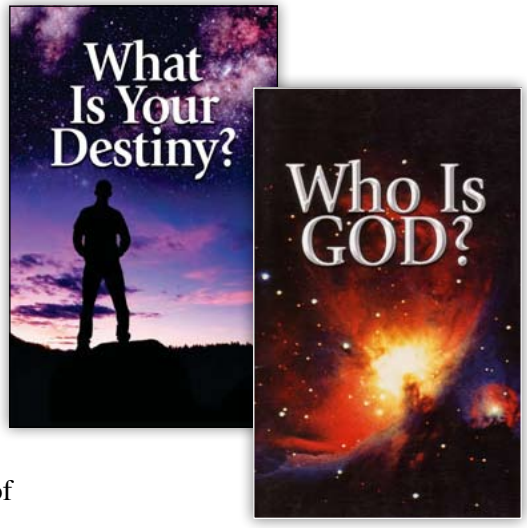
Scriptures indicate that we share some of the same characteristics of God our Father, only in a more limited way. Some of our similarities include our general shape, having dominion (rulership) over the earth, and the ability to think and communicate on far higher levels than animals.

In short, being created in God's image is what makes us human and of a different "kind" than animals. While the theory of evolution describes early man as only being capable of crude grunts, the first chapters of the book of Genesis show Adam and Eve immediately after their creation being able to name the animals, communicate in complete sentences and reason for themselves whether to obey God's instruction to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Being made in God's image also indicates the ultimate purpose for which human beings were made. Amazingly, humankind was created to be of the "God kind." Although God has made us physical beings for now, His ultimate desire is that all men and women accept His authority over their lives and eventually become part of His eternal family as His literal children (John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

For further study, send for, download or read online our free booklets *Who Is God?* and *What Is Your Destiny?*

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt20/answers-from-genesis.htm*






*Images: PhotoDisc, Inc.; United Church of God, ai*

# Answers From Genesis, Part 2

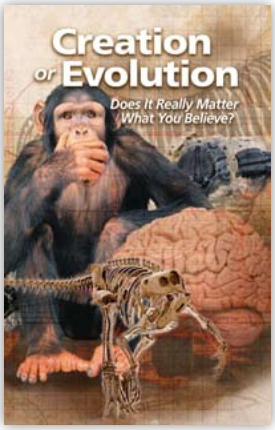
*Understanding how God made things in the beginning can help us understand things now.*

We continue with general questions about the book of Genesis. Here are the answers as we best understand them in light of the Bible.



**A young man recently asked, "The bones or fragments of bones like the skull cap of what is called a caveman have, from what I have found, been [dated as being from] a long time ago—some bones being from 80,000 years ago. The question is, if men were created 6,000 years ago, how could these bones exist?"**

We need to understand that paleontological findings are typically overlaid with hypotheses (educated guesses) based on the theory of evolution, which casts considerable doubt on their value. Man's origin as recorded in the Bible does indeed date to about 6,000 years ago. So how do we reconcile this with the fossil evidence?




One of the first things to consider regarding these finds is the way they are dated. Radiometric dating methods can give results that vary widely for the same fossil (see, for example, Marvin Lubenow's book *Bones of Contention*), and a number of factors—including the worldwide flood that occurred during the life of Noah—may skew the results.

Thus, it is possible that some of these humanlike bones may actually be those of human beings who lived prior to the worldwide flood described in Genesis 6 to 9—making them only 4,500 to 6,000 years old. Scripture reveals that people then lived for hundreds of years, which could account for the fossils' thick skulls and bone structure.

Even if these bones are of manlike creatures that existed prior to 6,000 years ago, we must remember that the Bible records the history of physical life only as far back as the renewal of the earth in preparation for the creation of Adam and Eve. It does not speak of creatures that lived on the earth before that time. Without divine revelation, and with so many past geologic upheavals of the earth, there's no way of knowing for sure what these creatures were, what they actually looked like, when they existed or what purpose they served.

But the Bible is clear. Twice in Scripture, Adam is called "the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Clearly, Adam and Eve were the first human beings God made "in His own image" (Genesis 1:27).

Their descendants have a spiritual component, called "the spirit" in Ecclesiastes 12:7 or "the spirit of the man" in 1 Corinthians 2:11. The joining of this spirit with the Holy Spirit of God is what makes conversion possible (Romans 8:16). This would set human beings apart from any supposed prehistoric man (or manlike ape)—if there was such a thing.

The United Church of God (which sponsors *Vertical Thought*) deals further with these subjects in its booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*



**On the fourth day of creation week, the Bible says God "made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16). How can that be when He created light on the first day, and also separated day from night (Genesis 1:3-5)?**

First, it is helpful to know that there is a difference between the original Hebrew terms translated *create* and *made* in Genesis 1. Where verse 1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," the term for "create" is *bara*, which "is only applied to a divine creation, the production of that which had no existence before" (*Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, emphasis added throughout ).

Thus, when God created the heavens and the earth, the "heavens" included the sun, moon, planets and stars. This is why there was light, day and night on the earth *on the first day*.

However, the Hebrew word translated "made" in verse 16, *asah*, generally means to make or reconstitute something *that already exists*. So, instead of God creating the sun, moon, planets and stars on the

*Images: JupiterImages; NASA; United Church of God, ai*

fourth day, it is more accurate to say He fixed these objects in their places and made them "divide the day from the night" and set them "for signs and seasons, and for days and years" (verse 14).

As *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains: "In other words, unlike the syntax of verse 6, in verse 14, God's command assumes that the lights *were already in the expanse* and that in response to his command they were given *a purpose*, 'to separate the day from the night' and 'to mark seasons and days and years.'"

Therefore, the emphasis in Genesis 1:14-16 is not about creating *something from nothing*, but about establishing the *purposes* for these great lights in the heavens. In particular, it was to place all these objects in their proper orbits, thus setting the astronomical standards for the calendar and being able to measure the days, months and years.

**What is meant by giving mankind "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26)? Does this give man the right to exploit the earth?**

No, God did not give His beautiful earth to mankind so people could destroy it.

