

The background of the cover is a photograph of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. The image shows several tall, fluted Doric columns supporting the entablature of the temple. The sky is blue with some white clouds. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and edition information in white text.

OMNIBUS I

Biblical and Classical Civilizations

Fourth Edition

OMNIBUS I

OMNIBUS I
Biblical and Classical Civilizations

General Editor **DOUGLAS WILSON**
Managing Editor **G. TYLER FISCHER**
Associate Editor **CARL L. PETTICOFFER**



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For the Detweiler clan, who have brought vision and friendship in equal measure.

—DOUGLAS WILSON

For Emily, whose love, support and longsuffering made this work possible. May your children rise up and call you blessed, adding their voices of praise to mine. *Amore fidelis*.

—G. TYLER FISCHER

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have to be excluded. But if we ever begin to think our children need to be protected “from the Bible,” this should bring us up short. Perhaps we have picked up false notions of holiness somewhere. In short, there is no subject that this curriculum will raise in the minds of seventh-grade students that would not *also* be raised when that student reads through his Bible, cover to cover. It is true that this curriculum has accounts of various murders, or examples of prostitution, or of tyranny from powerful and cruel kings. But we can find all the same things in the book of Judges.

So the issue is not the *presence* of sin, but of the *response* to that sin. What we have sought to do throughout—in the introductory worldview essays, the questions and exercises, and in the teachers’ materials—is provide a guideline for responding to all the various worldviews that men outside of Christ come up with. This program, we believe, will equip the student to see through pretences and lies that other Christian children, who have perhaps been too sheltered, are not able to deal with.

Of course, there is a limit to this, as we have sought to recognize. There *are* certain forms of worldliness and corruption that would overwhelm a student’s ability to handle it, no matter how carefully a parent or teacher was instructing them. And while children differ in what they can handle, in our experience with many students of this age, we believe that the content of this curriculum is well within the capacity of Christian children of this age group. But again, this assumes godly oversight and instruction. The challenge here is two-fold. The rigor of the curriculum can seem daunting, but we have sought to provide direction and balance with regard to the demands of the material. The second concern is the question of false worldviews, paganism and just plain old-fashioned sin, which we have addressed above.

As our students work their way through this material, and in the years of the Omnibus program that will follow,

we want them to walk away with a profound sense of the *antithesis*. What we mean by this is that right after Adam and Eve fell in the Garden, God gave His first messianic promise (Gen. 3:15). But along with this promise, He also said that there would be constant antipathy between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This is what we mean by the antithesis, and we want our students to come to share in that godly antipathy. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 8:13). In every generation, in all movements (whether of armies or philosophies), in all schools of literature, the men and women involved are either obeying God or disobeying Him. They are either trusting Him or they are not trusting Him. All students are learning to love God, or they are not learning to love God.



But when they love and trust Him, they must do so in the face of conflict. Jesus was the ultimate Seed of the woman, and yet when He came down and lived among us, He faced constant opposition from “broods of vipers.” It is not possible to live in this world faithfully without coming into conflict with those who have no desire to live faithfully. The task of every Christian parent bringing children up to maturity in such a world is to do it in *a way that equips*. False protection, precisely because it does not equip, leaves a child defenseless when the inevitable day comes

when that artificial shelter is removed. True protection equips. We do not want to build a fortress for our students to hide in; we want to give them a shield to carry—along with a sword.

Students who have faithfully worked through this course of study will not be suckers for a romanticized view of ancient paganism offered up by Hollywood. They have read Suetonius, and they have worked through a Christian response to true paganism. They are grateful that Christ came into this dark world, and they know *why* they are grateful.

—Douglas Wilson

P R E F A C E

One of the most obvious questions that Christians might ask about a curriculum like this one is, “Why study this stuff?” The question can be asked for different reasons. Perhaps a concerned parent is attracted to the rigor of a “classical and Christian approach,” and yet has thumbed through a couple of the texts and is taken aback by some of the material. “It was this kind of gunk,” he thinks, “that chased us out of the government school.” Or perhaps the question is asked by the student himself when he “hits the wall.” The rigor that is built into this course of study is significant, and about a third of the way through the year, a student might be asking all sorts of pointed questions. “Why are you making me do this?” is likely to be one of them. The student may be asking because of his workload, but if he points to the nature of the material, the question still needs a good answer. It is a good question, and everyone who is involved in teaching this course needs to have the answer mastered.

G.K. Chesterton said somewhere that if a book does not have a wicked character in it, then it is a wicked book. One of the most pernicious errors that has gotten abroad in the Christian community is the error of *sentimentalism*—the view that evil is to be evaded, rather than the more robust Christian view that evil is to be conquered. The Christian believes that evil is there to be fought, the dragon is there to be slain. The sentimentalist believes that evil is to be resented.

My wife and I did not enroll our children in a classical Christian school so that they would never come into contact with sin. Rather, we wanted them there because we wanted to unite with like-minded Christian parents who had covenanted together to deal with the (inevitable) sin in a consistent, biblical manner. We fully expected our children to encounter sin in the classroom, on the playground and in the

curriculum. We also expected that when they encountered it, they would see it dealt with in the way the Bible says sin should be dealt with.

A classical Christian school or a home school following the classical Christian curriculum must never be thought of as an asylum. Rather, this is a time of basic training; it is boot camp. Students are being taught to handle their weapons, and they are being taught this under godly, patient supervision. But in order to learn this sort of response, it is important that students

learn it well. That is, setting up a “straw man” paganism that is easily demolished equips no one. All that would do is impart a false sense of security to the students—until they get to a secular college campus to encounter the real thing. Or, worse yet, if they continue the path into a soft, asylum-style Christian college and then find themselves addressing the marketplace completely unprepared.

If this basic training is our goal, and it is, then we should make clear what one potential abuse of the Omnibus curriculum might be. This curriculum was written and edited with the assumption

that godly oversight and protection would accompany the student through his course of work. It was written with the conviction that children need teachers, flesh and blood teachers, who will work together with them. It was also written with the assumption that many of these teachers need the help and the resources that a program like this can supply. But we also believe that, if a seventh-grader is simply given this material and told to work through it himself, the chances are good that the student will miss the benefit that is available for those who are taught.

The Scriptures do not allow us to believe that a record of sinful behavior, or of sinful corruption, is inherently corrupting. If it were, then there are many stories and accounts in the Bible itself that would



PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Have you ever stopped to think what the President of the United States in the year 2040 is doing right now? What about the next Martin Luther or John Calvin? I'll tell you what I hope they are doing. I hope they just finished reading this sentence!

There is no doubt in my mind that classical Christian education and the rigorous study of the greatest works of Western Civilization is a tool to create leaders like no other—godly leaders who understand that this is God's world, Christ inherited it, and we are to take dominion of it to His glory.

Many have begun down the path of studying this material and have not persevered—in their minds it was too hard, too salacious for Christian ears, too unrealistic, too much to grasp, the books were too old or some other “too.” Be assured, like the Scriptures say in the Parable of the Sower, the work you do will *bear fruit a hundredfold* if you stick with it. In the lives of our own children we have already seen tremendous benefit and really have just barely scratched the surface.

Our goal with this text is to make the work easier for you. This text should make approaching *Omnibus*, and other material not previously encountered, come alive in a way that instills confidence, and it should convey a sense that young students (and teachers) can handle it.

We have done all we could to make this text a stand-alone guide for reading, studying and understanding these great books. One reference book in particular will prove beneficial as a resource for this year as well as the following years. *Western Civilization* by Jackson Spielvogel. If you have previously used our *Veritas Press History and Bible Curriculum*, you will want to keep the flashcards from them handy, too.

May you be blessed as you dig in and study the hand of God at work in the past and prepare for His use of you in the future.

—Marlin Detweiler

ADVISORY TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

In the course of history there has been much fluctuation on what has been deemed age appropriate for young students. And for those of us alive today, there remains great variation as to what is considered age appropriate. The material we have created and the books we have assigned address numerous subjects and ideas that deal with topics (including sex, violence, religious persuasion and a whole host of other ideas) that have been the subject of much discussion of whether they are age appropriate. The judgment we applied in this text has been the same as we apply to our own children.

In the creation of this program we have assumed that it will be used by students in seventh grade and above. Furthermore, we have assumed that there is no part of the Bible deemed inappropriate to discuss with a seventh-grade student. Therefore, the material assumes that the student knows what sex is, that he understands the existence of violence, that he understands there are theological and doctrinal differences to be addressed and that he has the maturity to discern right and wrong.

The worldview we hold and from which we write is distinctly protestant and best summarized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The Bible is our only ultimate and infallible rule of faith and practice.

We encourage you to become familiar with the material that your students will be covering in this program in order to avoid problems where you might differ with us on these matters.

INTRODUCTION

Knowing *why* we ought to study the books in *Omnibus I: Biblical and Classical Civilizations* is a good first step. It leads, of course, to another monumental question: “*How* are we going to do this?” While from the outside the “Great Books” might seem imposing (stack them up and just look at the height of the pile!), the *Veritas Press Omnibus Curriculum* is going to enable you to unlock the treasure chest of ideas contained in these works. This curriculum is going to make it not only doable, but enjoyable.

Before you start, however, there are a few terms that you need to understand clearly. First among them is the term *omnibus*. This Latin term means “all encompassing” or “everything.” So in a very loose sense, the Omnibus is where we talk about everything. All of the important ideas are set on the table to explore and understand. In a more technical sense, however, this Omnibus focuses our attention on the ideas, arguments and expressions of the Western Canon which have also become known as the *Great Books* of Western Civilization. Thus, Omnibus is the study of the Great Books, leading to the analysis of the *Great Ideas*—the ideas that have shaped Western Civilization.

This definition leads, of course, to the next set of definitions that we must consider. What are the Great Books and the Great Ideas? Even though all these concepts are linked, they can be distinguished.



Simply put, the Great Books are those books that have guided and informed thinking people in Western Civilization. They are the books that have stood the test of time. They come from many sources, starting with the Hebrews and Greeks and extending to their Roman, European and colonial heirs. These books represent the highest theological and philosophical contemplations, the most accurate historical record and the most brilliant literary tradition that have come down to us from our forefathers.¹ The use of the term *Great Books* today has been linked to the work of the late Mortimer Adler, University of Chicago professor and editor of the *Great Books of Western Civilization Series* for Encyclopedia Britannica. The set of books which he edited has been a great source of light, and his work an inspiration, to those involved in this project.

Adler, however, did not compile the list of the Great Books for *Omnibus I*. This curriculum is produced by Protestants, so you might note that we sprinkle in less Aristotle and Aquinas and more Calvin and Lewis. We consulted a number of sources, and then, in good Western style, argued about which books to include. On most lists there was great overlap. No one omits Plato, Aristotle, Augustine or Aquinas, for example.

This book is the first of six in the entire curriculum. We use this material and recommend using it for seventh grade. It can certainly be used by older students but probably not younger ones. The completed curriculum looks something like this:

TITLE	PERIOD	YEARS	EMPHASIS
Omnibus I	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 70	Logic
Omnibus II	Medieval	70–1563	Logic
Omnibus III	Modern	1563–Present	Logic
Omnibus IV	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 180	Rhetoric
Omnibus V	Medieval	180–1563	Rhetoric
Omnibus VI	Modern	1563–Present	Rhetoric

The list of books in the Ancient and Medieval years is fairly settled. The list of modern period books that we use is more flexible, but we are confident that our choices will stand the test of time. Thus the list of books that we use is what we are calling the Great Books.

A distinction must be made at this point between Primary and Secondary books. The list of Primary Books for each year is what might be termed the

traditional Great Books. For this seventh-grade year, *Omnibus I*, you will find authors like Homer, Plato and Sophocles on the list. The Secondary Books are ones that give balance to our reading (balance in the general areas of Theology, History and Literature).² In the secondary list you will find works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Holiness of God*.

All of these books inform us on the *Great Ideas*, which are, simply put, the main thoughts discussed in the Great Books. In a very real sense books become great because of their wise, timeless and effective dealing with great ideas. There are certain ideas that recur or cause great and intense thinking. They set the path for orthodoxy and for further growth in understanding. These ideas affect all areas of life. They include concepts like the Trinity or ask questions like “What is the nature of the soul?” These questions have caused an immense amount of thinking, and we are well served by seeking to gain understanding in these areas.

But how are we to gain access to these ideas? This happens as we join in what is sometimes called the *Great Conversation*. Perhaps the most wondrous aspect of the Great Books is that they are inescapably related. They must not be viewed as a pile of unrelated things, but as a long, continual search for truth or an extended discussion. These books speak to each other. They answer each other.

An example will be helpful. At the time of the Reformation, in the early sixteenth century, many ideas were being discussed and many people were divided. One scholar who had been critical of the Roman Church was Desiderius Erasmus. He was perhaps the most educated scholar in the history of the West and was responsible for the production of the edition of the Greek New Testament that sparked biblical scholarship in his day. While he had much to criticize about the abuses of the Popes of his day, Erasmus was not going to leave the Roman communion. To distance himself from Protestantism he penned his work, *On the Freedom of the Will*, spelling out his beliefs on this topic. This book, however, elicited a response from Martin Luther, who wrote his classic work, *On the Bondage of the Will*. The two minds were firing ideas and assertions back and forth at each other. The rest of the world watched this battle and learned. A Frenchman named John Calvin followed in Luther’s path and took some of Luther’s

ideas even further. The Counter-Reformation was the Roman Catholic response, hardening the position of the Roman Church. In the eighteenth century John Wesley, credited for founding the Methodist Church, sought some middle ground. As you might know, vigorous history-making discussion ensued. But this discussion stretches back into the ancient past. It begins with the pens of Moses (well, maybe not a pen for him) and unknown scribes writing about Gilgamesh. It is augmented by the poets and philosophers who set the agenda for future discussion as they sat around and discussed ideas in Athens.³ This discussion poured out of the minds of men like Augustine, who battled Donatists and Pelagians in his day. It saw the great schools of the Middle Ages take positions in debates and dueling works.

