

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

History in the Bible

THE TOWER OF BABEL

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

First read Genesis chapter 3

The years passed and life was hard. Adam and Eve struggled to live outside the garden they had lost. Then Eve had a son. "It's a boy! It's a boy!" She called to Adam. "We'll call him Cain." Soon after this Cain got a baby brother. Eve called him Abel.

I am sure Adam told his two boys about the garden in Eden and the things that happened there. How God put him and their mother out of the garden because they did not obey His command. Now they were cut off from His life and the fertile garden. Eden was behind them and they never would be able to go back (Genesis 3:23).

God sent mighty angels with swords of fire to close the way. It was a picture of God's judgment on sin, and of His curse on Satan and all evil. There would always be war between men who followed Satan - the serpent's seed - and those who had faith in God - the woman's seed (Gen 3:15).

God made all things. God created the heavens and the earth. Then he created the first people, Adam and Eve. God put them in a beautiful garden and told them what they must do. They did not obey God and He put them out of the garden.

ADAM AND EVE DID NOT OBEY

When Adam sinned and did not obey God, his mind and heart turned away from God. Sin changed Adam's whole nature. Sadly he passed his sinful nature on to his children and they passed it to their children (Rom 5:12). We all have Adam's sinful nature! We have all sinned through our father Adam, and our selfish nature rules over us. Sin is our master! Because sin is our master, we do wrong things. God word says, "All have sinned..." (Rom 3:23).

Read Genesis chapters 4 and 5

CAIN AND ABEL KNEW GOD'S WAY

When Cain and Abel were small, they followed their father into the fields. They learned how to till the soil and care for the animals. As they grew older, Cain worked in the garden and grew crops. It was hard work breaking up the ground, and thistles and weeds grew among his vegetables. Cain was young, strong and hard-working. And he looked down on his younger brother.

Abel chose a quiet life, working with the sheep. Every morning, he took them out to find grass. In the evening, he brought them in to a safe place. One day Cain and Abel had to make a choice. It may have been a "Sabbath," the day God told man to rest and

worship (Gen 2:3). On this day, Cain and Abel would bring an offering to God. It was to show they obeyed God. Abel was a righteous man, but Cain lived for himself. He did not care much about God or about these 'special days' God told them to keep.

That morning, the two men got up early. Abel went out into the field to find the best lamb to offer to God. He chose the best one from among the ones born first that season (Gen. 4:4).

Cain went to work in his garden. He cut some of the ripe vegetables and threw them into a basket. Back at the house, he put the basket down near the family altar.

When he saw Abel prepare a lamb for an offering, Cain stood back and frowned. Abel would offer God a lamb as a burnt offering on the altar.

The Bible tells us, "The Lord looked in favour on Abel and his offering..." (Gen 4:4). Some think fire fell from heaven and burned up Abel's offering, but we do not know what happened.

CAIN ARGUED WITH GOD

God did not accept Cain's offering and Cain had an argument with God about it. So God spoke to Cain and gave him a chance to confess his careless life. God called Cain to repent.

God always moves toward to us in grace and mercy, even when we do wrong. His love and favour are always toward us.

When God speaks to us we have two choices. We either believe Him and obey, or we don't! We all have to choose. Men listen and obey God's Word, or they listen to the 'sinner's voice' in their own hearts. When they turn away from God's voice and go their own way, God is sorry. He may allow them to have trouble to make them take notice, but He does not force them to listen to Him.

Cain thought he could obey God his way, but God said to him, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted" (Gen 4:7)?

In everything we do, there is a right and a wrong way. How can we know what is right? God tells us in His word. His word is TRUTH. You can trust God's word!

CAIN KNEW RIGHT FROM WRONG

Cain knew what was 'right.' If his life had been 'right,' his offering would have been right, also! God wanted the worship of a loving and pure heart, but Cain's heart was proud and full of himself. All his life, Cain went through the acts of worship without having true worship in his heart. He lived just as he wanted to, and without any care for God or his brother.

God waited for Cain to repent. Only then could God receive his worship. Cain knew that God was not pleased and he was angry at God.

And he was angry with his brother, too! That was not right. It was not Abel's fault. It was Cain's fault.

"Why are you angry?" God asked Cain. Am I so unjust as to reject your offering if you do what is right in your life? That is what God meant, because the Bible says: "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he (Abel) was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offering" (Heb 11:4). And again: "Do not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one (Satan)" (1 John 3:12).

