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## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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#### THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN (4:1-11:26)

##### The Place of the Passage

Sometimes sin has immediate consequences; sometimes it does not. In the previous chapter, we saw sin's immediate consequences. Adam and Eve realized they were naked, they hid from God, and God punished them for their sins. In this section of Genesis, we see the longer-term consequences of sin—how it just seems to get worse and worse. The scope of Genesis 4-11 is the “big picture”: instead of the earth being filled with representatives of God, the earth is filled with the consequences of sin. Nevertheless, God's grace abounds even in the face of our sin. Glimpses of his mercy are evident amid this big picture of the spread of sin with Seth, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and this prepares the way for the zeroed in focus beginning in chapter 12 on Abraham, who will bring blessings to the nations.

##### The Big Picture

The fall initiates a downward spiral of sin, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel and culminating in the Tower of Babel.

##### Discussion

In order to get a basic snapshot of this period, skim through the following passages and jot down brief answers to the following questions: How does sin spread? What is God's punishment for that sin? How do you see God's grace in this passage?

##### **Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1–26)**

- How does sin spread?
- What is God's punishment for the sin of Cain?
- How do you see God's grace in this passage?

##### **Noah (Gen. 6:1–22)**

- How does sin spread?
- What is God's punishment for the sin described there?
- How do you see God's grace in this passage (see also Gen. 8:20–9:7)?

##### **Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:18–29)**

- How does sin spread?
- What is God's punishment for the sin described there?
- How do you see God's grace in this passage?

### **The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9)**

- How does sin spread?
- What is God’s punishment for the sin of building Babel?
- How do you see God’s grace in this passage?

— Genesis is organized around sections that begin, “These are the generations of . . .” (Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). It is very concerned with tracing the genealogies, the offspring of Adam and Eve down through history. Look back at Genesis 3:15. Why do you think there is such a concern with genealogies that trace human offspring in the book of Genesis?

— In Genesis 10, we see the table of nations, as the descendants from Noah spread throughout the earth. After chapter 10 the focus is on the Semites, from whom the the Israel descend from. But if the focus is on the line of Shem, why might Genesis 10 include accounts of all these other nations?

— As you think back over Genesis 4-11, what is the main point of these chapters?

### **Gospel Glimpses**

**PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE GOSPEL** — John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). Similarly, Genesis 4–11 prepares the way for Abraham by showing the profound depths of human sinfulness when left unchecked. Before the work of redemption is further carried out, the downward tendency of sin is clearly illustrated, in order that subsequently in the light of this downgrade movement the true divine cause of the upward course of redemption (that is, the story of Abraham and the formation of the nation Israel) might be appreciated.” The ugliness and hopelessness of human sin prompt us to marvel at the even greater depths of God’s love in sending his own Son to suffer on behalf of such hopeless sinners.

**GRACE IN JUDGMENT** — Even as God demonstrates the consequences of sin, grace abounds. Before Cain murders Abel, the Lord warns Cain about the danger of sin (Gen. 4:7). Even after that murder, God protects Cain with a mark even as he is exiled from the presence of the Lord to the land of Nod, east of Eden (Gen. 4:16). And when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Gen. 6:5), God saves Noah in an ark and resolves, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21). Even as the Lord confuses human language at Babel and disperses them to cover the face of the earth, he does this largely to protect them from their own sin. Most importantly, throughout the downward spiral of sin evident in Genesis 4-11, God actively develops and preserves a line of holy offspring, preparing the way for the account of Abraham beginning in Genesis 12.

## Whole-Bible Connections

**THE GENEALOGIES** — Genesis 3:15 promised that the offspring of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. The genealogies of Genesis therefore help us trace the development of this offspring. Seth is important, since after Abel is killed and Cain exiled, we find Eve saying, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him" (Gen. 4:25). Adam was created "in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1; cf. 1:26–27), and Adam "fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth" (Gen. 5:3). This image is then passed down through the line of Seth in Genesis 5. The seventh generation in the offspring of Seth is Enoch, who "walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). The tenth generation is Noah, who "shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands" (Gen. 5:29). In contrast, the seventh generation in the offspring of Cain is Lamech, who multiplies the sin of Cain (Gen. 4:23–24). In genealogical accounts the number of generations is significant; Matthew's Gospel records three sets of fourteen generations, which are six sets of seven generations. As a result, Jesus is the seventh set of generations. The line of Adam through Seth culminates in Jesus.