In fact, He gave Adam precise instructions on how to take care of the earth: "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden *to tend* and *keep it*" (Genesis 2:15). He did not place him there to carelessly neglect it, but instead to enhance and take care of it. The entire earth was, by extension, also to be properly maintained and its ecology preserved.

As some Bible scholars explain: "The gift of 'dominion' over nature was not intended to be a license to use or abuse selfishly the created order in any way men and women saw fit. In no sense were humans to be bullies and laws to themselves; Adam and Eve were to be responsible to God and accountable for all the ways in which they did or did not cultivate the natural world about them" (*Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 1996, p. 90).

Unfortunately, man has not been a good "keeper" or steward of the earth God created for him. Just as the prodigal son squandered his father's goods (Luke 15:13), so has most of humankind mismanaged the earth. Let's not blame God for it, but place the blame squarely where it belongs—on man and on Satan, who has influenced and deceived him (Revelation 12:9). Thankfully, God will yet set things right.

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt21/answers-genesis.htm*







Images: PhotoDisc, Inc.

# Answers From Genesis, Part 3

*Understanding how God made things in the beginning can help us understand things now.*

We continue with general questions about the book of Genesis. Here are the answers as we best understand them in light of the Bible.

**Were the six days of creation literal days?**

Some contend that each of the days of creation in Genesis 1 represented a long span of time. Yet consider that fruit-bearing plants were created on the third day while insects to pollinate them were not created until a few days later. If these were millions of years apart, the plants would not have survived.

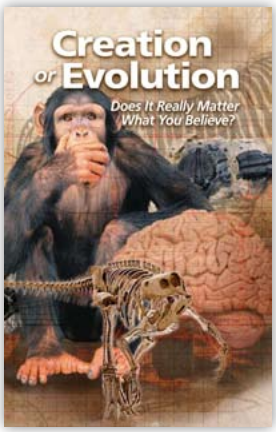
Note that the Bible is quite clear about how long each day was: "So the



evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5). How long is the daylight portion of a day? Jesus Christ Himself, contrasting day and night, said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 11:9, emphasis added throughout). There are also 12 hours in the night, for a total of 24.

There are, however, places in the Bible where "day" can symbolically mean an extended period of time, such as the "day of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 5:2), or the "day" when God created all things (Genesis 2:4). But anytime in Scripture when the term *day* is preceded by a *numeral*, it always means a literal day of the week.

So evening and morning clearly mean a full rotation of the earth, or a 24-hour period. Besides, Genesis 2:2 mentions the fact that God rested on the seventh day and sanctified that portion of time. This is enshrined in the Fourth Commandment, which requires resting on the seventh day of each week (the Sabbath) as a memorial of God's creative activities on the previous six days of creation week—and it obviously refers to a 24-hour period (see Exodus 20:8-11).




(For further information, download or request our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* Especially see the inset article "Genesis 1 and the Days of Creation.")

**Did Adam and Eve actually exist?**

Some think Adam and Eve were fictional characters, yet Jesus Christ knew they were real. He said of them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4-5).



In fact, Jesus Christ's own genealogy is recorded all the way back to Adam and Adam's son Seth (Luke 3:38).

Also, written language dates back to around 4000 B.C., about the time biblical chronology indicates Adam and Eve lived. From 4000 B.C. to 2000 B.C., history records an amazing advance of technology, art and culture.

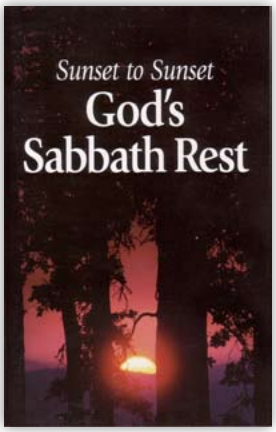
For instance, pictographic and then cuneiform writing appears. Elaborate architecture using mathematics arises, metallurgy using copper and then bronze is mastered and music and art reach sophisticated levels. This is faithfully recorded in the Genesis record, where cities are built (Genesis 4:17), musical skills are noted (Genesis 4:21) and metalwork appears (Genesis 4:22).

*Halley's Bible Handbook* explains about the region where Adam and Eve first lived, near the Euphrates River (Genesis 2:14): "Ethnologists quite generally consider this region to have been the original home of all the present races of men. It was the region from whence came the ox, goat, sheep, horse, pig, dog, apple, peach, pear, plum, cherry, quince, mulberry, gooseberry, vine, olive, fig, date, almond, wheat, barley, oats, pea, bean, flax, spinach, radish, onion, and most of our fruits and vegetables. [It is] the cradle of the human race" (1965, p. 64).

**When God rested on the seventh day, later called the Sabbath, did it become a command for all of**

*Images: Dan Dowd; United Church of God, ai; wikimedia*

**mankind or just for the Jews?**




Many will be surprised to know the Sabbath rest begins in chapter 2 of Genesis and not when God spoke His commandments to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai after bringing them out of slavery in Egypt.

Genesis 2:2-3 says: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested [the Hebrew word here is a verb form of the word Sabbath] on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Notice that God not only blessed but also "sanctified" the seventh day. In the Bible, sanctifying something means setting it apart for holy use—and that is what He did with the seventh day. This is why God later said, "*Remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

Note also that God created, blessed and sanctified the seventh day at the time of *creation*, which was *long before* Israel or the Jews even existed. Thus God had already given the Sabbath day, but He now reminded His people to not forget about it and "to keep it holy."

Jesus Christ expressly stated that the Sabbath was made not just for the Jews, but for all of mankind and that He was the master of it. "And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made *for man*, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

We see throughout Genesis that the seven-day weekly cycle was perpetuated. We read, for example, that Noah and his family were inside the ark for *one week* before the Flood came (Genesis 7:10). Then, after the Flood, Noah waited a *week* before sending the dove to see if there was any dry land. When it came back, he waited yet another *week* before sending it out for the final time (Genesis 8:10, 12).

Later in Genesis, Laban asked Jacob to wait a *week* before receiving Rachel as his wife (Genesis 29:27). So keeping the seven-day week, with the seventh being holy, remained the standard in Genesis.