GOD PREACHED TO CAIN

God preached the gospel to Cain. "Do what is right (live by faith) and be accepted..." God said, "Though sin crouches at the door; (waiting to grab you) you will master it. But if you do wrong (and continue to turn your back on God) sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you" (Gen 4:7).

Out in the field, Cain killed his brother because he could not control his anger. Anger is like a fire. It burns deep in men's hearts.

Abel's blood cried out to God from the earth where it had been spilled. His blood cried for pay back, and God spoke to Cain again!

Oh, the mercy and grace of God! His sweet voice keeps coming to us sinners, over and over again. Oh the grace of God that He does not go on His way, and leave us to suffer in our sin!

"Where is your brother?" God asked Cain. "Your younger brother - the one you should be protecting"?

Cain had to make a choice. He could have confessed his sin of murder and said he was sorry. He chose to dodge God's question, and he told a lie to cover up what he had done. How foolish! God knows all about us, and He knew all about Cain! He sees deep into our hearts and lives (Heb 4:12).

SATAN THE FATHER OF LIES

Satan is "the father of lies." And he is a murderer! So Cain followed his father. Satan put murder in his heart and he murdered his brother. Jesus said those who follow Satan are "sons of the devil" (John 8:44).

God gave Cain time to repent and confess his sin. From beginning to end, the Bible calls men to repent and confess their sin to God (Acts 17:30). And God waits for us to do this.

When God spoke to Cain again, it was in judgment. If we don't listen to God's voice calling us to repent and trust Him, what is there left for us? Only His judgment! (Heb 10:30-31).

GOD PUNISHES SINNERS

Cain was judged because of his sin against God the giver of life, and for killing Abel, his brother, who was made "in the image of God." (Gen 9:6) God told Cain, "You won't have a place that you can call home. Your father and mother won't want you and the soil will be even harder for you to work than before..."

"It's more than I can bear..." Cain said. He was too proud to say he had sinned and that he should be punished.

Cain went to another country, where no one knew him. He and his sons built a city there. Cain named the city after his son Enoch. Enoch may have been Cain's firstborn, for Enoch means 'beginning.'

Cain made a new start. Men in Cain's family learned science, art, and engineering. They spread out faster than the sons of Seth (Adam's third son), who were godly people. Cain's tribe did not care about God's laws and men began to take more than one wife. Under God's law a man must take only one wife (Gen 2:24), but Lamech married two women (4:19).

They did not repent

1. As far as we know from the Bible, Adam and Eve did not repent.
2. People did not repent when men like Enosh "called on the name of the Lord" (4:26).
3. Did anyone repent when Enoch warned them of God's judgment on sinners (5:21-24)?
4. Lamech did not repent when he killed a man (5:29).
5. People did not repent when Noah preached for 120 years (2 Peter 2:5).

GOD SENT MEN TO SPEAK FOR HIM

God sent men of faith among the people to speak for Him, but no one wanted to hear about Almighty God or repent of their sin (Rom 3:10-12). We find: a) No repentance that we know of in Adam and Eve. b) No repentance in the days of Enosh, son of Seth, when men of faith "called on the name of the Lord" (4:26). c) None in the days when Enoch warned of "judgment to come" (5:21-24; Jude 14,15). d) None in the days of Lamech (5:29). e) None in the days when Noah preached about a coming flood (2 Peter 3:9).

Men became more violent and fought each other. No one was safe. There were no laws or courts, so Lamech was not punished for his murder of a man.

And God's grace and patience waited. (2 Pet 2:5)

Lamech's song is a song of victory on the use of the sword (Gen 4:23-24).

Cainite history begins with murder and ends with the praise of murder. Human life was not held sacred, as God commanded (Gen 9:5-6).

Read Genesis chapter 6-7

NOAH, A MAN OF FAITH

"The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain" (Gen 6:6). God loved His creation, but the earth was filled with wickedness.

But faith had not gone from the earth, and God called Noah to speak for Him. 1. Noah walked with God in a world filled with hate and murder. 2. He was married, but we don't know Noah's wife's name. 3. He had three married sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. 4. He loved and obeyed God (6:22).

Noah was a man of great faith and courage. He told everyone that God would judge the earth because of their wickedness. He warned men that God would send a flood. He was not put off by the mocking of his neighbours, for his faith was in God alone (Heb 11:7).

"But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord." (6:8) Perhaps Noah was asking God to save his world, even as Abraham prayed for the righteous people in Sodom (Gen 18:22-33).