**THE NATIONS** — God originally commanded Adam to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" as a representative of God. Instead of Adam thus filling the earth with the image of God, "the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence" in Noah's day (Gen. 6:11). Instead of multiplying representatives of God to fill the earth, God scatters rebels against God at Babel and "dispersed them over the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9) with many different languages. The scattering of Babel into many languages is reversed, however, at Pentecost, when God unites "devout men from every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5) to hear "in [their] own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11).

**EXILE** — The consequence of sin is exile. First, Adam and Eve are sent "out from the garden of Eden" (Gen. 3:23-24). Then Cain is sent "away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden" (Gen. 4:16). After the Tower of Babel is destroyed, "the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9). Jacob must similarly flee the Promised Land because of his deception and stealing of his brother's birthright, and he lives in exile with his father Laban for many years (Genesis 28-30). Even before Israel enters the Promised Land, they are warned that disobedience would lead to their exile from the land (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64; 30:3-4). And Israel's sin does indeed cause them to be exiled from the land, first to Assyria and then to Babylon. However, even prophecies of the exile look forward to restoration from exile (Lev. 26:44-45; Deut. 30:3). Jesus himself is exiled to Egypt to flee the wrath of Herod (Matt. 2:13), and ultimately he experiences exile at the cross, where he cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). This was an exile from the Father. The Son became sin for us, at the Father's will, so that "in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

## **Theological Soundings**

**SIN** — The effects of sin are not only personal but spread quickly to fill the earth. Sin is contagious and addictive. It not only affects the individual but has cosmic and corporate implications. God brought the flood because “the earth was corrupt in God’s sight” (Gen. 6:11). Similarly, “the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Rom. 8:22). The scope of redemption is also cosmic and not only individual, as “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption,” but this cosmic redemption is intertwined with the redemption of humanity since the creation will “obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Gen. 8:21).

**COMMON GRACE** — Even as rebellion spreads throughout the earth, we see evidence of God’s common grace at work. Culture develops. From Cain’s line, Jubal fathered those who played the lyre and pipe, and Tubal-Cain forged instruments of bronze and iron (Gen. 4:20–22). One day, in the restored new earth, “the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it [God’s city]”—that is, “the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev. 21:24, 26).

**GRACE IN RE-CREATION** — Just as God created the heavens and the earth from the chaos of the waters (Gen. 1:12), so God initiates a work of re-creation through the waters of the flood. God makes a covenant with Noah with the sign of the rainbow after the flood (Gen. 9:8-17). Just as God blessed Adam and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28), so God blesses Noah and says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1,7). Tragically, however, God’s work of re-creation concludes with human rebellion once more; just as Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, so Noah sins in the garden of his vineyard (Gen. 9:20-21).

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Exile:** The relocation of a group of people from a preferred homeland. Several relocations of large groups of Israelites/Jews have occurred throughout history, but “the exile” typically refers to the Babylonian exile, that is, Nebuchadnezzar’s relocation of residents of the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC (Residents of the northern kingdom of Israel had been resettled by Assyria in 722 BC). After Babylon came under Persian rule, several waves of Jewish exiles returned and repopulated Judah.

A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE : GENESIS (THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN)  
**WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT**

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Based on Genesis 4:1-11:26 please answer the following questions:

**Chapter 4**

1. What were the names of Adam and Eve's first 2 sons? What were their occupations (4:1,2)?
2. Describe the sacrifices each of these sons offered to God (4:3,4). What was God's attitude toward their sacrifices (4:4,5)?
3. What was Cain's attitude when he knew God was displeased, and what did God say to him about it (4:5-7)? What did Cain do to Abel as a result (4:8)?
4. How did Cain respond when God questioned him about Abel (4:9)? How does this differ from the proper attitudes Christians should have?
5. What can we learn about sin from this study?
6. What punishment did Cain receive (4:10-12)? What protection did God give Cain from being killed (4:13-15)?
7. Where did Cain live after God had stated his punishment (4:16)?
8. What practice did Lamech introduce (4:19)? Was this practice in harmony with God's plan?
9. What did Eve name her third son and why (4:25)? What did he name his son (4:26)?
10. What did people begin to do in these days?