Moreover, this all happened long before the Sabbath commandment was codified as the Fourth Commandment at Mount Sinai. In the New Testament, we read that Jesus Christ, the apostles and the people of God faithfully kept God's Sabbaths (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2; Hebrews 4:4, 9).

Indeed, all the faithful followers of God kept the Sabbath day—in the Old and the New Testaments—and there are no recorded exceptions! (You may also wish to ask for our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.)

**Who did Cain marry?**

We read, "And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch" (Genesis 4:17). Where did he find a wife?

The first clue is found in Genesis 5:4: "After he [Adam] begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. " God had told Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

It was expected that Adam and Eve would have many sons and daughters—especially as their long lives gave them centuries of childbearing years. In fact, Jewish tradition states that they had 33 sons and 27 daughters.

By the time Cain and his brother Abel were old enough to raise livestock and harvest crops (Genesis 4:1-4), they must have had younger brothers and sisters. Of course, the Bible does not record every detail, such as naming all the children that followed. It only highlights major events such as the murder of Abel (verse 8). But it does say that Cain was very concerned about being killed by those who wanted to avenge Abel's death (verse 14). God therefore set a mark on him to protect him from being killed by those seeking to punish him (verse 15).

So the logical answer regarding Cain's wife is that he must have married one of his sisters, as at first that is what all the sons of Adam had to do.

After some time had passed, laws against close-kin marriages became necessary due in part to the frequency of children with biological defects springing from such unions. During the days of Moses, God gave laws against marriages between a brother and a sister (Leviticus 18:9; 20:17). Today almost every nation in the world enforces similar laws.

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt22/answers-genesis.htm*



*Image: United Church of God, ai*

# Answers From Genesis, Part 4

*We continue exploring the book of Genesis and the common questions asked about it. Here are the answers as we best understand them in light of the Bible.*

**Where is the Garden of Eden today?**

No one knows for sure, because it was located in a pre-Flood landscape, but the Bible leaves some geographical clues about where it existed.

The Bible states the Garden of Eden was situated where four rivers branched out (Genesis 2:10-14). Two of the rivers mentioned in the Garden of Eden are still known today—the Hiddekel (the Tigris) and the Euphrates (Genesis 2:14). The other two rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon, are not readily identified.



It is possible, though, that two great dry river beds revealed in that area by satellite imagery could turn out to be these two ancient rivers—the Pishon and the Gihon (see *Smithsonian*, "Has the Garden of Eden Been Located at Last?" Vol. 18, 1987). It may be that the Garden of Eden was located close to where the Tigris and the Euphrates converge and empty their waters, in the northern tip of the Persian Gulf.

An alternative view has more recently been presented by archaeologist David Rohl in his book *Legend: The Genesis of Civilisation* (1998), as well as in a TV documentary on The Learning Channel, *In Search of Eden* (2002). He proposes that the Garden of Eden could have been situated near the headwaters of the Tigris and the Euphrates—more specifically in northwest Iran. He makes a plausible argument based on linguistic and historical evidence. Yet for now the matter remains one of conjecture.

It's interesting to read the legends that grew up in various cultures about the Garden of Eden. The Sumerians, who lived in the southern region of Mesopotamia (which means land between the rivers), believed their origin was in the land of Dilmun, a paradise where all the animals were tame and neither sickness nor death existed. They wrote, "It is a pure, clean and bright place ... where the lion does not kill, nor does the wolf devour the sheep" (Samuel Kramer, *History Begins in Sumer*, 1974, p. 228).

The Babylonians called this paradise Eridu, where "Adapa" (the Babylonian Adam) lived. They said he was the seed of mankind, but later offended the gods by obtaining secret knowledge and was made mortal, thus bringing sickness upon the people. They wrote, "Near Eridu was a garden, in which was a mysterious Sacred Tree, a Tree of Life, planted by the gods … protected by guardian spirits, and no man enters" (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965, p. 66).

Archaeological evidence shows the entire area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to have been significantly populated from the beginning of civilization, and it is the region where the most ancient forms of written script—pictographic and cuneiform—have been found.

In any case, it's probably impossible to know just where the Garden of Eden was, despite the clues we have. It couldn't be found by archaeology even if one knew the vicinity in which to look, as there would be no ruins to excavate—civilization having developed after man's expulsion from Eden.

Furthermore, the garden was part of the pre-Flood world that was completely covered with water and destroyed during the great Flood. No recognizable remains of the Garden of Eden would have survived by the time Noah, his family and the animals disembarked and began to populate the newly transformed terrain.

Still, in giving us indications of its whereabouts, God assures us that this paradise was a real place—where real history happened.

**The Bible says, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). What happened to Enoch?**

Some erroneously jump to the cnclusion that Enoch was taken up into heaven, but notice the Bible nowhere says this. It simply says that God "took him." It does not specify *where* he was taken.

Jesus Christ later stated in the ospel of John that "Scripture cannot be broken" (10:35). One of the points He was making was that one passage of the Bible cannot contradict another passage.

This same Gospel of John reveals a startling fact very pertinent to this matter: " *No one* has ascended to heaven but *He who came down from heaven*, that is, *the Son of Man* who is in heaven" (John 3:13, emphasis added throughout).

*Image: United Church of God, ai*

Clearly, Jesus Christ was the only human being who had ascended into heaven. The phrase "who is in heaven" lets us know that this was written by the apostle John after Christ's return to heaven. So even as late as this statement, no human being—and that includes Enoch—had ascended into heaven.

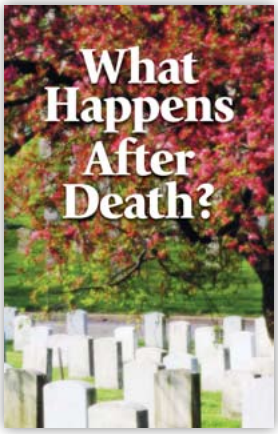
We later read about Enoch's fate in Hebrews 11:5: "By faith Enoch was taken away *so that he did not see death, 'and was not found*, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God." The word rendered "taken" can also mean "transferred elsewhere." And the New American Standard Bible says this was done "so that he *would not* see death"—a better translation than "did not," since we know from the same chapter of Hebrews that he died.