GOD TOLD NOAH HE WOULD DESTROY THE WORLD

God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people... so make yourself an ark of cypress wood...this is how you will build it" (6:13-14).

The ark was designed by God. The word 'ark' is very old. It is used in Exodus 2:3 and Deuteronomy 10:1.

This ark had ideal measurements -- 450 x 75 x 45 feet -- because God gave them. In 1609 the Dutchman, Peter Jansen, built a ship one third the size. It was very stable in the water and carried "one third more cargo" than an ordinary ship that long.

As the day came for God to send the flood on the earth, He called to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family" (Gen 7:1).

God's call is tender, like a father calling his children to come into the house away from a coming storm. "Come in! Come in!" God calls, but most do not listen. Only Noah and his wife, their three sons and the three son's wives went into the ark.

Then the animals and birds came to Noah. He did not have to go out and find them. This was a sign to that generation! Noah took male and female animals into the ark, also animals to sacrifice to God after the flood.

Then God shut Noah in. Why was this necessary? To make sure they were safe, and to keep all others out. Up to that moment, the door of the ark stood open. God's word to all was, "Whosoever will may come" (Rev 22:17).

God gave man a final seven days to accept His offer (7:4). Would anyone else go into the ark and be saved? No, not one person came forward to join Noah. The seven days passed like every other day, with men and women "eating, drinking and marrying..." (Luke 17:26-27).

Read Genesis chapter 8

A FLOOD COVERED THE EARTH

Now God, the JUDGE raised His hand (Jas 5:9). The day Noah was shut up in the ark, it began to rain. The rain came down in 'bursts' or 'spouts' and it did not stop for forty days. Also the waters from the deep parts of the earth came up and flooded the land. By

this time the earth was completely covered with water and the ark bobbed around on the water.

All the mountains were covered “to a depth of more than twenty feet,” and all living creatures died. We notice the force of these words: a) “Every living thing..” (7:21). b) “Everything on dry land that had the breath of life that moved on the earth...” (7:22). c) “Every living thing on the face of the earth...” (7:23). d) “Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark” (7:23).

Noah did not know where he was. He was ‘shut up to God.’ His life was in God’s hands. This is a great example of a man’s faith. When we trust ourselves to God, He takes care of us (1 Peter 5:7).

For 150 days Noah waited for God to ‘remember’ him. “The ark floated on the surface of the water” (7:18). Noah did not try to steer the ark. In the will of God, the spirit of a Christian is borne up above the evil, as we are cared for by our heavenly Father. We can trust Him to be in control.

EIGHT PERSONS WERE SAVED

“Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed” (8:2). The rain stopped and the water drained off the earth.

At the end of 150 days, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, in Armenia, north of Assyria and east of Turkey.

After 40 days Noah opened a window at the top of the ark. He let out a search team... first a raven, then a dove. Why did Noah wait 40 days? Because he walked with God. He was in step with God (Amos 3:3). Every morning Noah got up and asked God what he should do that day. He was not in a hurry. He waited for God’s answer, and God gave it to him.

The dove came back to Noah with an olive leaf in her beak. Noah waited seven more days (8:12), and sent the dove out again. This time it did not return. Then Noah took off ‘the covering’ (perhaps part of the roof) and saw that the land was drying up.

We might have jumped out of the ark and shouted ‘Halleljuah’, but Noah waited. Then God said, “Come out of the ark...Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you...” (8:15-17).

NOAH BUILT AN ALTAR TO THE LORD

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed some of the ‘clean’ animals as burnt offerings (8:20). God accepted Noah’s sacrifice. God had told men how to walk by faith and how to worship Him. The word altar means ‘lifting up of the sacrifice, or going up to God.’

God forgave and sanctified Noah’s family because of Noah’s sacrifice. The sweet smell of the burning sacrifice pleased God, just as Noah’s holy life pleased Him.

All animal sacrifice looked forward to Jesus’ death for man’s sin. (1 Pet 1:19-21; Heb 9:22) God said, “the soul that sins must die.” (Ezek 18:4,20) In place of the sinner’s death, God would accept the blood of an animal sacrifice. The blood would be a ‘covering’ or atonement for the sins of the people. ‘Atonement’ means ‘to make peace with God’ (Num 28:22).

That sacrifice – that blood spilled – was a picture of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for you and me (Rom 5:11). “God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

Read Genesis chapter 9

A NEW WORLD AND GOD’S PROMISE

Noah was head of a new world, even as Adam was head of the first creation. God made a new agreement or covenant with the earth (9:8-17), and gave Noah a sign. This sign was the rainbow. Noah saw it every time it rained. The rainbow was like a bridge from earth to Heaven, and it reminded Noah of God’s promise: “Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life” (9:15).