The pattern of entering into this discussion is to listen, learn and then to speak. Just as in the past, you will be made ready to enter into this discussion by reading the discussion from the beginning, and then you will next learn by engaging in this ongoing discussion. When you finish the *Omnibus*, you will be equipped to stand on the shoulders of your

forefathers, looking further, reaching higher and adding to the wisdom of the past. Most well-educated men in the distant past knew this material. They understood the value of knowing it. And they were humble enough to know the process, that is, that they needed to earn the right to be heard. Today, many think all opinions are equally valid and equally important.

Sadly, in our day, few have listened so as to be prepared to speak. The common phenomenon of ignoring virtually all of this knowledge of the past is perhaps the greatest tragedy of the “modern” world. In our great haste to move “forward” we have divorced ourselves from this massive amount of wisdom that is a treasure of inestimable value. Modern man gropes for answers that exist and are his by right, but he refuses to learn from those who went before him, and in failing to do so, makes the same mistakes all over again.

The goal or destination of this course is to learn to reason well and communicate winsomely. The Great Books are the path along which we are going to run to reach that destination. There are any number of paths to reach this goal. We think that this is the best path.



What better way is there to learn to argue and speak or write than to study the greatest arguments and the most winsome rhetoric? Who could be better teachers than Moses, Jesus, Dante, Virgil and Milton?

As a distinctly Christian program, however, we have to consider our destination, our path and the manner in which we run in light of God's revelation. We do not learn logic and rhetoric simply to become more competent than our peers. We do it to take dominion in the name of Jesus Christ. We do not choose the path of the Great Books without recognizing that all of the material that we come into contact with along that path must be sifted and evaluated by the inscripturated word of God. Nothing can be allowed to roam free outside of Christ. Every thought must be taken captive, every writer critiqued by Christ.

This program aims to cultivate and produce students who are culturally literate. This means becoming connected to and knowledgeable of the great traditions and thoughts of our forefathers. This should always be done simply out of consideration of the Fifth Commandment, which tells us to honor our father and mother. Our culture has rejected this eminently sensible idea in favor of the novelty of constant rebellion, which comes with the obvious punishment of reinventing the wheel every generation. This sort of insanity continues to infect many, and our culture finds itself lost in the woods.

Finally, you should know a little about the people heading up this project. The publishers are Marlin and Laurie Detweiler, the founders of Veritas Press. They have been involved in the genesis of this and many other products in the realm of classical Christian education and have been instrumental in the founding of both The Geneva School in Orlando, Florida and Veritas Academy in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The editors are Douglas Wilson and G. Tyler Fischer. Douglas is the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho, and Senior Fellow of Theology at New St. Andrew's College. Among his many books is *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, which is the foundational work of the resurgent classical Christian schooling movement, and he founded Logos School in Moscow, Idaho. Ty is the headmaster at Veritas Academy in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

During his tenure there the Omnibus was begun and has continued to develop. Ty is also the author of the *Veritas Press Bible Curriculum* for grammar school.

Many writers from across the country have worked to produce the material contained in this program. Some of particular note are Dr. Peter Leithart, the pastor of Trinity Church, Moscow, Idaho, and a Senior Fellow of Theology and Literature at New St. Andrews; and Douglas Jones, Senior Fellow of Philosophy at New St. Andrews. Many other notable men and women have made contributions and have produced this material.

We hope that God blesses your work in Omnibus, and we pray that He would help all of us to remember much that never should have been forgotten.
Kyrie Eleison.

—G. Tyler Fischer

Ash Wednesday, A.D. 2005

NOTES

- 1 This certainly is not meant to denigrate any other literary tradition in the world. This Omnibus goes out of its way to introduce books from other traditions as they have become meaningful in the West. This Omnibus, however, is produced by heirs of the Christian West for use by the future heirs of that glorious tradition, so we look to the West. We also do believe that it is the most glorious of traditions, and would invite those skeptical to simply take, read and compare. We also believe that the first step in appreciating other cultures—which is a common theme today—is to first appreciate our own.
- 2 To seek to maintain balance between the three disciplines that are covered comprehensively, each book has received a value of ten points that has been divided among the disciplines of Theology, History and Literature. So, the *Odyssey* is rated 2.2.6 (i.e., its ten points are divided into a score of 2 for Theology, 2 for History and 6 for Literature). This score, although somewhat artificial, allows us to maintain a balance in the subject matter and to produce grades for each of these three disciplines (Theology, History and Literature) which is particularly important for transcripts. See the Teacher's Edition for more information on grading. The entire listing of books with their respective point values is included in Appendix 1.
- 3 It is interesting that the play *Clouds* by Aristophanes makes fun of Socrates. So, the great minds not only debated each other, they teased each other as well.

GENESIS

We live in a world shattered,

Each step reechoes the cracking of broken glass,
Shards removed at first from aching feet
but then . . . finally . . . tolerated,
Longing to recover the tranquil garden of gentle grass.

Some days you might not feel it, but I bet that often you do. I call it “the longing.” Often, it is felt most on days that are either best or worst. It happens when the world seems almost perfect (like a warm day at the shore with tall waves to ride and lavender sunsets), or when horror surrounds you (like hearing of the death of a friend). You long for the day at the beach to never end. You long for your friend to rise from the casket. You long for . . . it.

Many have explained “the longing” in different ways. My favorite explanation came from the poet Dante Alighieri. He said that winds blew out from the top of the Mountain of Purgatory on the opposite side of the world and made us long for “it.” (Don’t get me wrong, there is no mountain in the Pacific like this, but I still like the story.) The Garden of Eden was set at the top of this mountain. These winds carried the scent of the Earthly Paradise out over the world.

Each night this brought back to us memories of a land that only a few humans had ever seen but that all of us somehow yearn for, the land of Eden. This sweet smell made us long to go back into the garden with God, with peace. This is what we long for in the best and worst of times.

Many centuries ago our first father began a sad journey, the journey of his exile. His path leads through the years to you . . . to today. As our father first stepped out of the garden into a world cursed and fighting against him, he knew he had shattered the world.

He carried with him, however, one glimmer of hope. He was promised that someday, Someone, a Seed would come and open the gates of the garden again. He could go back home again then. This is where the longing started.

You stand at the beginning of another journey. Before you is the first book of the Bible, Genesis. In it and the many other books you will be studying are wonders that you can not now imagine. Come along for the journey. Our destination is set. We hope to see our ancestral home once more, but first we have to figure out how we got here.



In this detail from the fresco in the Sistine Chapel, we look back to the dawn of Time and see the creation of the sun and moon.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Author and Context

Both Jewish and Christian scholars have historically maintained that Moses was the author of Genesis. While this has been questioned by modern scholarship, Mosaic authorship or editorship is quite reasonable. First, Moses was certainly capable of writing the book, educated as he was in all the learning of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Second, the text of Genesis is structured around ten sections¹ which begin with the Hebrew word *toledoth*, “These are the generations of . . .” (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). It is likely that these were written sources which the author edited and compiled into their present form. As a prince in Egypt, Moses would have had access to such written records, whether among the Egyptians or the Israelites. Third, and most significant, both Jesus and the apostles assume that Moses was the author (e.g., Matt. 8:4; Mark 7:10; John 1:17; 7:22; Acts 3:22; Rom. 10:5; etc.). Since Jesus was omniscient, that is He knew everything and the apostles wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit, the conclusion that Moses was the author follows quite naturally.²

[Abraham welcomes heavenly visitors to a meal.](#)



Growing up in the Egyptian court during the New Kingdom in Ancient Egypt, Moses (c. 1526–1406 B.C.) would have been exposed to one of the most sophisticated, wealthy, and powerful kingdoms the earth had yet seen. Under the tutelage of his adoptive mother, most likely the powerful Hatshepsut, Moses could have become a major player in Egyptian history. However, he considered the “reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:26) and numbered himself with the people of God, leading them out of bondage, revealing to them the precious law of God, and bringing them to the brink of the Promised Land.

Significance

Genesis is a masterpiece. Using a wide variety of literary genres (writing styles) and techniques, Genesis successfully acquaints the sons of Israel with their fathers and enables them to see both their faithfulness and weakness. As a result, it enables the Israelites to depart from Egypt knowing their role in God’s plan. Despite their own weakness, God would use them to bless the nations if they would but love and serve Him. The same holds true today for us who are the sons of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:16, 17).

The word *Genesis* means beginnings. Nearly all ideas, events, and themes developed later in the Bible have their beginning in this book. The frequent references to God as Creator (e.g., Ps. 8; 19; Isa. 40:28; Rom. 1:25) drive us back to Genesis. The ubiquitous or ever present nature of sin which prompts the fall of Israel again and again (Deut. 27:9-26; Judg. 2:11-23; 2 Kings 17:7-20; 24:1-5) receives its explanation in the Fall. Our hope for deliverance from corruption bases itself upon the repeated promises in Genesis—the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head (3:15), the Descendant of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (12:3; 22:18), the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (22:13,14), and the Ruler who would arise from the tribe of Judah (49:8-12).

The significance of Genesis is not limited to the biblical text. Throughout history, Genesis has shaped the thinking and imagination of millions. Writers have imitated its stories. Scientists have used and abused the creation account. Artists and musicians have sought to capture its passion and emotion. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Genesis.

Main Characters

The major character who pervades Genesis is the Triune God of heaven and earth, Yahweh. In the beginning He speaks the world into existence, creating all things “very good.” After the Fall, He repeatedly evaluates the works of the sons of men. Eventually He chooses a people for Himself and preserves them from certain destruction despite their foolishness and treachery.

The other characters are divisible according to the two main sections of the book. Chapters 1 through 11 discuss the early history of the world, known as primeval history. During this period the major figures are Adam and Eve, the first couple, Cain and Abel, the first siblings, and Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the founders of a new humanity following the flood.

The second section of the book, chapters 12 through 50, chronicles the beginning of God’s redemptive (the way He would save a people) program through a single family. The three patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—figure largely in this story. Associated with them are a variety of other fascinating characters. With Abraham, we see his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, his wife’s maid-servant Hagar, his child Ishmael, and his promised son Isaac. With Isaac we witness his wife Rebekah and his sons Esau and Jacob. With Jacob, renamed Israel, we meet his brother Esau, his uncle Laban, his wives Leah and Rachel, and his twelve children, the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Noteworthy among them are Judah and Joseph who play pivotal roles in the last portion of the book.

Summary and Setting

Interestingly enough, Genesis has two different historical settings. First, it has the original setting in which the events occurred: the Fertile Crescent and Egypt from creation until the death of Joseph around 1805 B.C., the lion’s share of the material spanning from the call of Abraham in 2091 B.C. (12:4) to the death of Jacob around 1859 B.C. (49:33ff). Second, it has the setting in which it was finally written: Israel was either still in the land of Egypt or had just departed under the leadership of Moses and the time was around 1446 B.C.

The book of Genesis treats its story like a chef peeling an onion. Starting with a broad focus upon the world at large, the book gradually, by removing one layer after another, highlights the selection of the twelve tribes of Israel as God’s chosen people. The book begins with the universe as it bursts upon the scene, new and fresh from its Creator’s hands but soon twisted by man’s rebellion. This rebellion reaps horrendous consequences. Brother is set against brother and in time all men rise up in rebellion against God. Yet in the midst of this rebellion, God works to fulfill His promise to bring forth a Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent (Gen. 3:15). He delivers Noah and his family from judgment and brings them safely through the deluge. God then covenants with Noah, promising never again to destroy the earth in such a fashion but to provide a stable environment in which His Gospel promise would be fulfilled.

As the book progresses, its focus narrows step by step. God’s promised deliverance will not come through Ham and Japheth but through Shem. Yet it will not come through all of Shem’s descendants but only through those of Terah, the father of Abraham. And to Abraham the gospel promise is reissued, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3; cf. Gal. 3:8).

But God has not finished narrowing the scope of his redemptive purpose. Not all of Abraham’s children shall be incorporated into God’s plan—Ishmael is passed over and the story focuses upon Isaac, whose life is redeemed by the ram which God provides in the thicket. Then Esau is left behind and the story of Jacob becomes paramount. Jacob is renamed Israel and his sons, the sons of Israel, become the twelve tribes through whom God’s redemptive purposes for the world will be fulfilled.

The sons of Israel, however, fail to perceive their role in the plan of God. They quarrel and complain and treat their brother Joseph treacherously, selling him into slavery in Egypt. But God’s promises cannot be thwarted. He uses their jealousy and spite to change their character and preserve them in the land of Egypt; they meant it for evil, but God intended it for good (50:20). And so the book ends, awaiting the fulfillment of God’s promise to lead His people to the promised land (50:24, 25; cf. 15:12–16).

Worldview

J.R.R. Tolkien's superb *The Lord of the Rings* epic never fails to stir my imagination. It has spawned whole industries. Book stores are lined with "Tolkien like" material (much of which deserves as little attention as it receives). Hollywood produced three blockbuster movies based on Tolkien's epic. When these movies came out they caused quite a stir, and many people were so inspired by them that they actually picked up the books and began to read. Or, better yet, perhaps they picked up the books first and read them before they went to see the movies.