**Genesis 5**

1. What can we learn from the fact Adam's son was born in Adam's image or likeness?
2. What curse or punishment from God was fulfilled in 5:5?
3. Why did Enoch not live on earth as long as other men? What happened to him (5:23,24)?
4. Why did Noah's father choose the name he gave Noah (5:29)?
5. What were the names of Noah's sons? How old was Noah before they were born (5:32)?

## **Genesis 6**

1. What were some physical characteristics of some people in Noah's time (6:4)? Describe what people were like spiritually
2. What did God think about these conditions among people (6:6)?
3. What did God determine to do about conditions on earth (6:7)?
4. What classes of living things were going to receive the greatest damage (6:7)?
5. How long did God yet wait until He took action (6:3), and what does this tell us about God's character?
6. In contrast to other people, how is Noah described (6:8,9)?
7. What had God decided to do to the earth and its inhabitants, and why had He decided this (6:11-13)?
8. What provision did God make to spare the good people?
9. What is a covenant, and with whom did God make one (6:18)?
10. Describe Noah's response to God's instruction (6:22).

## **Genesis 7**

1. Why did God spare Noah (7:1)?
2. How long did God say it would rain (7:4)?
3. What information is given that tells how high the water got (7:17-20)?
4. What happened to all the people and animals not on the ark (7:21-23)?
5. How long did the water prevail on the earth (7:24)?

## **Genesis 8**

1. When and where did the ark come to rest (8:1-4)?
2. When could the mountains first be seen (8:5)?
3. What kind of bird did Noah first send out and what happened to it – 8:6,7?

4. What kind of bird did he send next and what happened (8:9)?
5. How long did Noah wait before sending birds again the next two times, and what happened each time (8:10-12)?
6. When did Noah remove the covering of the ark and see dry ground (8:13)?
7. When did they leave the ark, and how long was this after the rain had begun (8:15-19)?
8. What did God say the animals were supposed to do?
9. What is the first thing we are told that Noah did after leaving the ark (8:20)?
10. What promise did God make to Noah at that time (8:21,22)?

### **Genesis 9**

1. What responsibility were Noah and his sons given (9:1)?
2. What kinds of food were men instructed to eat, and what were they not to eat (9:2-4)?
3. What are we forbidden to kill and what reason is given why this is different from killing animals (9:5,6)?
4. What punishment was decreed for the kind of killing that God forbade?
5. With whom did God make a covenant in 9:8-11, and what was the covenant?
6. What is the sign of the covenant (9:12-17)?
7. Explain the meaning of 9:19.
8. What was Noah's occupation after the flood (9:20,21)?
9. What did he do wrong as a result?
10. What did Ham do that displeased Noah?

### **Genesis 10**

1. How has the account of Gen. 10 troubled history?
2. Name the sons of Japheth – 10:2.

3. Name the sons of Ham – 10:6.
4. What famous descendant of Ham is named in 10:8,9, and what was his occupation? What kingdom(s) did he establish and what city(s) did he begin (10:10,11)?
5. What other nation, often mentioned in the Old Testament, descended from Ham (10:14)?

### **Genesis 11**

1. What did the people in Shinar intend to do and why (11:1-4)?
2. What did God say was His objection to their plan (11:5,6)?
3. What did God do to frustrate their plans (11:7-9)?
4. What name was given to the city (11:9)?
5. List the descendants of Noah from Shem to Abram.
6. Name Abram's two brothers, and name the son of one of them (11:26,27).
7. What was the name of the region where Abram and his family originally lived?
8. Where did they move (11:28-31)?
9. Name Abram's wife and Nahor's wife, and tell what problem Abram's wife had (11:29,30).
10. Where did Haran die and where did Terah die (11:28-32)?