Notice in verse 13 the summary given of all of the men and women of faith listed here, including Enoch: "*These all died* in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). So Enoch definitely died as well as all the rest.

How then can it be that Enoch was transferred elsewhere so he wouldn't see death? God doesn't give us all the details of what happened, but a few scenarios have been proposed that do not conflict with the fact that Enoch died as the Bible says.

It may be that God transported Enoch elsewhere to keep him from being killed at a certain time—perhaps protecting him from martyrdom at the hands of angry persecutors who didn't like his announcement of coming divine judgment (see Jude 14-16). God likewise supernaturally transported Elijah and Philip to other places on earth (see 2 Kings 2:11; Acts 8:39).

On the other hand, we should observe that Enoch died young for his time—at age 365 while those before and after him lived into their 800s and 900s. Because of this, some speculate that God "took him" from life prematurely so that he would not have to live out his remaining centuries in a miserable world (compare Isaiah 57:1-2). His next moment of consciousness will be the resurrection. In this case, "so that he would not see death" would refer to his not having to experience the process of dying—his life ending instantly.




Still others, putting the likelihood of Enoch experiencing persecution together with his early death, have concluded that Enoch was murdered—martyred for his preaching. Enoch being taken and not found would then refer to God removing his body and burying it—as happened with Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). It is even proposed that the murderer was Cain's descendant Lamech, who killed a young man (Genesis 4:23-24)—but there is no way to know if this was Enoch. In this case, Enoch being taken or transferred so that he would not see death is taken as separate matter—that of him being spiritually converted, transferred from the world's ways to God's way of living, so that he would not see ultimate death in the lake of fire (compare Colossians 1:13; John 8:51).

Again, we don't have enough details to know exactly what is intended. But we do know that Enoch did not skip death and go to heaven. He died, and no human being has ascended to heaven except Jesus Christ. To learn more, send for or download our free booklet *What Happens After Death?*

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt23/answers-genesis.htm*



Image: United Church of God, ai

# Answers From Genesis, Part 5

*The book of Genesis is known as the book of origins. Here are more frequently asked questions about it.*

**Who were the "sons of God" mentioned in Genesis 6:1-4?**

Scholars debate and disagree over the meaning of the reference to "the sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4. Some people read into these verses the idea that it refers to angelic beings marrying women and producing a race of giants. Christ explained that is impossible, teaching that angels don't marry and, by implication, don't produce children either (Luke 20:34-36).



Human beings are clearly the subject in Genesis 6—not angels. God said, "My Spirit shall not strive with *man* forever, for he is indeed *flesh*" (verse 3) and, "I will destroy *man* whom I have created from the face of the earth" (verse 7, emphasis added throughout).

The "giants" in verse 4 were simply people of giant stature. Similar people are spoken of in later times, most notably Goliath and his family.

How, then, can we understand Genesis 6:1-4? Human beings are also sons of God. This is not referring to becoming spiritual sons of God through conversion, but to the fact that all people are sons of God by creation (Luke 3:38). The attitudes and actions of these "sons of God" were so wrong that they provoked God to send the Flood.

*Halley's Bible Handbook* raises the possibility that these sons of God were the descendants of Adam and Eve's son Seth. Seth, the Bible records, was a son in the image of Adam, who was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26; 5:1-3).

Speaking of Seth's descendants, Genesis 4:26 adds, "men began to call on the name of the LORD," a phrase that could also be rendered, "to be called *after* the name of the LORD"—that is, the "sons of God." If so, the women, "the daughters of men" whom these "sons of God" married, were the descendants of unrighteous Cain. By marrying these women, the sons of Seth turned from God, leading Him to say that the entire world was then corrupt (Genesis 6:5-7, 12).

An alternative explanation is that "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2 should be rendered "sons of the gods" and refers to men who were called such not in worship of the Creator, but of pagan deities. Their marriages would have been in defiance of the Creator God, as they lived contrary to His will. Indeed, in light of God's characterization of society riddled with violence (verses 11, 13), it could be that such men forcibly took the women as wives.

Regardless of which explanation is accurate, the idea that a half-spirit, half-human race resulted from angels marrying women is not what the Bible teaches.

**Was Noah's Flood a local or a worldwide event?**

Genesis 7:19-23 states: "And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and *all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.* The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the *mountains were covered*. And all flesh died that moved on the earth … 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. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive."

Jesus Christ confirmed that the Flood was global in scope. He said, "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and *took them all away*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:38-39).

In addition, the apostle Peter taught about a universal flood, saying, "For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which *the world that then existed perished*, being flooded with water" (2 Peter 3:5-6). Clearly, he was referring to a *worldwide flood*.

Moreover, the Bible clearly records that the ark finally settled upon the mountains of Ararat. Could a local flood have lifted Noah's ark to the top of those mountains?



As Gleason Archer, professor of Old Testament studies, explained: "Now

*Images: PhotoDisc, Inc.; 123RF*

the most elementary knowledge of physical law leads to the observation that water seeks its own level … If the water level rose thirty thousand feet so as to submerge the peak of Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, it must have reached that level everywhere else on earth … Therefore we must conclude that *the Flood was indeed universal*, or else that the biblical record was grievously in error" (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 1982, p. 82).

It may be that mountains were not then as tall as Everest, but even if they were much small, the water rising above the tallest one means the whole world would still have been covered in water.

According to the Bible, the whole Flood event lasted less than a year, and it took just a few months to reach its peak and then quickly recede again.