But imagine for a moment that you did watch the first movie and were so inspired by what you saw that you picked up *The Fellowship of the Ring* and began to read Tolkien's tale. Let us pretend that you were so excited that you decided to skip the prologue with its extended discourse on the history of hobbits and jump right into Chapter 1. You would, of course, immediately bump into Bilbo Baggins. And as you read,

you would find that Bilbo is not your typical hobbit. It seems that Bilbo has had some odd adventures, has actually been out of the Shire and is now fabulously rich as a result. You pause in your reading. "I'd like to know about that adventure," you say to yourself. Suppressing this desire, however, you press on—you want to read about Sauron and Isengard. But the desire continues to increase as tantalizing details from the past leak out—a magic ring, a wizard, frozen trolls, the House of Elrond, and the son of Glain. You get a nagging feeling that you are missing an important piece of the puzzle. "Will I never have any peace?" you ask yourself. So you decide to glance at the Prologue. And there you find mention of an earlier book, *The Hobbit*, where many of these tantalizing details are discussed. Heaving a great sigh, you decide to become a true Tolkien aficionado. You close *The Fellowship of the Ring* and go to the store where you pick up a copy of *The Hobbit* and you begin to read at the beginning.

The point of this vignette is to illustrate that the first book of a series often sets the stage for the entire set. Frequently it reveals key information without which the other books are cryptic or make no sense. What is the basic story line or plot? Who are the major characters? The heroes? The villains? What problems do the characters face? How will they overcome these problems? The answers to these and other questions are often provided in the first book.

So it is with the Bible. The book of Genesis sets the stage for the entire book—both Old and New Testaments and for all of life. Without an understanding of Genesis the reader of Deuteronomy, the Psalms, or Matthew is going to be at a loss to understand fully what is being discussed. On the contrary, the man or woman who knows Genesis will both understand and enjoy the latter books much more.

To understand this "introduction" to the Bible and to all of life, one must understand the main characters and the main problem that faces these characters.

The reward for this grand epic, however, is unlike reading the *Rings* trilogy or *The Hobbit*. Much more is at stake; much more can be gained because this epic is the story of your race. The great problem set forth in Genesis is your great problem, and to grasp God's answer to this problem at Calvary you must understand Genesis.



Scripture tells of a flaming sword outside of the garden to keep out Adam and Eve.

God Is Personal

The great main character of this story is the Lord God of heaven and earth, Who is unlike any other being.

One of the interesting aspects of God's personhood is that He interacts with Himself. This indicates that God is Triune—He is three persons in one nature. While the full revelation of the Triune character of God comes in the New Testament, Genesis contains at least two clear allusions to this central biblical doctrine. First, within the first three verses of Chapter 1 we have all three persons of the Trinity mentioned: God, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God. Second, God refers to Himself in the plural, "Let Us make man . . ." (1:26), "Behold the man has become like one of Us . . ." (3:22), "Let Us go down . . ." (11:7). Some have argued that this use of the plural is the "plural of majesty" as when a queen says, "We would like crumpets with our tea." Others have argued that this is a reference to other heavenly beings such as angels. However, in the light of later revelation it seems that the most reasonable explanation is that this is a foreshadowing of the Triune character of God.

Genesis not only reveals the Triune nature of God, it also assumes that there is only one true God. In the context of Egyptian culture and belief, the opening chapter of Genesis is revolutionary. The Egyptians associated the various portions of creation with a multitude of different deities who each had their respective sphere(s) of authority. Genesis overthrows this entire way of

CREATION MYTHS

Many in academia refer to Genesis as a creation myth. While the Bible is not "mythological," there are creation myths from vastly diverse cultures and civilizations.

The Sumerians held that the primeval sea existed first and within that the heaven and the earth were formed. The stars, planets, sun and moon were formed between heaven and earth. The Babylonian story is similar: "When in the height heaven was not named, and the earth beneath did not yet bear a name, and the primeval Apsu, who begat them, and chaos, Tiamut, the mother of them both their waters were mingled together, and no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen; when of the gods none had been called into being, and none bore a name, and no destinies were ordained; then were created the gods in the midst of heaven . . ."

There are several creation myths in Hinduism. One myth tells of Brahma sitting in a lotus flower, floating and tossing on the sea. He lifted up his arms and calmed the wind and the ocean. Then he split the lotus flower into three. He stretched one part into the heavens, another part into the earth, and with the third part he created the skies.

In ancient Egypt several versions of creation emerged. In one there was the swirling watery chaos from which arose Atum, the primordial god represented in the form of a human and a serpent. He created the gods, then men were created from his tears. In another myth, the god Ptah is the supreme deity and creator of Atum: "He who made all and created the gods . . . who gave birth to the gods, and from whom every thing came forth, foods, provisions, divine offerings, all good things."

There have been many reports from missionaries in the last century that pre-literate tribes often have "sacred narratives" which are quite similar to, and provide a kind of echo for, the truth of Biblical creation.



In Hinduism, Brahma is the supreme god whose essence pervades the entire universe.

thinking by tracing the origin of everything to the creative power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The gods of Egypt, Moses declares in Genesis 1, are mere idols (cf. Ps. 115:1-8).

God is Sovereign

Like all good epics, the history of the world has a producer and director.

As the Creator of all, the God of Genesis is also the Lord of all, or Sovereign. This means, first, that God is distinctly different from His creation. While God has existed from eternity, the world began to exist when God called it into being. God created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing (cf. Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3). While God is not dependent on anything for His own existence, all of creation depends on Him.

God's sovereignty extends over all the earth. The God of Scripture is immanently involved in His creation, not passively and distantly watching all that transpires. The creation is His and He does with it as He sees fit. He destroys the earth with a flood, He confuses the tongues at Babel, He destroys Sodom and Gomorrah, He turns Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, He chooses Jacob rather than Esau. The list could go on, but the point is the same: God acts in the world as He sees fit.

God's sovereignty would be frightening if it were not simultaneously revealed that God is holy, righteous, and good. His sovereignty is the power to do all those things which He wants to do. Of course, all that He wants to do is good and right because He is Goodness and Righteousness. When Abraham was informed of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he feared for the lives of the righteous within the city and asked, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" The ensuing conversation between God and Abraham reveals that God does indeed deal justly and mercifully with sinners.

God's goodness, however does not make Him too lax and indulgent to visit calamity on his enemies. Cain is cast out for murder, the earth is flooded because of man's wickedness, languages are confused because of pride, Sodom and Gomorrah are incinerated for

their debauchery, and two of Judah's sons are killed for their "evil."

While God condemns ungodliness, He promises to bless those who love Him and keep His commandments. God's treatment of those who serve Him is in sharp contrast to pagan deities who may or may not be favorably disposed to those who seek their aid. The gods are foremost man's enemies. In contrast, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob always works for the good of those who love Him and keep His commandments. He never punishes the godly for following in His paths. Thus, He takes Enoch to himself, He preserves the life of Noah, He rewards the faithfulness of Abraham, and He blesses the integrity of Joseph.

God is Covenantal

This God who is unique and sovereign is also love.

The reason God works for the good of His people is because He loves them. This love is demonstrated by the fellowship God has with His people. First, He communicates with them. He does not leave them ignorant of Himself and His standards; He reveals Himself via direct revelation, blessings, dreams, prophecies, angelic visitations. Second, He establishes a clearly defined relationship (or covenant) with them, promising to bless them if they will but love and serve Him but threatening to chastise and even destroy them should they rebel. We see this in His relationship with Adam (2:15-17), in His covenant with Noah and his offspring (9:8-17), and in His covenant with Abraham and his descendants (17:1-14).

In His covenant with Adam³ God gives clearly defined privileges, expectations, and consequences. He grants that Adam and Eve can eat from any tree in the garden, presumably even from the tree of life. However, God restricts them from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warns them that if they eat of its fruit, they "will surely die." Adam and Eve despise the Word of the Lord and listen to the word of the serpent. As a result, God demonstrates His faithfulness—He fulfills His word of judgment, and mankind becomes subject to death and decay.

After the Fall, God sets in motion a plan to save His ruined creation. His plan, much like Tolkien's *Hobbit*, involves some strange choices. We might expect God to immediately wipe out the

So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

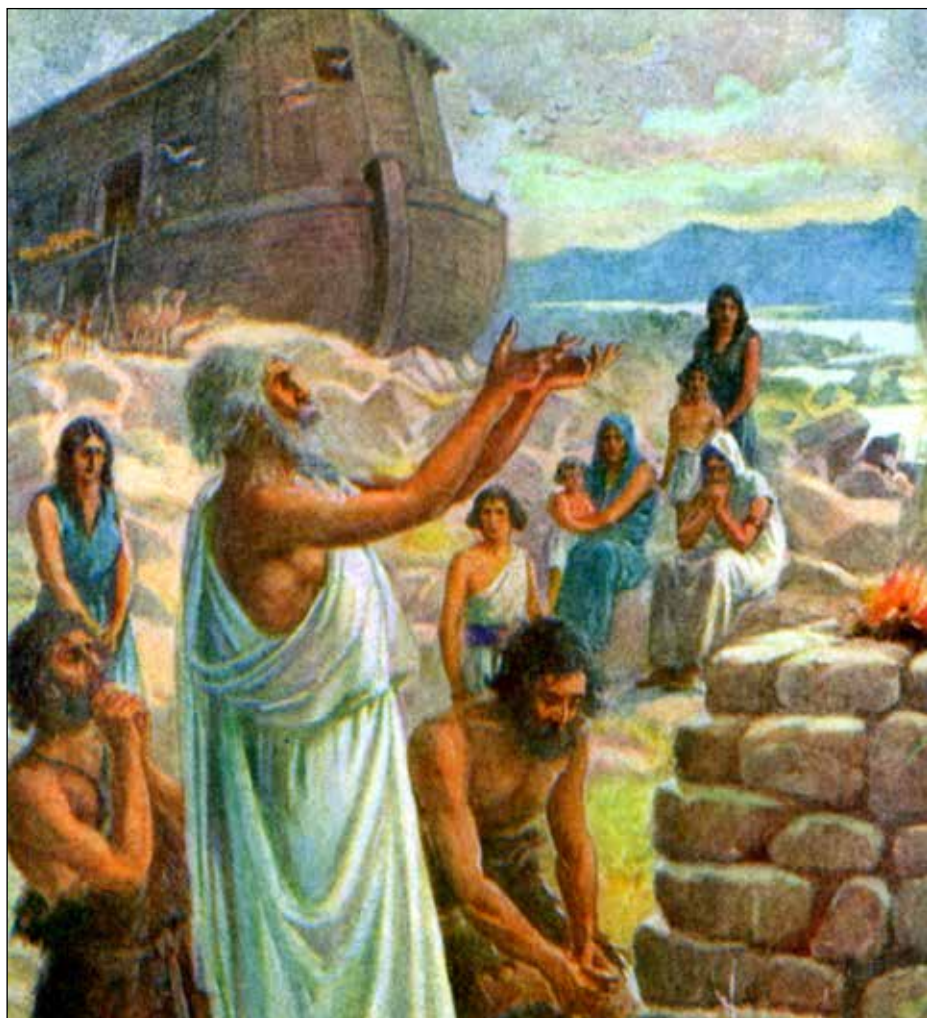
wicked or raise up some army of the righteous. God often, however, chooses the few and the obscure, just as Tolkien calls on the frightened and apprehensive Bilbo to do great things and to set in motion the actions far beyond his imagination. So God looks at times to single families like Noah and his children. God calls Abraham to be the father of many nations. Ironically, when God first comes to Abraham he is an idol worshipper who has been unable to have any children. What irony!

God's covenant with Noah likewise stresses God's faithfulness. While we are accustomed to think of the regularity of the seasons as a matter of scientific necessity, Genesis presents this regularity as a testimony of God's faithfulness. Why does the sun rise each morning? Why does winter turn to spring? Why do birds fly? Apples fall from trees? Why do cows moo? The answer, according to Genesis, is because God is faithful—He orchestrates both the mundane and the spectacular events in the world (cf. Ps. 104; Col. 1:17).

God's covenant with Abraham shines brighter than the sun. Again and again God manifests His determination to fulfill His promises in the life of Abraham and His descendants. Nowhere is this portrayed more forcefully than in Genesis 15. It was a common practice in the Ancient Near East to establish covenants by slaying an animal, cutting the animal in two and then placing the two pieces opposite one another. The participants of the covenant would then walk through the pieces as they recited the terms of the covenant. The action symbolized the covenanters' vow either to fulfill the terms of the covenant or to become like the divided animal—dead. The remarkable part of Genesis 15 is that, though there are two parties to the covenant, God and Abraham, only one of them walks through the pieces.

God, symbolized by the flaming pot, passes through the pieces and thus declares to Abraham—either I will fulfill my promise to grant you a son or I will die. The latter of course is impossible. What follows? God will certainly grant a son. What a testimony of God's faithfulness!⁴

This testimony continues throughout Genesis as God fulfills His promises despite the foibles, trickery, and treachery of men. He blesses the faithful efforts of His people and makes them successful. Likewise, God turns the evil actions of His own people to *their* eventual good. While not excusing sin, Genesis emphasizes that God is faithful and does whatever is necessary to fulfill His promises.



Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

God is Merciful

As in Tolkien's epic where the weaknesses of even a hobbit like Bilbo is eventually unmasked, the biblical characters prove that they are sinners in need of grace. During his adventure, as you might remember, Bilbo finds a "precious" magic ring. Eventually, he begins to fall under its powers, and we see his weakness. In the same manner, the biblical heroes all have feet of clay. Noah falls into drunkenness. Sarah laughs at God's promise of an heir. Abraham seeks to fulfill God's promise in his own strength by fathering Ishmael. Isaac tries to bless Esau instead of Jacob. The patriarchs even sell their brother, Joseph, into slavery. All are in need of mercy.