God’s covenant with Noah was really a promise, made to all His creation. Noah was named because he was head of the ‘new creation’ or the new earth. God told Noah His

order, fixed in creation, would remain: 1. God's order in nature. 2. God's order in civil life. 3. God's order in redemption (pictured in altar and sacrifice, 9:8-17).

After over 1,600 years of no written law, God started out on a new relationship with Noah and his family. God's goodness is in words a poet might use: "As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (8:22).

After the flood, God gave Noah: a) A new covenant with the earth (8:20-22). b) New rules to live by (9:1-7). c) A new relationship with Himself (9:8-17). d) A new test (9:18-23). e) A final prophecy for mankind (9:24-29).

NOAH'S THREE SONS

Noah's three sons had large families. They soon spread out over the world (9:19). At this time, a new temptation came to Noah. What happened changed every society.

Before he began to build the ark, Noah was a farmer-preacher. After the flood, he went back to farming and caring for animals. He worked the ground and planted grape vines. When the grapes were ripe, he had a big party with his family, and he drank old wine. He "became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent" (9:21; Prov 23:30-32).

Satan had found a way to 'uncover' Noah. He was a sinner by birth, and showed it in his actions, just as we do.

Ham made fun of his father's naked body. Japheth and Shem covered their father's shame (9:23). God warns us not to make fun of sin (Prov. 14:9). God's command is, "honour your parents..." (Ex 20:12).

Because Ham had no respect for his father, Noah spoke a curse on Ham's son: "Cursed be Canaan!" Did Noah refuse to speak Ham's name?

At the same time Noah blessed Shem (9:26). Japheth was joined to Shem's blessing by the words: "May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem" (9:27). Japheth would be blessed as he joined with Shem in trusting God.

NOAH WAS A PROPHET

God showed Noah what would happen to his three sons, and the peoples and nations that came from them. And the history of the world has followed this prophecy closely.

In Palestine, through the Semitic Jews (from Shem), especially under Joshua, the Canaanites were put down (Jos 9:21-27; Jud 1:28-30). The other tribes of Ham ruled in Egypt and the Nile Valley.

"The lowest of slaves" (9:25), meant the lowest of them all. This was partly fulfilled when Joshua made slaves of the Gibeonites (Jos 9:27). The same was true when Solomon ruled over Israel (1 Kings 9:20-21).

In North Africa, the children of Ham were conquered by Persians, Greeks and Romans. These nations all came from Japheth. (Erich Sauer "The Dawn of World Redemption")

Ham's sons were cursed, not because of what their father did, but because they followed in his steps (Ezek 18:20). This is a sad reality of life.

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem." Did Noah know that Shem had more faith than his brothers? Or that Shem had true faith in God?

Of Ham's descendants, only Nimrod got special mention in the Bible. He built an empire and cities (10:8-10). The first and greatest city Nimrod built was Babel = Babylon. Later Nimrod moved further north and built Nineveh.

NIMROD'S RULED WITHOUT GOD

Nimrod set up a government that was against God, and he started a new religion of idolatry. The LXX (Greek translation of the Bible) says he was 'a mighty hunter before the Lord'. At that time kings proved how strong and brave they were by hunting lions. Pictures of kings hunting lions were found in rock carvings.

After Nimrod's death, he was worshipped as 'Belus', or Bel=the Lord. Babel (Babylon) was the first of Nimrod's cities. It was called "the mother of harlots" by John in "The Revelation."

Nimrod gathered the people into villages and built walls to protect them. As towns grew into cities they were called city-states or kingdoms (Gen 10:10).

There are many stories told about Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, and her son Tammuz, born after Nimrod died (or was killed?). She claimed Nimrod was the sun god and Tammuz was Nimrod come back to life. She said he was "the promised seed" born to be the Saviour of men (Gen 3:15).

Both mother and son were worshipped in Babylon and this idolatry spread to all nations. ("Nineveh and its Remains" by Herodotus)

At this time men invented: a) The decimal system of measure that we use today. b) The science of math. c) The twin sciences of astronomy and astrology. d) Codes of law like Hammurabi's which was found written on a stone cylinder. e) The cuneiform system of writing. Wedge-shaped prints were made in wet clay and the clay tablets baked hard in the sun.