Professor Archer comments on what he sees as confirmation of the Flood from paleontology: "Perhaps the most striking evidences of the violence of the Deluge throughout the earth are to be found in the amazing profusion of Pleistocene animals whose bones have been discovered in a violently separated state in several ossiferous [bone-laden] fissures that have been excavated in various locations in Europe and North America …

"Since no skeleton is complete, it is safe to conclude that none of these animals (mammoths, bears, wolves, oxen, hyenas, rhinoceros, deer, and many smaller mammals) fell into these fissures alive, nor were they rolled there by streams. Yet because of the calcite cementing of these heterogeneous bones together, they must necessarily have been deposited *under water* …

"This is just exactly the kind of evidence that a *brief but violent episode* of this sort would be expected to show within the short span of one year" (ibid., pp. 82-83).

Other possible evidence of a universal flood comes from studies of the ocean floor. In the 1960s and 70s, two American oceanographic vessels took long, slender core samples from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. They contained sediments of shells from plankton called foraminifera. While alive, they leave traces in their shells of the chemical composition of the water that indicate temperature and salinity. When they reproduce, the shells are discarded and fall to the bottom. A cross-section of that sea bottom carries a record of climates that are attested to go back more than 100 million years according to traditional dating methods. Every inch of core may represent as much as 1,000 years of the earth's past.

What scientists found left them astounded. Several thousand years ago, the foraminifera shells registered a sudden plunge in the salinity of the water. Dr. Cesare Emiliani, the founder of paleoceanography, notes: "The North American ice cap underwent a sudden collapse, followed by rapid melting. A huge amount of ice-melt water rushed into the Gulf of Mexico and produced a sea-level rise that spread around the world with the speed of a great tidal wave …

"We know this, because the oxygen isotope ratio of the foraminifera shells show a marked temporary *decrease in the salinity* of the waters of the Gulf of Mexico … *There is no question that there was a flood*, and there is *no question that it was a universal flood*" (Fred Warshofsky, "Noah, the Flood, the Facts," *Reader's Digest*, September 1977, p. 133).

Historian Werner Keller relates: "Among people of all races there is a variety of traditions of a gigantic and catastrophic Flood. The Greeks told the Flood story … long before Columbus many stories told among the natives of the continent of America kept the memory of a great Flood alive; in Australia, India, Polynesia, Tibet, Kashmir and Lithuania tales of a Flood have been handed down from generation to generation to the present day … It is highly probable that they all reflect the same world wide catastrophe" (*The Bible as History*, 1981, p. 43). Does this sound like the Flood was local? Absolutely not!

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt24/answers-genesis.htm*



*Image: NOAA, US Government*

# Answers From Genesis, Part 6

*Here are some frequently asked questions about Genesis, the book of origins.*

**Can people eat anything they want? Genesis 9:3 says, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs."**




Within the context of this section of Scripture, we find three key points:

• After the Flood, God reiterates to Noah's family His previous instruction to mankind to multiply and fill the earth (9:1).

• God says animals will fear man, and man is given dominion over them (9:2-3).

• Man can eat the meat of the animals, but he must not eat the blood (9:4).

From previous instruction, it is evident that Noah already knew of the distinction between clean and unclean animals. Before the Flood God had told him, "You shall take with you seven each of every *clean* animal, a male and his female [that is, seven pairs]; two each of animals that are *unclean*, a male and his female" (Genesis 7:2, emphasis added throughout). Other passages explain that "clean" and "unclean" refer to animals that should and should not be eaten (Leviticus 11:1-4).

The implication in Genesis 7 is that they were to take these extra pairs of clean animals aboard because they would be raised to provide food for Noah's family as well as replenish the earth. Only one pair of each of the unclean animals was needed for species replenishment since these were not fit to eat.

Moreover, after the Flood, Noah sacrificed only clean animals before God (Genesis 8:20). Throughout Genesis, we see the men and women of God eating only clean animals (Genesis 18:7; 27:9). Later, the food laws of clean and unclean animals would be spelled out more explicitly—in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

Jesus Christ—our perfect example and the One whose example we follow—ate only clean meat.

Similarly, after Christ's death and the start of the New Testament Church, Peter, who had spent more than three years sharing meals with Jesus, declared, "For I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). The context of this statement is a vision given to Peter so he would not again call any gentile "common or unclean" as Jewish people of that time often did (verse 28).

Although these verses are focusing on the equality of man, they do reveal Peter's eating habits at that time. And clearly, he did not then begin to eat unclean meat! We know this because he later told the church members in Jerusalem what he had learned from the vision. No discussion about actually consuming unclean meat is brought up.

He said, "'If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?' When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life'" (Acts 11:17-18). So the lesson was not to call any gentiles "unclean" but to fellowship with them.

Had the lesson been that now they could all start eating pork and other unclean meat, a lengthy discussion on this vital and controversial subject would have ensued and would surely be mentioned in the book of Acts. Yet again, only the issue of gentile repentance is mentioned.

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* gives a good summary of the topic, showing that Genesis 9:3 wasn't the first time God allowed people to eat meat and that Noah already knew which meat he could eat:

"Though some scholars infer from a comparison between Genesis 1:29 and 9:3 that divine permission to eat the flesh of animals was first given after the Deluge [Flood], it is more probable that mankind from the beginning made use of both animal and vegetable food.

"The dominion given to humans over animals (Gen. 1:26) included the eating of them, as dominion over fish at least cannot mean anything else. Abel's sacrifice (4:4) supposed the eating of mutton: mankind offered to the Divinity what he himself ate. The distinction between clean and unclean animals in the ark has no meaning if meat was not eaten (7:2).

"Prehistoric findings point to primitive man as an omnivore [eater of meat and vegetables]. It is only after settling down as an agriculturist that humans became chiefly eaters of vegetable food. Seminomads like the patriarchs combined both categories (18:5-8)" (1982, Vol. 2, p. 327).

To learn more, send for or download our free booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*

**Why was Canaan cursed instead of Ham in Genesis 9:25?**

The Bible tells us: "And Noah

*Image: United Church of God, ai*

began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his *younger* son had done to him. Then he said: 'Cursed be *Canaan*; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren'" (Genesis 9:20-25).

Who committed the wrong here? It must have been Canaan, as he was the one punished. Yet the wording has confused many. Many see "his younger son" as a reference to Noah's son Ham, who had seen Noah's nakedness.