Genesis emphasizes the mercy of God alongside His covenantal faithfulness. Though Adam and Eve rebel against Him, He does not completely disown them but promises to deliver them from the craft of the serpent (3:15), provides them with clothing to cover their shame and symbolize their forgiveness (3:21), and expels them from the garden lest they live forever in their fallen state (3:22–24). Though God destroys the world in a great deluge, He "remembers" (8:1) Noah and delivers Him. Though Sarai is brought into the harem of Pharaoh, God delivers her and preserves her to bear the promised child (12:10–20). The God of Genesis is a God who delights to show mercy.



Isaac is shown mercy and a ram is given for the sacrifice to God.

Man Reflects the Image of God

The other main character in Genesis is mankind. Man begins his time on earth as a true and righteous reflector of God's glory. Man is like a mirror reflecting back to God the wonder of His own glorious love.

Originally, man was made in the image of God. What is he as the image of God? First, he is personal. Just as God speaks, acts and judges, so man speaks, acts and judges. He has the capacity to think and reason. He can analyze and assess.

Second, like God, man is initially sovereign, but in a limited way. He is sovereign, first, in the sense that he is a mini-creator. Many creatures are like God in this way. Beavers make dams; birds make nests; bumble bees make honey. But man has the unique ability to create, not simply things that he needs, but frivolous things—things which have no apparent link to his needs—bookshelves, video games, sculptures, and Oreos. The reason man can and should create such things is because God did. God did not need the universe; He created it because He wanted to. It delighted Him. And just as there is a fundamental distinction between God and the universe, there is also a distinction between the things man makes and man himself.⁵

Man is also sovereign because God has invested man with authority over the creatures of the earth.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea' And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea . . .'" (1:26, 28).

Like God, man is covenantal. God created man to live not in isolation from but in relation to God and other creatures. Man always lives *coram Deo*, before the face of God. God walks in the garden and finds Adam when he is trying to cover his sin (3:8–11). God "comes down" to see what the men of a particular region are doing

(11:7; 18:21). All men are in a covenantal relationship with God. Some men acknowledge this relationship, and others choose to suppress it (e.g., 19:9 cf. Rom. 1:18–32), but everyone is accountable to God. Man also lives in relationship with other people. In the opening chapters of Genesis, the covenant of marriage is created by God as a perpetual statute (2:24). Sons are identified in relation to their fathers and nations in relation to their father, or patriarch (10:1ff). Man is responsible to see that justice is upheld and to hold perpetrators of injustice, notably murder, accountable (9:6). Man always exists in covenantal relation with other people—in the family, the church, and the state. Third, Adam himself bore a special covenantal relationship to the entire creation. Adam was appointed by God as the head of creation. When Adam sinned against the Lord, the earth was plunged into ruin and decay and all of Adam’s descendants were born in a state of moral corruption. In other words, man is born into sin and born a sinner.

Man is a Distorted Reflection

Early in the story of Genesis, however, Adam, the righteous mirror reflecting God’s glory, is shattered by sin. As a sinner man no longer perfectly bears the image of God, but he still bears God’s image.

This fall into sin creates the great problem for the human race. Adam was created “very good.” Sin, however, made man love evil and commit sin. For now, because he is created in the image of God, there are certain things which man is but other things he ought to be but is not.

Man ought to be holy, righteous, and good. God created man to joyfully receive His commands and obey them. He told Adam and Eve to abstain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they disobeyed, He visited them with death and cast them out of the garden. He demanded that they obey.

This expectation of obedience recurs again and again in Genesis. When God looked down upon the earth prior to the Flood, He “saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and . . . the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved

in His heart” (6:5, 6). As a result, He judges man for his disobedience with the great deluge. God expected that His law would be obeyed. However, as a result of the Fall, man no longer had the capacity to do good on his own initiative. Following the Flood, God declares that “the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (8:21). By nature man ought to be holy, righteous and good, but he is not.



“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”

Also man ought to be faithful both to God and to other men. Just as God is faithful to fulfill his covenantal obligations and promises, man ought to fulfill his. Sadly, this does not happen. Beginning in the opening chapters of Genesis, man turns against his sovereign Lord. Although God created man to live in fellowship with Him, man rejected this relationship. As a result, man’s covenantal faithfulness to other men is also undermined. Isaac endeavors to avoid the Word of the Lord and give the blessing to Esau, forcing Rebekah and Jacob to resort to trickery in order to fulfill God’s prophecy. Laban treacherously betrays Jacob, forcing him to work for seven years and then failing to give Rachel in fulfillment of his promise. By nature, therefore, man is a covenant breaker, always with

respect to God and frequently with respect to other men.

Finally, man ought to be merciful just as God is merciful. God extends grace to those who are undeserving or weak. Ought not his creatures then do the same? But in Genesis we learn that this is not the case. Jealous of Joseph's favor in the eyes of their father, the sons of Israel plot to kill their brother. Their mercy consists in a decision not to kill their innocent sibling but to sell him into slavery to some Midianite traders. This was their idea of mercy! The book is full of examples of man's cruelty to men. By nature man ought to be merciful, but he is not.

Man is a Restored Image-Bearer

Sméagol—
or Gollum—
from Tolkien's
epic *The Lord
of the Rings*

The problem of sin must be solved and the shattered mirror of man must be restored. Fortunately, Genesis does not leave us with

what man ought to be by nature but is not. It leads us on to what man can be by grace. This basic distinction is set up in the garden, when God establishes a dichotomy between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman. The seed of the serpent are those who build up the kingdom of Satan and rebellious man. The Seed of the woman is ultimately Christ and also, in Him, those who build up the kingdom of God and redeemed man.

This redemption follows a basic pattern. First, God extends his grace to a man. Second, He speaks a word to him, expecting that he will receive His word and believe it. Third, the man responds by approaching him

via blood sacrifice as an acknowledgement of his sin (this pattern can be seen as early as Genesis 4 with Abel). Finally, the faithful man demonstrates his faith and gratitude by living in obedience to God's law.

This pattern is evident throughout Genesis: *See Chart 1.*

Genesis sets the stage for the greatest epic, the real history of the world in which God redeems Adam's fallen race through Christ. God's story sets the stage for all future history. It also sets the pattern for all great stories throughout history. As we recall Tolkien's *Hobbit*, we see that he echoes Genesis in many ways. The insignificant, like Bilbo of Bag End, are called to become great players in the history of their imaginary world. This, of course, repeats the pattern of the patriarchs, who are called to important roles in the history of God's saving plan.

The Hobbit also leaves us with the same sense as Genesis. Both end leaving us in a state of hope and expectation mixed with foreboding. What will become of the Ring? What will happen to Bilbo? We haven't seen the last of Gollum, have we? Now, we are ready to dive into the *Fellowship* with new understanding. In a similar way, Genesis leaves us with the expectation that God will bring about great things through the family of Abraham. We hope that we will again enter the garden. We long for the Seed of the woman to appear. This expectation, however, is mixed with foreboding of coming slavery and the fact that the problems of the Fall have still left the world in pieces as we leave the book. God's original creative act has been distorted and corrupted, but God Himself has not been thwarted.

—Stuart W. Bryan

For Further Reading

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Spielvogel, Jackson J. *Western Civilization*. Eighth Edition. Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth, 2012. 1–35.

Veritas Press Bible Cards: Genesis through Joshua. Lancaster, Pa.: Veritas Press. 1, 2, 5, 9, 17.

Chart 1: PATTERNS OF OBEDIENCE

	NOAH	ABRAHAM
God's Man	6:8	12:1
God's word to the man	6:13	12:1–3
Man's sacrifice for sin	8:20–22	12:7, 13:4
Man's obedience	6:22	15:6



SESSION I: PRELUDE

The Mystery of Michelangelo's *Creation of Man*

This is the famous fresco painting by Michelangelo that is on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It shows the creation of man spoken of in Genesis. This, of course, shows a very unbiblical picture of God. He is not a grey haired old man. The cherubim are not pudgy little babies. This, however, is not the controversial part. Look behind God. One character is not like the others. Just under God's left arm is a beautiful woman (who is not like the cherubs). Artists and art historians dispute her identity.



Detail of Eve from *The Temptation and Expulsion*.

Write a paragraph explaining who she is (Hint: on another part of the ceiling Eve is pictured but she does not look like this woman).⁶

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Comprehension Questions

1. When and by whom was Genesis written?
2. What does the word *Genesis* mean?
3. How would one divide Genesis into a two part outline?
4. What purpose does the word *toledoth* serve in Genesis? What does it mean?
5. Make a list of the things we learn about God from the book of Genesis.
6. Why did the Fall introduce a distinction between what man is as the image of God and what man ought to be?
7. What is a covenant? With whom did God enter into covenants in Genesis?



READING ASSIGNMENT:

Genesis 1:1-11:26 (This reading is the *Toledoth 1-5* mentioned in the *Author and Context* section.)

SESSION II: DEBATE

Genesis 1:1–11:26

A Question to Argue

How long did it take God to create the world?

Read the three views of Creation held by Christians in the church today outlined below. Then discuss or write short responses to the objections to each view, thinking through how advocates of each view would seek to defend their position.

THE HISTORIC SEVEN 24-HOUR DAYS POSITION.

This view takes Genesis literally. It states that God created the world in six days. Each day was a 24-hour period. It holds that this creation happened in the order set forth in Scripture and that God rested the Seventh Day. This view also holds that all death was the result of the Fall. This pattern of work and rest set up the weekly paradigm that we are all to follow.

THE DAY-AGE POSITION.

This position asserts that the “days” in Genesis are not 24-hour days, but that each Day represents an age that could have been years or even millennia long. It bases its interpretation of the Hebrew word *yom* (day) on verses like Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8. It looks at the Sabbath rest of God on the Seventh day as His rest from His creative activity which continues to this day. This view does believe that animal death occurred before the Fall.

THE FRAMEWORK POSITION.

This view believes that the seven days of creation are not to be taken as literal, twenty-four hour days, but are instead figurative, topical descriptions of God’s creation of the world. As evidence they point to the fact that there is a pattern in Genesis 1 in which God creates realms in days 1–3 (light and dark in

the heavens, the sky and sea, and dry land) and their rulers in days 4–6 (sun and moon to “rule” the day and night, birds and fish to rule the sky and sea, animals and finally man to rule the dry land). This view asserts that the Genesis language offers snapshots of the divine creativity, but that this language is by nature metaphorical. The chief thing not to be taken literally according to the framework position is the chronological sequence. This view does not, however, commit to any specific time frame for creation; neither does it commit itself to any specific order of events. It also allows for the possibility of death in all but man (who bears God’s image) before the Fall and points to the Sabbath as God’s eternal enthronement over creation, and the eternal rest to which all creation ultimately points and is fulfilled in Christ.

Objections

OBJECTIONS TO THE SEVEN 24-HOUR DAYS POSITION:

1. How can you know that days 1–3 are “normal 24-hour days” if the sun and moon had not yet been created?
2. How can you hold this view since modern science has found that the earth is about 4 billion years old?

OBJECTIONS TO THE DAY-AGE POSITION:

1. In the few Old Testament passages in which the words *day* or *days* are not to be taken literally (normal 24-hour days), doesn’t the context determine this meaning? What in the context of Genesis 1 tells us that *day* does not mean what it normally means (i.e., a normal 24-hour day)?
2. Isn’t your view just an attempt to force the conclusions of modern science into the biblical text?

OBJECTIONS TO THE FRAMEWORK POSITION:

1. It can be said that the language of Genesis 1 points to a poetic structure (i.e., Realms on Days



- 1–3 and Rulers on Days 4–6). While this seems clear, why does this pattern prove that the language is figurative? Or, put another way, why couldn't God have done his creative work in a poetic pattern?
- Do you think that this complicated theory is really what God was trying to convey with the language of Genesis 1 or is this just another attempt to make our Bibles fit the conclusions of modern science?
 - How do we know that this curse is carried on to their children?

Cultural Analysis

- In athletic events, if one player does something wrong (e.g., drops an easy fly ball in the bottom of the ninth inning, allowing two runs to score and his team to lose), is it fair for his whole team to be punished for it (i.e., lose the game)?
- If a child robbed a store, what would our culture say about sending the parents of that thieving child to jail?
- Why does our culture react differently in these circumstance? Is this biblical?

Write a paragraph promoting which view of creation you think is correct.



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Genesis 11:27–37:1 (Toledoth 6–9)

SESSION III: DISCUSSION

Genesis 11:27–37:1

A Question to Consider

Should someone ever be punished or rewarded for the actions of another?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

- What one prohibition did God give to Adam in Genesis 2?
- Why did Eve disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit?
- Why did Adam eat? (See I Timothy 2:14 if you need some clarification)
- What punishments resulted from Adam's sin?
- What curse does the ground receive because of Adam?
- What curse do Adam and Eve receive because of Adam's sin?

Biblical Analysis

Read Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:20–22 thoughtfully out loud. These passages can be difficult to understand so make sure you have your Bibles open while you discuss it.

- In both of these passages to what is Adam's sin compared?
- In Romans 5:12, why did death spread to all men?
- In Romans 5:13–14 how were the sins of those that lived between Adam and Moses different than (not in the likeness of) Adam's sin?
- What does Romans 5:18–19 make clear about Adam's sin?
- In 1 Corinthians 15:22, what happen to all men in Adam?