Read Genesis chapter 11 ANOTHER NEW BEGINNING

After the confusion of Babel, Nimrod went to Assyria and built Nineveh. This city was dug up by the British archaeologist Sir Austen Layard, beginning in 1845. He filled the British Museum with its treasures, but they were from a much later time in history than Nimrod's time.

When God sent Jonah to Nineveh, He called it "that great city." (Jonah 1:1) It had a wall ten miles long around it, with many gates. Hundreds of thousands of people lived in Nimrod's city (Jonah 4:11).

"Now the whole world had one language..." These words must span a long period of time. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar (Babylon) and settled there." Babel is a form of Babylon (11:1). The 'whole earth...' may mean the territory where these men lived.

God commanded Noah to "increase in number and fill the earth" (9:1). The peoples who moved eastward to the area of Babylon stuck together to be safe and to help each other. One language helped them stay close.

The story of Babel tells us why God made a new beginning in history.

Many years had passed and thoughts of the flood quickly faded from people's minds. Men did not keep God in their thoughts (Rom 1:21-25).

These eastern peoples found a new way to build. They made clay bricks and baked them (11:2-3). They used pitch (tar) to lay the bricks. Before this men lived in tents or built with stone.

What they built is preserved in the great ziggurats (Zig-gu-rat). They are like a pyramid with steps on all sides, leading to the top. At the top there was a place for men to worship the sun. Babel was probably a ziggurat. Another rose into the sky at Ur of the Chaldees in Abram's day.

The Arabians worshipped the sun without any object or symbol (Job 31:26-28). Even Judah's kings practiced this sun worship (2 Kings 23:11).

God's answer was: "Let Us go and confuse their language..." (11:7). God came down from Heaven and judged the people of Babel. He scattered the people "over all the earth and they stopped building the city" (11:8).

Those who study language tell us that, as people groups separate from each other, their language changes, but at this time God suddenly changed their language. Language is the key to culture. Culture is our philosophy of life, our thought patterns. Our culture marks us out from others. That is why it is so important for missionaries to study the language of the people they go to. They study the language to learn the culture.

Every language group wants a place of their own. The United Nations may want 'one world' with no borders between nations, but every culture fights for a place of its own.

Because of Christ there is a universal language that crosses all languages and cultures. It is a language of love. Christ's love breaks down all boundaries. Paul said

Christ had “broken down the wall of hostility” that use to separate Jew and Gentile and all other races of men (Eph 2:14).

God did not destroy these people at Babel, but He mixed up their talk. One day they were all talking at once and working very hard. The work was going well when suddenly, and without warning, a mason could not understand the man working next to him! And he couldn't tell what the other men were saying. When one called for bricks, or for pitch, the other looked blank. So the big building project at Babel came to a sudden stop.

BEFORE BABEL MEN KNEW ONE GOD

Until the time of Babel, man knew one God. The God of creation wanted mankind to know Him, so He revealed Himself: 1. In nature (Rom 1:19-20). 2. In man's conscience (Rom 2:15). 3. In man's history (Gen 1-9). 4. In Christ, the Son (Heb 1:2).

All heathen religions twist and change this revelation of God. When The man without God worships the rivers, hills, the sun and idols. He worships demon spirits. The idol itself is nothing. It has no power. But every idol has a demon spirit behind it (1 Cor 10:20-21; Rev 9:20; Deut 32:17).

Read Genesis 11:10-27

GOD CHOSE MEN OF FAITH

“The generations of Shem...” are his family history. The family line from Shem to Abram has 10 names in it (11:10-27). The record given here leaves out the total years each person lived, saying only “and he died.” From this record we cannot say when the flood actually happened.

We do know that God did not leave man to go on in his lostness. He chose men of faith and made covenant with them. They would carry His promise on into the future and be His witnesses in the earth.

When the time was right, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save men from sin. He came “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Now, by faith in Him, we can come back to God. Saved sinners can go to heaven because Jesus took their punishment in His own body. The sword of God's judgment came against Him and we can go free. Jesus Christ opened the gate to heaven to all men (Rev 22:17).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in His shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Ask Jesus to save you from your sins. Then read more about God's plan for you in the Bible. You can have peace and joy in your life.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did God put Adam out of the garden in Eden?
2. Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's?
3. How did Abel know the rules for worshipping God?
4. Why did evil in the earth get worse and worse?
5. Why did God save Noah's family from the flood?
6. Did all Noah's sons grow up to love God?
7. What prophesy did Noah give about the nations?
8. What does the word 'Sabbath' mean to you?
9. Name some men of faith found in the Bible.

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