The term "younger" is translated as "youngest" in several Bible versions (see New International Version, American Standard Version, Bible in Basic English). Yet Ham was not Noah's youngest son. *Japheth* was (Genesis 5:32; 10:1). Canaan, though, was *Ham's* youngest son (Genesis 10:6). This is sometimes resolved by considering the "his" in "his youngest son" as meaning "Ham's." Yet Noah is the last person mentioned. Could Canaan be described as *Noah's* youngest son? Yes, if the term "son" is understood in its broader sense of descendant.

Hebrew scholar Tayler Lewis concurs: "The Hebrew rendered 'his younger son,' cannot refer to Ham, who was older than Japheth, but means the *least or youngest* of the family, and hence is descriptive of *Canaan*. The words, 'had done unto him' means something very shameful had been done to the old man in his unconscious state, and of such a nature that it becomes manifest to him immediately on his recovery …

"Thus regarded, everything seems to point to some wanton act done by the very one who is immediately named in the severe malediction that follows: 'Cursed be Canaan.' He was the *youngest* son of Ham, as he was also the youngest son of Noah, according to the well-established Semitic peculiarity by which *all* the descendants are alike called sons" (*Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Genesis*, p. 338).

Therefore, it appears Canaan was cursed because he took advantage of Noah's unconsciousness to commit a perverse act. Ham merely saw his father's nakedness and reported it to his brothers. Shem and Japheth then walked with their backs to their father out of respect for him and covered him.

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt25/answers-genesis.htm*

# Answers From Genesis, Part 7

*Here are more frequently asked questions about Genesis, the book of origins.*

The authors of a 2009 book titled *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* have found that up to two thirds of young people eventually leave their church. Why? One of the primary reasons, these authors discovered, was that the youth quit believing that the first chapters of Genesis are true. With the constant bombardment from schools and the media against the veracity of the book of Genesis, it's no wonder this is the result.

This ongoing dilemma is one of the reasons we continue addressing some of the questions young people have about the book of Genesis. Of course, even apart from that, this book that lays the foundation for the rest of Scripture merits a lot of attention.

**Some believe the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 is mostly fictional. Are they right?**

Genesis 10 traces the genealogies of mankind after the Flood through the descendants of Noah's three sons up to shortly before the time of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham. The chapter has been called the table of nations because the descendants listed fathered the 70 nations that eventually overspread the earth after the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel.

But how accurate is the record, really?

Here are some quotes from some prominent archaeologists and historians about the Table of Nations.

• William Albright, probably the greatest archaeologist of the 20th century, stated: "The tenth chapter of Genesis … stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in a genealogical framework. But among the Greeks the framework … Many of the names of peoples and countries mentioned in this chapter have been discovered on the monuments for the first time … The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document" (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955, p. 70-71).

• *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* notes, "As a literary and historiographic document *the 'Table of Nations' is without parallel in the ancient world.* What makes it even more remarkable is its contrast to the parochialism [local focus] that tended to plague the Israelites throughout their history. In one quick stroke the 'table' puts the nation's history into its proper perspective. Although the Hebrews were the specially chosen agents of divine revelation, they were but one member of the universal family of nations, all of whom had a common origin" (1988, Vol. 4, p. 712, emphasis added throughout).

• Anthropologist Arthur Custance, an author dedicated to bridging science and theology, wrote: "Had this Table been designed for propaganda purposes (to establish Israel's position as of equal dignity though not sharing some of the glories of the surrounding peoples) or had it been merely the work of some early historian creating his own data with a comparatively free hand, then almost certainly some device would have been adopted for deliberately setting forth not only the high status of his own ancestors, but the very low status of that of his enemies …

"In complete contrast, it would be difficult to prove with certainty of what nationality the author of Genesis 10 was. We assume he was a Hebrew, but if the amount of attention given to any particular line that is traced were used as a clue to his identity, he might have been a Japhethite, a Canaanite, or even an Arab. This is remarkable and shows enormous restraint on the author's part, *the kind of restraint which suggests the hand of God upon him"* (*A Study of the Names in Genesis 10,* 1975, chapter 1, online book edition).

• Again from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:* "If the 'table' is allowed to speak for itself in its present canonical context, several themes seem to be emphasized or implied. (1) The providential fulfillment of the Noachian blessing and the population of the earth after the flood proceeded in the main along ordered lines. (2) The world is one united family, all of whose members trace their origin back to a common ancestor, Noah. (3) The segmentation of Noah's family is reflected in the present existence of separate nationality groups, recognizable by their distinctive locations, languages, and political structures. (4) The call of Abraham and Israelite history in general take place within the context of universal history, thus the effects of patriarchal revelation are felt throughout the earth" (1988, Vol. 4, p. 712).

Even after being subjected to extensive analysis by noted scholars,



*Images: Creation Research Institute; joseph_berrigan.tripod.com*

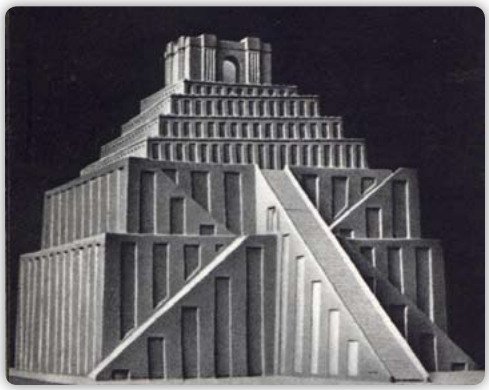
the table of nations has stood the test of time.

**Was there really a confusion of the tongues at the Tower of Babel?**

Secular teachers often dismiss this biblical account as a myth, but when we examine the evidence we find that a great deal exists about both the confusion of languages *and* the Tower of Babel.

Many linguists (those who study languages) readily admit they have no feasible explanation for how or why there are so many languages on the earth.

For instance, Dr. Mario Pei, a world-renowned linguist and author, states: "If there is one thing on which all linguists are fully agreed, it is that the problem of the origin of human speech is still unsolved … Human language, in contrast with animal cries, displays infinite variability, both in time and in space … In one sense, the reason for the changeability of language is as mysterious as the origin of language itself" (*The Story of Language*, 1965, pp. 21-23).