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Is it righteous to punish or reward some people for the actions of another? What does culture believe and what does Scripture teach?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Genesis 37:2–50:26 (Toledoth 10)



Chart 2: PARTS OF A COVENANT

ASPECT OF COVENANT

	NOAH	ABRAHAM
Promise	Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. (9:11)	I will be a God to you and your children (17:7). You will receive a Seed (15:5). Your descendants will be like the stars (15:5). You will receive a land (12:8). I will bless the world through you (12:3).
Law	Protecting the image of God seems closely related to this covenant. (9:1–7)	Walk before me and be blameless (17:1)
Blessing	Food, multiplication and safety. (9:1–4)	Seed, land, wealth, blessing to the world. <i>See above.</i>
Sign	Rainbow (9:13 ff)	Circumcision (17:9 ff)

ASPECT OF COVENANT

	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	QUESTION
Promise	John 17:1–3, Matt. 28:20	What does Christ pray for? What does He promise for His Church?
Law	Rom. 13:9, Gal. 3:13–14;	What is this Law in this passage the same as? What does this tell you about God's rules of righteousness?
Blessing	Rom. 4:12–14; 1 Pet. 2:4–5	Whose blessings has the Church inherited? How has this promise expanded? If we are what 1 Pet. 2:4–5 says, is the Church still his people?
Sign	Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 11:24–26	What are the signs of the New Covenant? How do they relate to the sign of Circumcision and Passover given to Israel?

SESSION IV: ANALYSIS

Genesis 37:2–50:26

A Question to Consider

What is a covenant?

*Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:**Text Analysis**Reread: Genesis 9:1–17 and Genesis 15*

1. According to the similarities of these passages, what is a covenant?
2. One theologian has said that God's covenant is basically a relationship (or bond) of life or death significance ruled over by God.⁷ What do you see in these two passages that supports this view?

Biblical Analysis

What are the essential parts of a covenant?

Answer the questions in Chart 2.

SESSION V: DISCUSSION

A Question to Consider

Can God accomplish His will by using sinful people in the process?

*Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:**Text Analysis*

1. Does God ordain that sinful actions take place? Consider Genesis 45:4–8; 50:19, 20; Exodus 4:21; Matthew 26:54; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28.
2. Does this remove man's responsibility for his sin? Consider the above passages, Ecclesiastes 7:29 and Romans 9:19–26.

Biblical Analysis

1. What does it mean that God is sovereign? Consider the following Scriptures:

- He accomplishes His will (Ps. 115:3; 135:5–7;



Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*. 1656. Oil on canvas. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, Germany.

Dan. 4:17, 34, 35; Eph. 1:11)

- He brings about trivial things (Ex. 34:24; Prov. 16:1, 9, 33)
- Calamity is under His rule (Isa. 45:7; Lam. 3:37, 38)

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

How can God accomplish His purposes through the sinful actions of human beings and still be holy, just, and good?

OPTIONAL SESSION

Analyzing the Art

Begin class by analyzing this painting by Rembrandt.

1. Who are the characters in this painting?
2. Where in Genesis is this scene described?
3. What is Joseph endeavoring to do with Jacob's hand?
4. Does Rembrandt capture the emotion which the biblical text ascribes to Joseph at this point? What emotion is portrayed?
5. Which of the boys appears the more pious? Why?
6. What event does this blessing recall from Jacob's own life?
7. Rembrandt's painting changes a number of things in the biblical text, both by addition and omission. Can you identify them? Why do you suppose he did this?

ENDNOTES

- 1 Technically there are eleven sections. The two toledoth sections about Esau have been combined (36:1-8 and 36:9-37:1).
- 2 The identification of Moses as the primary author of Genesis does not exclude some later editorial revisions or additions. For instance, Genesis 11:31 associates Ur with the tribe of the Chaldeans, a group of people who did not emerge until after Moses' death. For a fuller treatment of Mosaic authorship consult Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) pp. 38-48.
- 3 Some people are uncomfortable describing Adam's relationship with God as a covenant. However, Scripture explicitly identifies this relationship as a covenant (Hos. 6:7), and all the elements of a covenant are present: privileges, expectations, blessings, consequences, etc. For a fuller treatment, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980) chapter 5.
- 4 Hebrews 6:13-20 discusses this passage in Genesis 15 and uses it to encourage us to trust in God's faithfulness through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5 This point is related to the Nicene Creed's statement that Jesus was *genitum non factum* (begotten, not made). Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, meaning of course that Jesus has the same nature as God Himself (Jesus is divine). We are adopted sons of God. We do not have His nature because we are creatures. Nevertheless, through Christ, we receive all the benefits that He as the Son of God deserves. For example, we shall inherit the earth.
- 6 For a fascinating discussion of this question, see James Romaine's chapter on Creativity in: Ned Bustard, ed. *It was Good: Making Art to the Glory of God* (Baltimore: Square Halo Publishing, 2000) pp. 159-201.
- 7 O.P. Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1980) pp. 3-15. This gives the definition for covenant, saying that it is a bond in blood sovereignly administered. For the adventurous student or the inquisitive parent this chapter of this book does a great job explaining covenants.

EXODUS

Freedom is one of the most important ideas in the modern world. The great revolutions that started the modern world proclaimed liberty and freedom: The slogan of the French Revolution was “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” and the Declaration of Independence claims that men are endowed by their Creator with the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Some of the greatest wars in modern history have been waged to secure freedom. The Union fought the Confederacy in the Civil War to preserve the union and to free slaves, and America entered World War II to liberate Europe from the Nazis. During the second half of the twentieth century, many millions in Eastern Europe were enslaved to a cruel Soviet system, until the Soviet Union broke into pieces in the 1980s and 1990s. Throughout the Southern Hemisphere, the twentieth century was the century of freedom. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, peoples that had been subjected to European nations fought for freedom, and often succeeded.

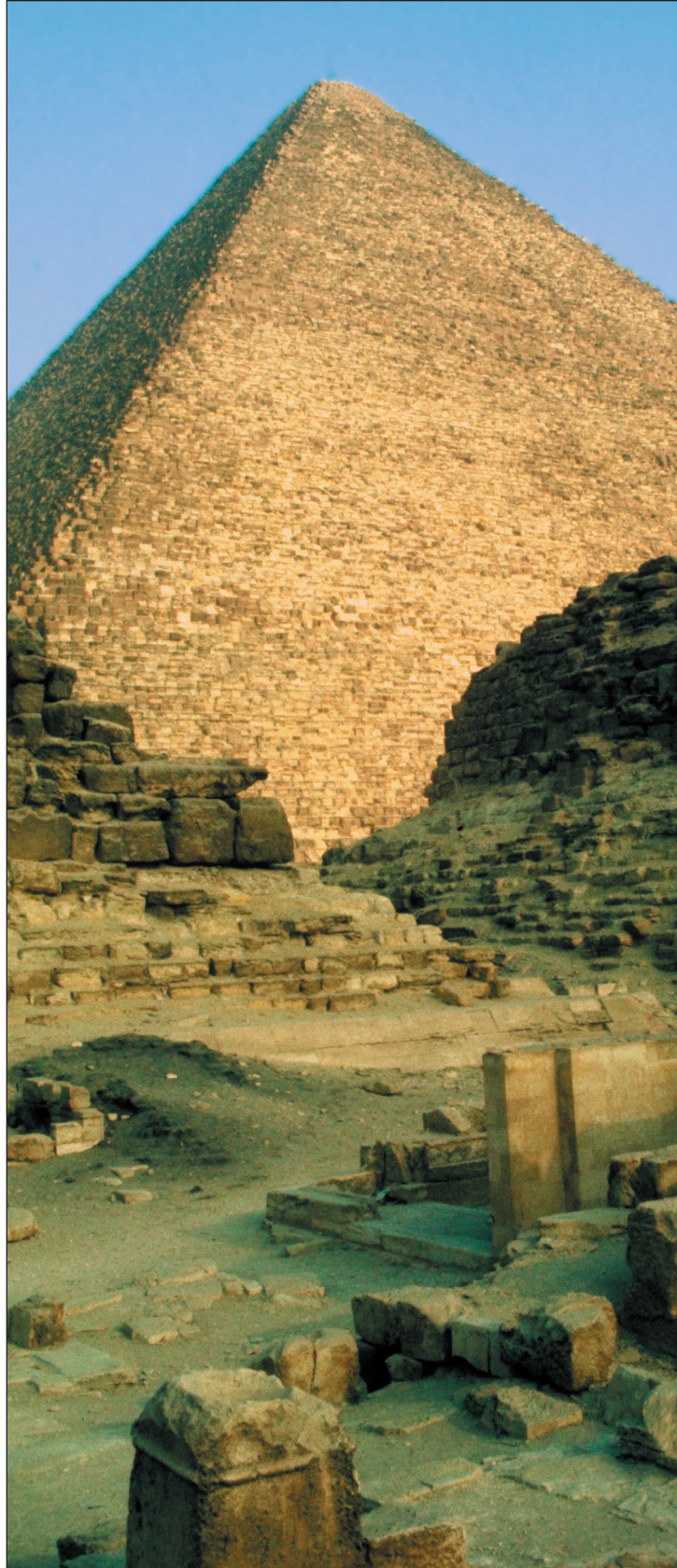
Freedom is especially important in American culture and politics. Everyone in American politics says they favor liberty and everyone in American politics accuses his opponents of enslaving Americans. Liberals say that we should throw off the chains of traditional morality and society so that we can be truly free. Without freedom to abort babies and pursue a homosexual lifestyle, Americans would be slaves. Conservatives say that liberal laws make the government too big and make people slaves.

But what is freedom? Is freedom the same as “liberty?” Is there any difference between freedom and “license?” Does freedom mean being able to do anything? Are there several different kinds of freedom? Is freedom equal for all people? Is freedom compatible with authority?

Scripture has clear answers to these questions, and Exodus, the story of a slave people being freed from slavery, is one of the most important books of the Bible for addressing these questions.

The Great Pyramid of Giza existed during the Exodus.

It was the world’s tallest structure for more than 43 centuries, and remains the world’s largest compass—each side is oriented to north, south, east, and west.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Author and Context

Who wrote Exodus? Many scholars today believe that Exodus, like Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, is patched together from several different books. These “source” books are known as the “Jahwist” or J book (“Jahweh” or “Yahweh” is one way to write the Hebrew name of God), the “Elohist” or E book (“Elohim” is another name for God), the Deuteronomist or D book, and the “Priestly” or P book. The names are supposed to tell us what is unique in each book. The “J” book uses the name “Jahweh” a lot, and the “P” book has a lot to say about priests and their activities.

This is not correct and is a foolish idea. Exodus mentions that Moses writes portions of the book (Exodus 17:4; 24:4; 34:4, 27–29), and the Ten Words (or Ten Commandments) were written by God Himself (Exodus 32:15–16). Most of Exodus 20–40 comes straight from God’s mouth, and Moses only records what He hears God say. Exodus is written by someone

who took part in the events that the book talks about. The author was an eyewitness to the plagues and the exodus, and the author actually wrote down God’s words as He spoke on Mount Sinai.

Significance

The book of Exodus is a cornerstone of the Bible. It tells about the story of Israel’s birth as a nation, and of the Lord’s covenant with Israel. Over and over again throughout the Bible, this story is told and replayed. When David goes into Philistia to escape from Saul and then returns to become king, he has gone through an exodus. Israel later is taken captive to Babylon, but returns in what Isaiah describes as a new exodus. Jesus goes into the grave, but death “passes over” and He rises to new life, leaving “Egypt” behind.

Exodus is also a key book in the history of Christendom. Many of the law codes of the early Middle Ages were based on the Mosaic laws of Exodus 20–23, and even in the early colonial period, the Puritans tried to design their laws and government after a biblical model. Moses is one of the greatest figures in history, honored by Jews as the founder of Israel, as well as by Christians and Muslims as a great prophet. In the modern world, Moses has been studied by many writers. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychology, wrote a book called *Moses and Monotheism* and political thinker Michael Walzer has studied the Exodus to gain insight into politics.



Summary and Setting

When did Moses live? When did the events in Exodus take place? We know from the Bible that the Exodus happened 480 years before Solomon began to build the temple (1 Kings 6:1). Solomon begins to build the temple in 967 B.C., and that means that the Exodus took place in 1447 B.C.

Yet, many today believe that the Exodus took place much later, in the thirteenth century, between 1270 and 1250 B.C., rather than in the fifteenth century. This conclusion is partly based on the names of the

While bathing in the Nile, the pharaoh’s daughter—possibly Hatshepsut—found a Levite’s son floating in a basket made with bulrushes and tar. The princess named the baby Moses, which means “to draw out” because she drew him out of the water.

cities in Exodus 1:11: Israel works to build Pithom and Ramses, and these cities are built by Seti I (1308–1290 B.C.) or Ramses II (1290–1224 B.C.). This is called the “late date” theory.

But there are problems with this later date, especially for those who believe the Bible contains accurate dates and chronologies. If the late date is correct, then 1 Kings 6:1 is not accurate. Often, it is said that this is a merely symbolic number, since it is the product of 12 and 40, the number of Israel (12) multiplied by the length of a generation (40 years). But the numbers in the Bible are both literal and symbolic (e.g., the 40 days of the Flood, 40 years of Israel’s wandering, 40 days of Jesus’ temptation, etc.). Chronological issues are discussed later in more detail. It is a fascinating question, but one that is too complicated to figure out here.

Moses is the main character in Exodus, but to understand what Moses does, we need to remember why Israel goes to Egypt in the first place.

Israel goes into Egypt at the end of Genesis, when Jacob takes his family from Canaan to Egypt because of a famine. Israel is in Egypt for four generations (Exodus 6:14ff). According to Genesis 15:16, the Lord told Abraham that his seed would be strangers for that length of time. So, when Exodus begins, the four generations are nearly passed. Israel has been prospering and multiplying in Egypt. They are “fruitful, increased greatly, multiplied exceedingly, became numerous, and filled the land” (Exodus 1:7).

Suddenly everything changes (1:8). A new king arises who does not know Joseph and does not care about Israel. This Pharaoh is also afraid of Israel because they are multiplying so fast. He fears that if a nation invades Egypt, the Hebrews will switch sides and fight against him (vv. 9–10). And he fears that they are “spreading out,” taking over land that belongs to the Egyptians (v. 12). So, the Pharaoh makes life very hard for the Israelites, forcing them to make bricks without straw, then making them slaves, and then trying to kill their



male children.

Pharaoh’s plan does not work. Even though Pharaoh makes the Israelites work harder and harder and tries to kill all their sons, the midwives save many of the boy babies so that “the people multiplied and became very mighty” (1:20). More importantly, the Lord is working to raise up a deliverer to bring Israel out of slavery into rest. That deliverer is Moses.

Like many boys of his time, Moses has to be saved from Pharaoh, and he is saved by his mother, Jochebed. Jochebed puts her “beautiful son” in a basket and lines it with pitch, where he is found by Pharaoh’s daughter, who takes him into Pharaoh’s house and raises him there. When he grows up, he kills an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew slave (Exodus 2:11–15). Stephen the martyr calls this an act of “vengeance on behalf of the oppressed” (Acts 7:24), and that is a good thing to do. Moses is hoping that killing the Egyptian will be the beginning of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Acts 7:25). Nothing in the Bible says that Moses is guilty of murder. The next day, though, Moses gets his first taste of how the Israelites will treat their savior. He tries to stop a fight between two Israelites, as he stopped the fight between the Egyptian and the Israelite the day before. But the Israelites do not want him to be ruler and judge over them (Exodus 2:14). Moses sees that Israel

isn't ready to leave Egypt, and so he flees to Midian for forty years.

While Moses is in Midian, he marries Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, and takes care of Jethro's animals on the "mountain of God," Mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1). There he sees the burning bush, and God speaks to him from the bush and tells him he must return to Egypt to deliver Israel. Though he objects, Moses obeys and announces to Israel that the Lord is going to deliver the people. Moses tells Pharaoh that Yahweh, the God of Israel considers Israel his son, and demands that Pharaoh let his son go (4:22–23).

As the Lord had told Moses, Pharaoh hardens his heart and refuses to let the people go. "Who is Yahweh?" he asks (5:2). Yahweh responds by showing who He is. He brings ten plagues against Egypt, plagues that get worse and worse for Egypt (Exodus 5–11). Meanwhile, the Lord protects Israel from the plagues, dividing between Israel and Egypt. Finally, the Lord sends the final plague, the killing of the firstborn of Egypt. The Israelites stay safe from the angel of death by killing a lamb or goat and spreading its blood on the doorposts of their houses (Exodus

12–13). This is the Passover, when the angel of death "passed over" the people of Israel.

Seeing all the firstborn of Egypt dying, Pharaoh finally agrees to let Israel go (Exodus 12:31–32). After Israel gets a short start, Pharaoh changes his mind, gathers his chariots, and begins to chase down Israel in order to force them to come back to Egypt. Israel is stuck between Pharaoh's army and the Sea of Reeds. The Lord makes a way of escape for Israel by sending a wind that blows back the sea and opens up dry land. Israel passes through the sea in safety, but when Pharaoh tries to get through the sea he and all his army are drowned (Exodus 14).

From there, Israel moves toward Mount Sinai, where the Lord has called them to meet with Him. Along the way, the people complain that there is no food or drink, and the Lord miraculously provides bread (manna) from heaven and water from a rock (Exodus 16–18).

When Israel gets to Mount Sinai, God "cuts" a covenant with His people in a ceremony that is like a wedding. God promises to provide all good things for His bride, and His people take an oath to obey and honor Him. If His people don't keep the covenant promise that they make, God threatens to bring all kinds of bad things—diseases, famine, drought, death (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

The wedding service goes from Exodus 19–24, with Moses officiating. He goes up on the mountain to hear the Lord's word, and then brings it back down to the people. The Husband's part of the wedding service begins with the Lord reminding His bride of what He has done for her (Exodus 20:1–2). Then Yahweh tells Israel how they are to live as His holy people (Exodus 20–23). When Moses brings these words to the people, they say, basically, "I do": "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 24:3). The wedding ceremony ends with a wedding reception, a feast in the Lord's presence (Exodus 24:9–11). Now that Yahweh and Israel are married, Yahweh decides to move in with His bride. Most of the rest of Exodus is about the kind of house He wants Israel to build for Him (Exodus 25–40).

In Exodus 20–23, the Lord tells Israel how they are to live as His servants. Many of these laws are based on the exodus. For example, the Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week, and it is a time when all Israelites stop working and rest. They do this to follow



"The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain."



God's example in creation, since He rested on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11). Resting on the Sabbath is also a reminder of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). When Israel is in Egypt, they are slaves and are not allowed to rest. By rescuing them from Pharaoh, Yahweh gives His people rest, and so every week they are reminded that they were slaves and that they should give rest (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The rest of Exodus is concerned with the house of God, the tabernacle. The tabernacle is not merely canvas, but has walls made of wooden boards that are set in sockets on the ground (Exodus 26:15ff). Three layers of curtains cover the wooden frame, and the inner layer is a beautiful curtain with figures of cherubim woven into it. The doorway of the tabernacle is to the east, so that anyone who wants to enter the tabernacle has to move from east to west (Numbers 1:53; 3:23, 29, 35, 38).

Within the tent are two rooms. The first is the Holy Place and the second is the Most Holy Place or "Holy of Holies." The courtyard makes a third area. Each

The first record of a man being filled by the Spirit of God is an artist named Bezalel. *"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works . . ."* Here Bezalel is crafting the altar for burnt offering.

"room" of the Lord's house has furniture in it. In the courtyard is a bronze altar. All the animal offerings are burned on this altar and blood of most animals is poured out here. Also in the courtyard is the bronze laver filled with water, set between the altar and the tent (Exodus 30:17-21). Priests wash their hands and feet in the water from the laver every time they enter the Holy Place.

In the Holy Place are three pieces of furniture. On the North side is a table made of wood and overlaid with gold (Exodus 25:23-30). Twelve loaves of Shewbread or "bread of the presence" are on the table, and are replaced each Sabbath day (Leviticus 24:5-9). To the South is a lampstand of pure gold that looks like an almond tree, with branches and bulbs (Exodus 25:31-40). On the West side, in front of the veil that separates the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place is the golden altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-10).

The Most Holy Place contains only one piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant, a box of wood covered inside and out with gold. The cover of the ark is pure gold, and has golden cherubim stretching over the top of it (Exodus 25:10-22).

In the middle of the tabernacle section of Exodus is the story of the golden calf. Israel becomes impatient waiting for Moses to come back from the mountain, and they ask Aaron to make them a god who will go before Israel as Moses has done. When Moses comes down from the mountain, he sees Israel worshipping the golden calf, and breaks the tablets of the law, as a symbol of the broken covenant between God and Israel.

The glory of God that fills the Most Holy Place and makes the tabernacle holy comes from the top of Sinai (Exodus 19:16; 24:17; 40:34-38).

Artistic Design

Try telling your little brother this story: “See Jack sit. See Jack sit and sit and sit. See Jack sit and do nothing. See him sit and sit and sit all day. The end.” If your little brother is smart, he will never ask you to tell him a story again.

Stories always tell about change. If you tell a story where nothing changes, you are telling a bad story. When you think about the change that takes place in a story, it is usually helpful to ask what specific things have changed. And a good way to get an idea of what is changing in the story is to look at the beginning and end of the story. At the beginning of *Robinson Crusoe*, Robinson survives a shipwreck on a desert island; at the end of the story, he leaves the island. The story tells how his situation changes from the beginning to the end.

When we think about Exodus this way, we can see how things change for Israel during the book. At the beginning of Exodus, Israel is serving Pharaoh by building storage cities (1:11). When we come to the end of the book, Israel is still busy building, but they are building the tabernacle for their new King, Yahweh (Exodus 35–40). At the beginning of the book, the Egyptian Pharaoh is killing Israelite babies; but Pharaoh himself is killed in the middle of the book (Exodus 14). When the book begins, Pharaoh says that Israel belongs to him. Yahweh says that Israel belongs to Him (4:23; 8:1), and at the end of the book Israel is serving a new Master. At the beginning of the book, Israel has no rest. At the end of the book, the Lord tells Israel to take a day of rest every week and He Himself rests in the tabernacle. At the beginning of the book, Israel is in slavery; by the end of the book they are free servants of God. The story of Exodus could be titled “From Slavery to Sabbath,” or “From Serving Pharaoh to Serving God.”

Think about how this is different from some other ways of telling the exodus story. Exodus does not end like the movie *Prince of Egypt*, with Israel crossing through the Sea. If it ended there, it would be a story of Israel being delivered from Pharaoh. But Israel passes through the sea in Exodus 14, and there are forty chapters in the book. The end of the story happens at Sinai.

The book of Exodus is not the first “exodus” story in the Bible. God displays His power and shows that

idols are powerless by saving His people from their enemies. The stories that tell about God rescuing His people are called “exodus stories.” The story of Jacob is an exodus story: He goes out of the land, spends time with Laban who treats him badly, and then returns to the land wealthier than before. And Jacob is not the first patriarch to leave the land and return. Abram leaves twice, and his first exodus in Genesis 12 reminds us of what happens to Israel later on in history (Genesis 12:10–20). Like a preview at the movie theater, the exodus of Abram is a preview of the exodus of Israel. Long before Israel goes to Egypt, God is the God of exodus, the God who delivers His people from slavery.

Another important design of the book is the connection between Moses as the “head” of Israel and Israel as the “body” of Moses. Everything that happens to Moses early in the book of Exodus later happens to Israel. Moses is saved through the water, and the whole nation will be saved through the sea. Jochebed places Moses in the “reeds” along the river (Exodus 2:3), and he will bring Israel through the “Sea of Reeds” (Exodus 13:18). Moses flees to Midian, where he spends forty years (compare Acts 7:23 with Exodus 7:7), just as Israel will have to spend forty years in the wilderness because of her rebellion (Numbers 13). While Moses is among the Midianites, Yahweh appears to him in a burning bush on Mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1–2), just as the Lord will appear at Horeb to the whole nation after the exodus. Moses is the head of Israel, and whatever happens to the head will happen to the body.



Worldview

He is a pillar of the community. The foundations of our society are crumbling. We have to defend our gates against the barbarians. We should establish stronger walls to protect our children against pornography. The economy is caving in. Everyone should be actively engaged in building our community.

All of these expressions assume a common metaphor: That a society or group of people is like a building or a house. Important people in a group are “pillars,” since they carry the burdens of the group on their shoulders. Every group is based on certain beliefs and practices that serve as a foundation. A community is something to be built, and once it’s built it has to be protected.

We not only think of society as a building, but we also think of our lives as construction projects. When we are young, we may draw out a “blueprint” of what we are going to do when we grow up. Education helps to establish the “foundation” for a career, and a career is something to be built on that foundation. Marriage and family too are like a house to be built, decorated, protected, and expanded.

The similarity between houses and societies, between our lives and a building, are not random. In fact, Scripture speaks a lot about the design of God’s houses, the tabernacle and the temple. About a third of exodus is concerned with the tabernacle, and three long chapters in Kings describe the temple (1 Kings 6–8). There is even more information about the temple in Chronicles, and in Ezra Israel returns from exile to rebuild the temple. Ezekiel 40–48 is a great vision of the future temple, and Jesus spends a lot of His ministry attacking the corruptions of Herod’s temple (cf. Matthew 24). Revelation, the final book of the Bible, is largely about the fall of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and God’s creation of a new city (Revelation 17–22).

In the New Testament, Paul says that the people who make up the church form a “holy temple,” a building where God lives. As Jesus said, people can build their houses on a rock, in which case the house will last, or they can build a house on sand, in which case the house is doomed (Matthew 7:24–27).

The tabernacle portion of Exodus develops this analogy in detail. The tabernacle has many different levels of meaning. Fundamentally, it is a house, God’s

house. Israel is living in tents, and so Yahweh agrees to live in a tent alongside them. In God’s house, there is a “kitchen,” the courtyard where God’s food is cooked, a “dining room” or “living room” in the Holy Place, and the “throne room” of the Most Holy Place.

The tabernacle is also like Sinai, a building made like a holy mountain. When Israel leaves the mountain, they take the mountain with them. Like the tabernacle, Sinai is divided into three zones. The people are encamped at the foot of Sinai, but they may not even touch it (Exodus 19:20–25). Elders and priests ascend partway to feast in God’s presence (Exodus 24:1–8), but only Moses enters the cloud on the top of the mountain. Similarly, in the tabernacle, the people may only enter the courtyard, and are not allowed to touch the altar. Priests work in the Holy Place, but are not allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, where only the High Priest, a permanent “Moses” may enter. If the tabernacle is like Sinai, every time a priest enters the tabernacle, it is like climbing up God’s mountain.