Presently, we know of some 5,000 different languages, with seven main branches, spoken around the world. About 1,000 are doomed to disappear within the next two decades, due in large part to the major languages growing in cultural and economic dominion.

Surprisingly, as it may seem counterintuitive, the more advanced a culture becomes, the *simpler* the language gets, since people tend to simplify and abbreviate their concepts and words. Inversely, the most primitive tribes have the *most complex languages*. For example, the African Swahili language has 26 different functions for nouns!

Dr. Pei notes, "It seems at least partly established that language changes least rapidly when its speakers are isolated from other communities, and most rapidly when they find themselves, so to speak, at the crossroads of the world" (ibid., p. 23).

This remarkable feature shows that language has not "evolved," as many assume, but instead has actually "devolved" from a very sophisticated system. The diversity and complexity of language is evidence that God, not human beings, is the original author of languages.

What about the fabled Tower of Babel? The Babylonians, or the inhabitants of Babel who remained in the area, apparently were very proud of this tower, for they built many more. There are 35 ruins of towers, called *ziggurats*, found in the region. They had seven levels with a pagan temple at the top, and they may have become a pattern for the first Egyptian pyramids.

*The New Bible Dictionary* explains: "Babel, or 'the gate of God,' called also Babylon. The name of one of the chief cities founded by Nimrod in the land of Shinar (Sumer), ancient Babylonia. According to Babylonian tradition, the tower [i.e., the ancient ziggurat of Babylon] was founded by the god Marduk and destroyed by Sargon [king of Akkad or Agade] in 2350 B.C.… A text of Sharkalisharri, king of Agade (c. 2250 B.C.) mentions the restoration of the temple-tower at Babylon, implying the existence of an earlier sacred city on the site … After Sharkalisharri, the earliest reference to the ziggurat at Babylon is to its restoration by Esarhaddon [king of Assyria] in 681-665 B.C. This was named in Sumerian 'Etemenanki'—'the Building of the Foundation-platform of Heaven and Earth.'

"It is very probable that such a sacred edifice followed an earlier plan. The tower was severely damaged in the war of 652-648 B.C. but restored again by Nebuchadnezzar II [king of Babylon] (605-562 B.C.) … The ziggurat at Babylon was demolished by Xerxes in 472 B.C., and though Alexander [the Great] cleared the rubble prior to its restoration, this was thwarted by his death. The bricks were subsequently removed by the local inhabitants, and today the site of Etemenanki is a pit as deep as the original construction was high" (1982, pp. 110-111).

Some, however, contend that the original Tower of Babel was located 11 miles southwest in modern Birs Nimrud—anciently called *Borsippa*, meaning "tongue-tower." Nebuchadnezzar also built a great ziggurat over an earlier structure here, stating: "This edifice, the house of the Seven Lights of the Earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa, a former king built it (they reckon forty-two ages), but *he did not complete its head. Since a remote time people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words.* Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had dispersed its sun-dried clay; the bricks of the casing had been split, and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps" (quoted in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, "Tongues, Confusion of").

In any case, the biblical account of the Tower of Babel is not a myth. The building of such enormous mudbrick towers has solid historical backing. And clearly the tradition of the unfinished tower due to language confusion was known at the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt26/answers-genesis.htm*



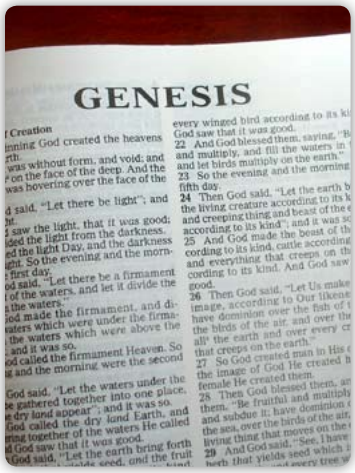
Image: Wikimedia

# Answers from Genesis, Part 8

*Here are more frequently asked questions about Genesis, the book of origins.*

This series has focused on beginnings—questions about creation and the earliest history of mankind as relayed in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. With chapter 12, the narrative changes and the focus turns to the life of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, then of his son Isaac and then of his son Jacob, giving the origins and the history of the Israelite people. Consequently, the end of chapter 11 provides us with a natural break in the Genesis account.

So with this installment we will end the series, wrapping up with some final questions about the first 11 chapters of Genesis.


GENESIS

**Who wrote the book of Genesis?**

The Bible itself reveals that it was Moses, in the 1400s B.C., who wrote the first five books of the Bible (except for the last chapter of Deuteronomy about Moses' death, which was probably added by Joshua, Moses' successor and author of the following book—Joshua).

Many passages in these first five books of the Bible actually mention that Moses wrote down what was thereby recorded in the Scriptures. For example, God told Moses, "*Write this* for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua" (Exodus 17:14, emphasis added throughout). Also notice Exodus 24:4: "And Moses *wrote* all the words of the Lord." There are many other passages where Moses writes down God's words (Exodus 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22).

Furthermore, Jesus Himself testified that Moses wrote part of the Bible. He said: "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for *he wrote about Me*. But if you do not believe *his writings*, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:45-47).

Christ later explained, "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" (Luke 24:44). He was referring to the three main sections of the Old Testament. The Law of Moses is the first section, the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or Torah.

*The New Bible Dictionary* explains, "For centuries both Judaism and Christianity accepted without question the biblical tradition that Moses wrote the Pentateuch" (1982, p. 904). In recent centuries, however, critics have questioned Moses' authorship and developed complicated theories about the works of multiple authors being meshed together centuries later.

Yet writing existed long before Moses. Indeed, it appears likely that earlier documents or oral traditions were compiled by Moses in producing Genesis. Several sections begin with "the generations of…," each serving to advance the narrative (see Genesis 2:4; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2 King James Version). These may well have been ancestral records passed down, which Moses would have put together with editing under God's inspiration.