The tabernacle is not only a picture of Sinai, but also a picture of the people of God. The New Testament tells us that the church is the temple of God, and in the Old Testament the tabernacle is a picture of the people of God. As the holy things of the tabernacle are “gathered at the throne of God,” so also the holy people are arranged around God’s throne. Like Sinai and the tabernacle, Israel is divided in three groups. Most of the people of Israel are not priests; the descendants of Aaron are all priests; and one of the priests is the High Priest. So, the house of Israel is like the house of the Lord, and the house of the Lord is a picture of the house of Israel. This is why the blood of the animal offerings is always sprinkled or thrown on some piece of furniture in the tabernacle, never on the people.¹ This seems odd at first. How can blood make a sinner clean if the blood is never put on him? The answer is that the tabernacle is a picture of Israel,

Chart 1: **ARRANGEMENT OF THE TABERNACLE**

UNIVERSE	EARTH	TABERNACLE AREA
Heaven	Land of Eden	Most Holy Place (throne of God)
Firmament	Garden	Holy Place (lampstand)
Land	Eastern land	Courtyard (altar)
Sea	Other lands	Outside the courtyard

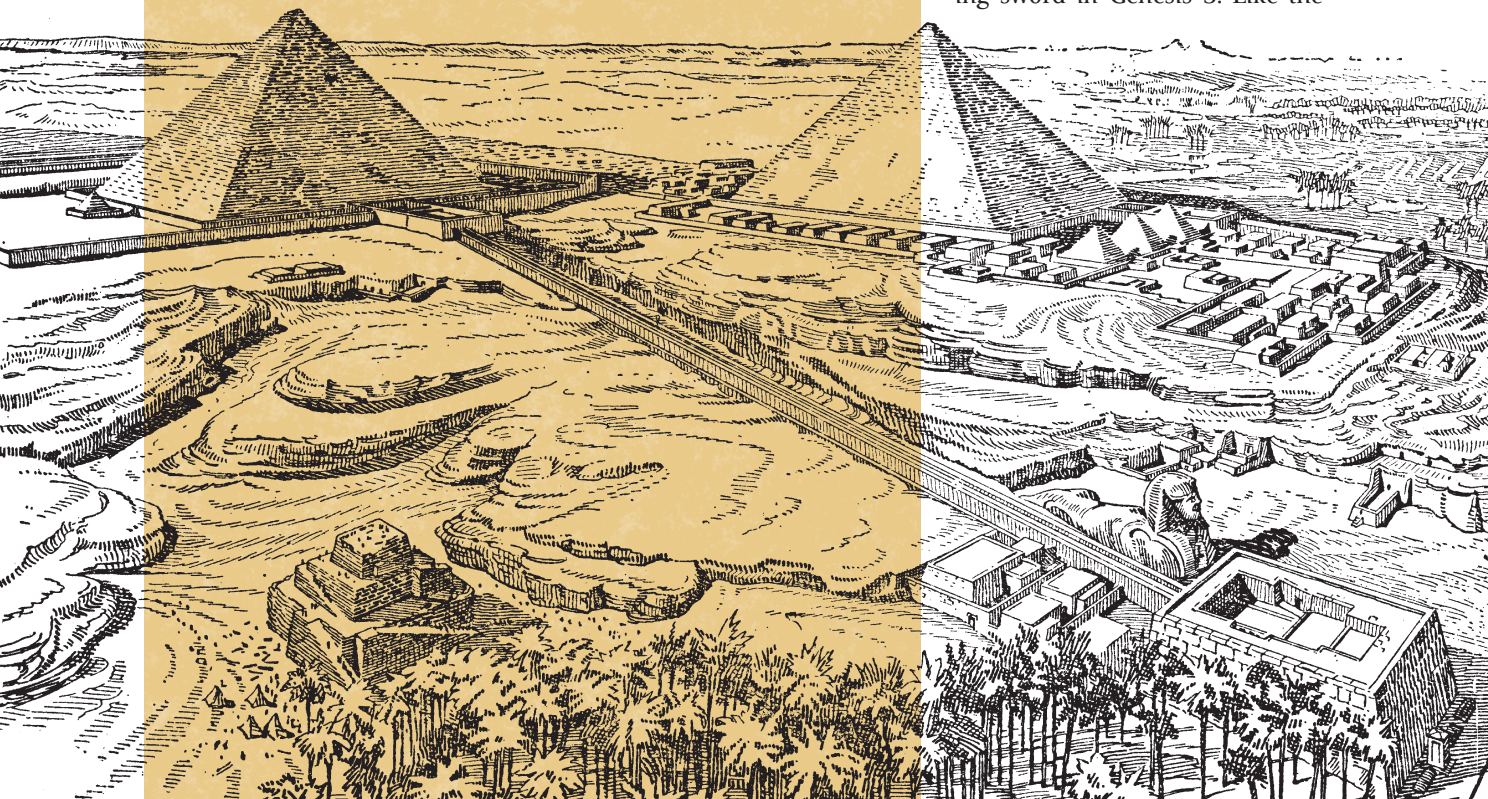
TOMBS OF GIZA

These royal tombs belonged to the leading kings of the Fourth Dynasty, the early part of the Pyramid Age. The Great Pyramid, the tomb of Pharaoh Cheops (also known as Khufu), is on the right, and next in size is Khafre's on the left. In front of the pyramids is a temple, where food, drink, and clothing were placed for use by the dead pharaoh. These temples, like the pyramids, were built on the desert plateau above, while the royal town was in the valley below. For convenience the temple was connected with the town below by a covered gallery or corridor of stone, seen here descending in a straight line from the temple of Khafre and ending below, just beside the Sphinx, in a large oblong building of stone, called a valley-temple. It was a splendid structure of granite, serving as temple and entrance way to the great corridor from the royal city. The pyramids are surrounded by tombs of the queens and the great lords of the age. At lower left is an unfinished pyramid, showing the inclined ascents up which the stone blocks were dragged. These ramps were built of sun-dried brick and were removed after the pyramid was completed. Sometimes we fail to make historic connections. Are there buildings in your town that were seen by past generations? Of course there are. When we see the Great Pyramid we must realize that the Hebrews enslaved in Egypt would have been living and working around this pyramid.²

and so putting blood on the tabernacle is counted as putting blood on the sinner. When the priest puts blood on the altar, God accepts the sinner as clean.

The tabernacle is not only a picture of Israel but of the whole world. The world is a "three-story house," the heavens are divided between the "highest heavens" and the "firmament," and earth is also divided into several areas. With these things in mind, we can understand the arrangement of the tabernacle, as demonstrated in Chart I.

Let's look at one of these connections. A number of things in the tabernacle remind us of the garden of Eden. Like the garden, it has a doorway on the east side (Genesis 3:24). The cherubim in the tabernacle curtains and above the ark remind us of the garden (Exodus 26:31-37). When a priest enters the Holy Place, he looks at the veil that has cherubim on it, and is reminded over and over of the cherubim with the flaming sword in Genesis 3. Like the



garden and land of Eden, the tabernacle is mostly off limits.

The fact that the world is a house means that our work in the world is like building and decorating a great building. We take the raw materials that God gives us, and with those we build a “house” out of the world for God to live in.

Thinking about our life as a construction project helps us to address questions about freedom that we thought about at the beginning of this study guide. It helps in two major ways. First, Exodus makes it clear that complete freedom is never a biblical goal. Israel is not freed from Egypt so that they can do whatever they please. They are freed from Egypt so they can work on the Lord’s house. They are freed from Pharaoh so they can become slaves to another King.

Second, the process of building itself shows the reality and limits of freedom. If we want to build a house that stands, we need to pay attention to the kinds of materials we use and how we put them together. In one sense we are free to make a house from anything we want, and to slap it together in any way we please. But if we make walls from Jello or put the foundation in quicksand, it won’t last very long. If we use thumb tacks and cellophane tape for the framing, the house will not stand. We have to find materials that can be made into a house, and put those materials together in a way that will actually stand as a house. Our freedom is limited by the materials, and our freedom is limited by what we want to build.

—Peter J. Leithart

For Further Reading

Janson, H.W. & Janson, Anthony F. *History of Art for Young People*. Sixth Edition. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 48–63.

Spielvogel, Jackson J. *Western Civilization*. Tenth Edition. Boston, Mass.: Cengage Learning, 2018. 14–27.

Veritas Press Bible Cards: Genesis through Joshua. Lancaster, Pa: Veritas Press. 18–24.

Anubis the jackal-headed patron god of mummification, watches over the process to see that all is done properly. Once they are prepared, he leads the soul through the underworld, testing their knowledge of the gods and their faith.



SESSION I: PRELUDE

A Question to Consider

What does it mean to be free? How can we be free?

From the General Information above answer the following questions:

1. Who wrote Exodus?
2. How do we know who wrote the book?
3. What do the letters J, E, D, and P stand for?
4. When did Moses live?
5. How do we know?
6. What are the alternative dates for the exodus?

Optional Activities

Watch *Prince of Egypt* or *The Ten Commandments* and explain how the story is different from the biblical account. This involves not only noticing differences of detail, but differences in the overall shape of the story.

Do some research on Egyptian religion. How do the plagues in the story of the Exodus strike at the core of Egyptian religious beliefs?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Exodus 1–15

SESSION II: DISCUSSION

A Question to Consider

Do we have free will? What does “free will” mean?

Discuss or list answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. What does Yahweh tell Moses about how Pharaoh will react to his demands? See Exodus 4:21.
2. What is Pharaoh's first reaction when Moses tells him that he comes from Yahweh?
3. Who hardens Pharaoh's heart? See Exodus 8:15 and 9:12.
4. What makes Pharaoh harden his heart?
5. Why does God let this all happen?

Cultural Analysis

1. What does our culture believe concerning free will? What do modern people believe about free will?
2. How does modern science deal with the question of free will? For example, think of the science of genetics or brain research.
3. According to modern science, what causes alcoholism? What causes homosexuality? What does this say about free will?

Biblical Analysis

1. What do the rest of the Scriptures say about free will? Does the Bible teach that we have freedom to do whatever we want?
2. Does God force people to sin? Is he the one who invented or created sin?
3. How does Paul apply the story of Pharaoh in Romans 9?

Application

1. Should we be frightened to think that God hardens hearts? Why or why not?
2. If God has mercy on whom He wills, and hardens whom He wills, why should we pray or do evangelism? Shouldn't we just wait for God to act?

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Do we have free will?



This fresco is opposite *The Temptation of Christ* on the wall of the Sistine Chapel, and both deal with the theme of temptation. Botticelli brought together seven episodes from the life of Moses reading the painting from right to left. Moses strikes an Egyptian overseer and then flees to the Midianites. There he chases off a group of shepherds who were harassing the daughters of Jethro at the well. He meets with God in the burning bush (top left), then leads the Israelites out of slavery.³

Optional Activities

Study the passage below from Martin Luther's treatise, The Bondage of the Will. Answer the questions that follow.

“For if we believe it to be true that God foreknows and foreordains all things; that He cannot be deceived or obstructed in His foreknowledge and predestination; and that nothing happens but at His will (which reason itself is compelled to grant); then, on reason's

own testimony, there can be no ‘free-will’ in man, or angel, or in any creature. So, if we believe that Satan is the prince of this world, ever ensnaring and opposing the kingdom of Christ with all his strength, and that he does not let his prisoners go unless he is driven out by the power of the Divine Spirit, it is again apparent that there can be no ‘free-will.’”

1. What does Luther mean by *foreknowledge*?
2. How does foreknowledge differ from *foreordaining* or *predestination*?
3. Why does Luther reject the idea of *free will*?
4. How can people who are slaves of the devil be freed from him?

David Rohl, a British Egyptologist, has challenged the traditional chronology of Egyptian history. He accepts the traditional dating of the Exodus (1447 B.C.), but argues that ancient historians are mistaken to identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus as Ramses II. Read the summary of Rohl's New Chronology provided at Link 1 for this chapter at www.VeritasPress.com/OmniLinks, and answer the following questions:

1. What mistake did Champollion make?
2. How does this mistake affect the chronology of the ancient world?
3. According to Rohl's new chronology, who is the Pharaoh Shishak who attacks Jerusalem after the reign of Solomon?
4. According to Rohl, who was the Pharaoh during the time of David?
5. What evidence supports Rohl's conclusion about the Pharaoh during David's time?

Not all scholars accept Rohl's new chronology. Read the following paragraphs from J.G. van der Land⁴, and answer the questions that follow:

“The big shifts proposed by Rohl would lead to apparent solutions to a few problems, but would give rise also to insoluble problems concerning the history of Israel and Biblical data.”

“Pharaoh Seti I (1294–1279 B.C.), the father of Rameses II, would become a contemporary of King Solomon (972–931 B.C.) and would have led his army through the latter's kingdom several times, capturing cities on his way.”

“The Late Bronze period too would be moved forward some 350 years, to end around 850 B.C. The Philistines settled in Ashkelon and Ashdod only after Late Bronze. The proposed new chronology would place this event about a century after king Solomon, despite the fact that both cities had already been inhabited for over a century before Solomon (1 Sam.6:17).”

1. What is van der Land's main criticism of Rohl's theory?
2. What did Seti I do?
3. Why is this a problem for Rohl's theory?
4. What is van der Land's point regarding the Late Bronze age?



READING ASSIGNMENT: Exodus 16–24



SESSION III: DISCUSSION

A Question to Consider

What are the appropriate punishments for crimes like theft, murder, or adultery? Should we try to apply the laws of the Old Testament in our own day?

Discuss or list answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

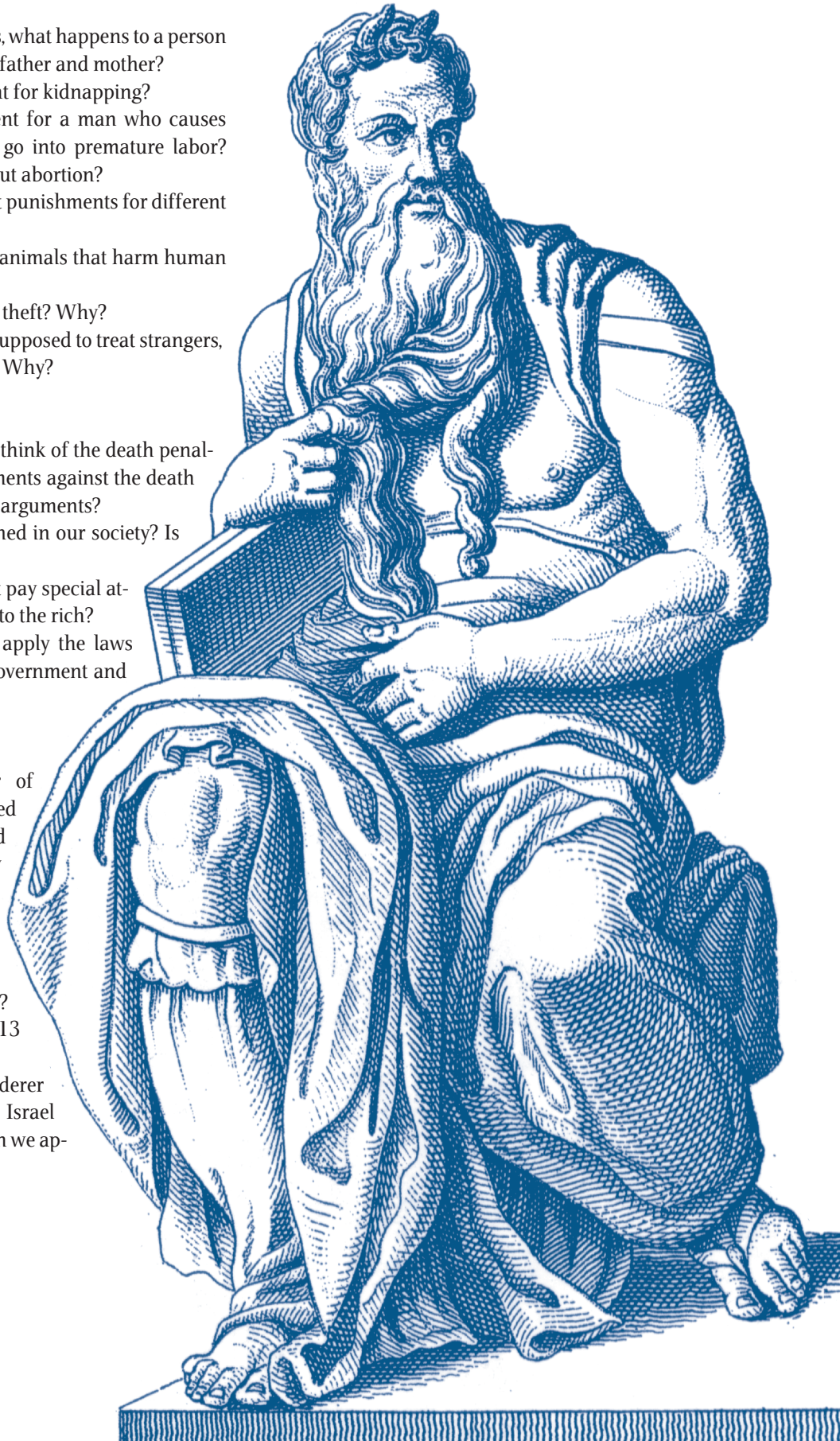
1. Under the law of Moses, what happens to a person who strikes or curses a father and mother?
2. What is the punishment for kidnapping?
3. What is the punishment for a man who causes a pregnant woman to go into premature labor? What does this say about abortion?
4. Why are there different punishments for different sorts of killing?
5. What are the rules for animals that harm human beings?
6. What is the penalty for theft? Why?
7. How are the Israelites supposed to treat strangers, orphans, and the poor? Why?

Cultural Analysis

1. What does our culture think of the death penalty? What are the arguments against the death penalty? Are they valid arguments?
2. How are thieves punished in our society? Is this a good idea?
3. Should the government pay special attention to the poor? Or to the rich?
4. Should we attempt to apply the laws of Moses to our own government and laws?

Biblical Analysis

1. There are a number of crimes that are punished by death in the Old Covenant. But many Christians believe that the death penalty should not be used in the New Covenant. Do you agree with this? What does Romans 13 have to say about this?
2. How was a murderer punished in ancient Israel (Numbers 35)? How can we apply this practice today? Should we?



SUMMA

Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Should we try to apply the laws of the Old Testament in our own day, especially concerning the punishment of criminals?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Exodus 25–40

SESSION IV: RECITATION**Comprehension Questions**

Answer the following questions for factual recall:

1. What do the Hebrew midwives do to protect the Hebrew children? Are their actions good?
2. Why does Moses say he cannot lead the people from Egypt?
3. What name does the Lord give Himself? What does it mean?
4. What is the first plague? Why is this significant?
5. What do you think happens to Egypt's farming during the plagues?
6. Who eats the Passover meal?
7. What do the Hebrews call the bread that they find in the wilderness? What does the word mean?
8. How does Israel know that the Lord has come down on Mount Sinai?
9. What is the penalty for theft according to the law of Moses?
10. What are the rules for owning and releasing slaves?
11. How many festival days is Israel supposed to observe?
12. Describe the tabernacle and its furniture.
13. What does the clothing of the high priest look like?
14. Why does Israel want Aaron to make a golden calf?
15. What does Moses do when he sees Israel worshipping an idol?
16. What does the Lord say He is going to do because of the golden calf? How does Moses respond to that?
17. Who are Bezalel and Oholiab? What do they do?

18. Who puts the tabernacle together?
19. What happens when the tabernacle is finished?

Lateral Thinking

Discuss the following questions or answer them in a short essay.

1. Some Christians today believe that the Exodus story shows that God is on the side of the poor and oppressed. Does the Exodus story teach this? In what sense?
2. In the discussion above, we looked at some other Bible stories that were like the story in Exodus. Can you find other "exodus narratives" in the Bible? Look at 1 Samuel 21–2 Samuel 6 and Matthew 1–7.

Optional Activities

Examine the drawing opposite based on Michaelangelo's sculpture called Moses and answer the following questions:

1. What does Moses have in his hand?
2. What event from Exodus is this picture showing? How can you tell?
3. Why is Moses seated?
4. What is coming out of Moses' head? Why are they there?

SESSION V: EVALUATION**Possible Review Questions**

Answer the questions from the recitation in Session III.

Evaluation

1. What is the situation for Israel at the beginning of Exodus?
2. Summarize the early life of Moses.
3. Describe some of the plagues, and their effect on Egypt.
4. What happened at Passover?
5. How did Israel behave in the wilderness?
6. What happened at Mount Sinai?
7. Describe the tabernacle.
8. Why did Israel ask Aaron to make a golden calf?
9. What did Moses do when he saw the golden calf?
10. What happens at the end of Exodus?

Demonstrate your understanding of the themes of Exodus by answer the following questions in complete sentences. Answers should be a paragraph or two. 10 points per answer.

1. Describe the overall story-line of Exodus.
2. What does Exodus teach about the relationship of Moses and Israel?
3. Why is there so much emphasis on the tabernacle in Exodus?
4. Discuss some of the details of the Mosaic law. Is it a just system? Is it excessively harsh?

Answer two of the following three questions. These questions will require more substantial answers. 12 points per answer.

1. Describe the leadership qualities of Moses. Give specific examples of how Moses leads Israel.
2. What does the book of Exodus teach about freedom?
3. What does the book of Exodus teach us about God?



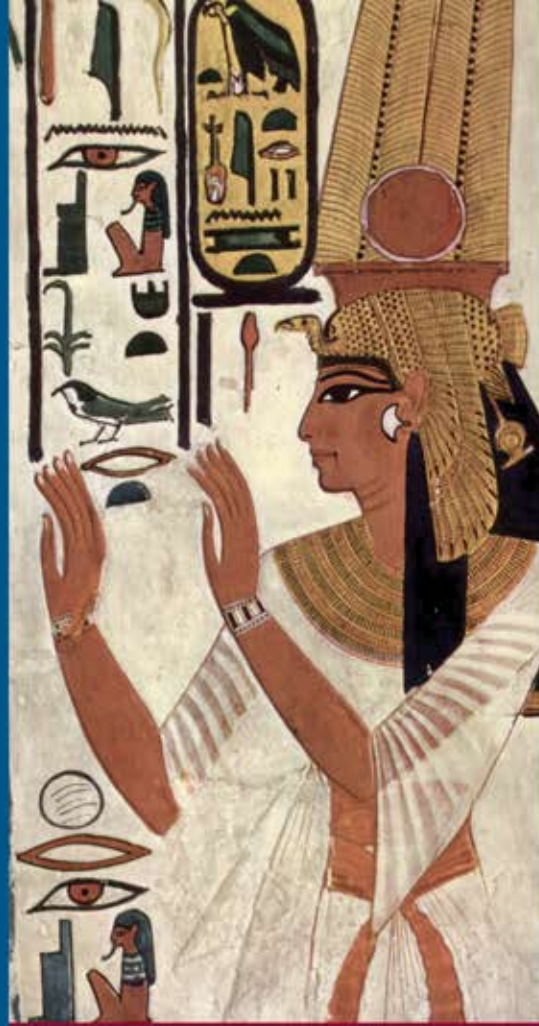
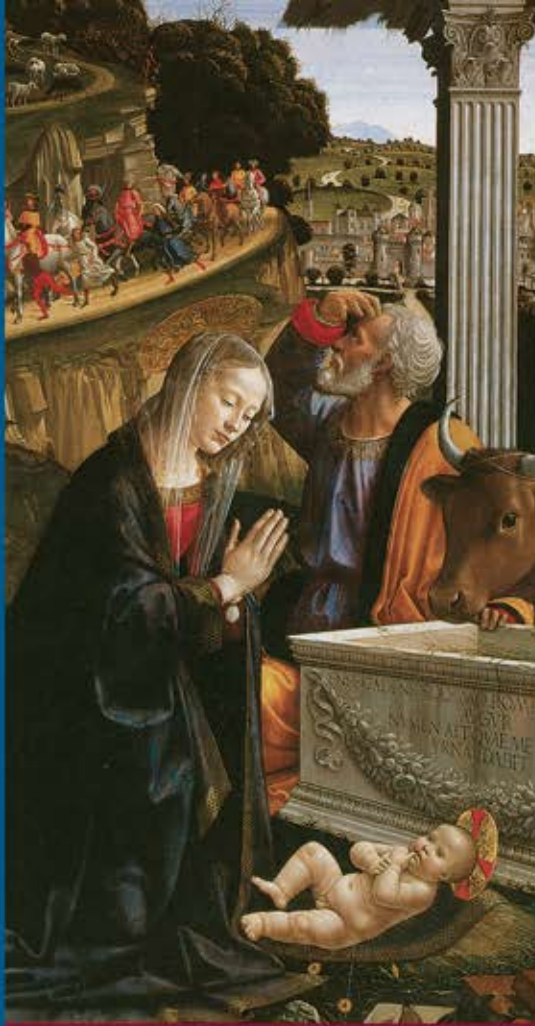
OPTIONAL SESSION: ACTIVITY

Assign a panel of students to serve as judges, and bring the following cases to them. They must render a verdict on the basis of the laws of Exodus 20–23.

1. Judy has a Doberman that usually stays in a fenced yard. One day, the Doberman got loose, and chased the mailman back to his truck. Along the way, the Doberman bites the mailman's leg. He brings his complaint to the judges, and asks them to make Judy pay for his stitches.
2. Larry borrows a lawnmower from Jerry. While Larry is mowing, the mower breaks down. Should Larry pay Jerry to fix the mower?

ENDNOTES

- 1 Exodus 24:8 looks like an exception, since the text says that Moses sprinkled blood on the people. But verse 4 makes it clear that there are 12 pillars in front of Moses "for the people," and it is most likely that the pillars were sprinkled as a symbol of cleansing the people. After all, Moses was standing in front of hundreds of thousands of people, and they could not all be sprinkled by the blood of a few bulls.
- 2 Breasted, James Henry. *Ancient Times, a History of the Early World: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient History and the Career of Early Man*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1916.
- 3 Lamouroux, Maurice. "Moses Escapes to Midian & the Call of God / Moïse S'échappe à Madian & L'appel De Dieu / 15 Boticelli Jethro S Daughters B" *Moses Escapes to Midian & the Call of God / Moïse S'échappe à Madian & L'appel De Dieu / 15 Boticelli Jethro S Daughters B*. Accessed September 1, 2004. http://www.artbible.net/1T/Exo0211_Escape_call/pages/15BOTICELLIJETHROS DAUGHTERS B.htm.
- 4 J.G. van der Land, "Pharaohs and the Bible: David Rohl's chronology untenable." Accessed August 31, 2004, <http://www.bga.nl/en/discussion/echroroh.html>.



“Our teacher, who was not as familiar with ancient literature, has been able to use your material with great success because of the excellent material you have written, otherwise she would have needed to read and study this material a great deal more on her own to prepare for teaching. . . . All in all, I think you have produced something fantastic that will enable teachers to teach this material without needing a classics degree, and I for one am really grateful.”

—Camille

“It is Awesome! Thanks for all the hard work! The depth of thinking and logic skills needed are perfect for seventh graders!”

—Kelly