The Bible does not specifically mention individuals creating written records before Moses, though archaeological discoveries confirm that several writing systems existed in the Middle East well before Moses' time that would have made it possible. However, it is not *necessary* that Moses had such records at his disposal. Those who believe in God's inspiration understand that God could well have revealed everything necessary to him had He wanted to.

For more on this, refer to the introduction to the book of Genesis in *The Good News Bible Commentary* (www.ucg.org/bible-commentary/Genesis/Creation;-Earth's-six_day-renovation;-The-Sabbath/default.aspx).

**Many accounts in the first 11 chapters of Genesis are similar to the mythical narratives of ancient Mesopotamia, and some of these were written down well before Moses' writing of Genesis. Did the Bible borrow from these other accounts?**

It's important to note that just because one account of a distant historical event was written before another, it does not necessarily follow that the second account was taken from the first. Nations had histories that were transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation until they were finally put down in writing in different periods. How accurately historical events were transmitted in different cultures is the question.

The creation and Flood stories of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, for

*Image: Dan Dowd*

instance, do have many similarities with the biblical account but are laced with absurd myths. The Bible, on the other hand, presents the events in a strictly historical manner, leaving out the outlandish embellishments found in the accounts of other nations.

*Halley's Bible Handbook* explains:"Epics of Creation, in various forms, on tablets which were in circulation before the time of Abraham, have been found in recent years in the ruins of Babylon, Nineveh, Nippur and Ashur, which are strikingly similar to the 'Creation Hymn' of Genesis … These Babylonian and Assyrian Creation stories are all grossly Polytheistic. But with so many points of similarity to the Genesis account, it would seem that they must have had a common origin. Are not these corrupted traditions a testimony to the fact of a divine original?



"The Bible represents the human race as starting with a belief in One God, and that Polytheistic Idolatry was a later development. This is directly contrary to the present day theory … [of] a gradual development upward from Animism. The Bible view has received recent confirmation from Archaeology. Dr. Stephen Langdon, of Oxford University, has found that the earliest Babylonian inscriptions suggest that man's first religion was a belief in One God, and from that there was a rapid decline into Polytheism and Idolatry" (1965, p. 62).

Experts attest that the Bible gives the most accurate and factual account, while other accounts have been distorted through legend and myth.

As the respected biblical scholar Dr. Gleason Archer notes about the Flood account: "Some comparative religionists have suggested that the Babylonian myth was earlier than the Hebrew, and that the compilers of Genesis 7 and 8 borrowed from it. But this is rendered most unlikely in view of the significant contrast between the two. Thus, the ark built by Utnapishtim [in the Babylonian account] was completely cubic, equipped with six decks for all the animals to be quartered in. A more impractical and unseaworthy craft could hardly be imagined. But Noah's ark was three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits deep—*an ideal set of measurements* for an ocean liner …

"Moreover, the stark contrast between the quarrelsome and greedy gods of the Babylonian pantheon and the majestic holiness of [the God of the Bible], the absolute Sovereign over the universe, furnishes the strongest basis for classifying the Gilgamesh account as a garbled, polytheistic *derivative* from the same original episode as that contained in Genesis 7-8. The Hebrew account is couched in terms of *sober history* and *accurate recording* that reflect a source derived from the persons who were actually involved in this adventure. The Gilgamesh Epic is far more mythical and vague" (*New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 1982, p. 84).

We see, then, that it was not the biblical writer who did the borrowing from the Babylonian or the Assyrian sources of the creation and the Flood. The biblical account faithfully recorded the events from the beginning of mankind's history, while other nations—with their different languages, cultures and corrupted religions blended their myths and legends into what had actually transpired.

*This original article can be found on-line at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt27/answers-from-genesis.htm*



Image: Wikimedia

# WORLDWIDE MAILING ADDRESSES

## NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

**United States:** United Church of God
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795
Web site: www.gnmagazine.org
E-mail: info@ucg.org
**Canada:** United Church of God–Canada
Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779
Fax: (905) 876-0569 Web site: www.ucg.ca
**Bahamas:** United Church of God
P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566
**Martinique:** Église de Dieu Unie–France
127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France
**Spanish-speaking areas:** Iglesia de Dios Unida
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795
E-mail: info@ucg.org

## EUROPE

**British Isles:** United Church of God
P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England
Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999
Web site: www.goodnews.org.uk
**France:** Église de Dieu Unie–France
127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France
**Germany:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten
Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637
**Italy:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita
Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy
Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573
Web site: www.labuonanotizia.org
E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org
**Netherlands:** P.O. Box 93
2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands
**Scandinavia:** Guds Enade Kyrka
P.O. Box 3535, 111 74 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467 Fax: 0046 0142 10340
E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

## ASIA

**All except Philippines:** United Church of God,
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795
E-mail: info@ucg.org
**Philippines:** P.O. Box 81840
DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines
Phone and fax: +63 82 224-4444
Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444
Web site: www.ucg.org.ph E-mail: info@ucg.org.ph

## AFRICA

**East Africa–Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda:**
United Church of God–East Africa
P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya
E-mail: kenya@ucg.org
Web site: www.ucgeastafrica.org
**Ghana:** P.O. Box 3805, Kumasi, Ghana
E-mail: ghana@ucg.org
**Malawi:** P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi
Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: malawi@ucg.org
**Mauritius:** P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius
E-mail: mauritius@ucg.org
**Nigeria:** United Church of God–Nigeria
P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria
Phone: 01-8113644 Web site: www.ucgnigeria.org
E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org
**South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland:**
United Church of God–Southern Africa
P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone and Fax: 043 748-1694
Web site: www.ucg-rsa.org
**Zambia:** P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia
Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: zambia@ucg.org
**Zimbabwe:** P.O. Box 928
Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe
Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

## PACIFIC REGION

**Australia and Papua New Guinea:**
United Church of God–Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202
Fax: 07 55 202 122 Web site: www.ucg.org.au
E-mail: info@ucg.org.au
**Fiji:** United Church of God
P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva, Fiji
**New Zealand:** United Church of God
P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand
Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763
**Tonga:** United Church of God–Tonga
P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

## ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795
E-mail: info@ucg.org