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Day 5 Primeval History: Genesis 4-11

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Five Principles to keep in mind when Interpreting Biblical Narratives

1. None of these narratives tells the complete story, and there is always more we wish we knew. The authors and redactors consciously selected, emphasized, and arranged their materials in a particular way for a reason, generally theological. Thus, it is helpful to regularly ask, “Why was this information included?” and “What purpose(s) does it serve?”
2. Remarkably, Old Testament narratives present what actually happened, which means they often provide negative examples, rather than just the “right” way to live.
3. Old Testament narratives rarely teach doctrinal principles explicitly. Rather, they illustrate them. Readers need to consider what principles are being represented.
4. Likewise, these narratives do not usually explicitly state the “moral” to the story (no written “and thus we see” insights). Readers must judge what was right and what was wrong in an account based on information contained elsewhere in scripture.
5. As is often observed, Jehovah is the main character or figure in Old Testament narrative. Whether he is depicted as actively intervening in human affairs or not, the Bible depicts him as always there, blessing, cursing, and bringing about his purposes.

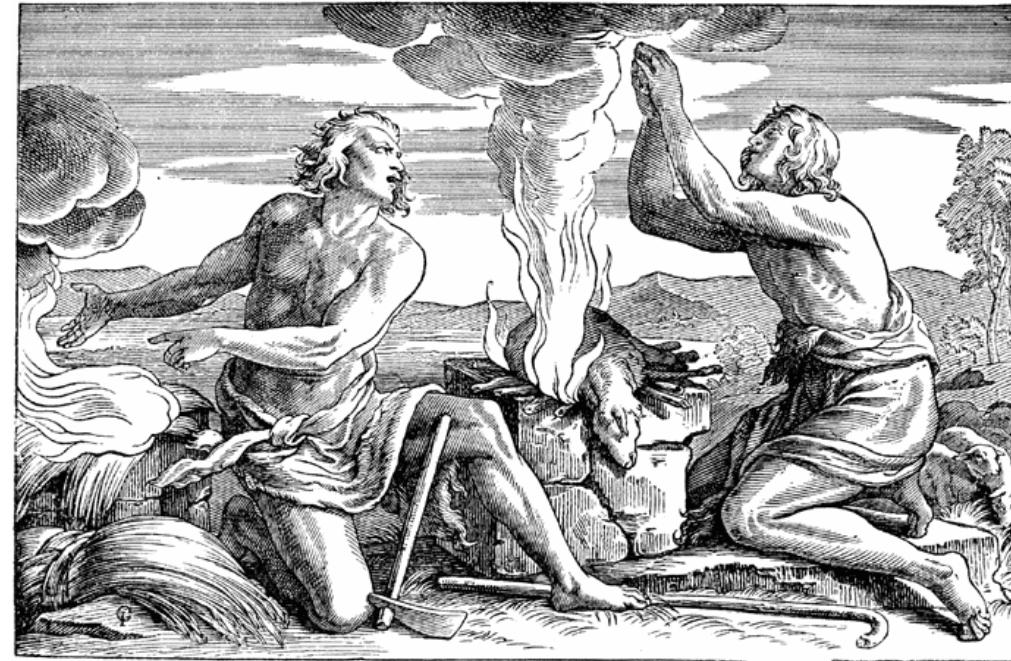
Holzapfel, Pike, and Seely, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament* (2009), 172.

Dr. Lynn Japinga, Professor of Religion @ Hope College hits on important ways I want us to read. She writes: “**focus on discerning God’s action in these stories. How is God being gracious? How is God bringing about shalom? How does God redeem human brokenness? How does God work through human beings to bring about God’s purposes?** Some texts . . . are so ugly and devoid of good news that they are difficult to read and interpret. Some . . . critics have even said these stories should not be proclaimed as the Word of the Lord. Perhaps the better approach is to ask where we find the Word of the Lord in such stories of human brokenness and sin? . . . What does it mean to say that the text is the Word of the Lord? **Some people claim that all parts of Scripture are inspired and infallible, but some biblical stories are horrible examples of human sinfulness. The ‘Word of the Lord’ in this case is ‘Do not do it this way!’ These stories are not meant to be imitated but rather challenged and critiqued.** I believe that all the stories of the Bible, even the ugliest should be taken seriously. They deserve our attention, our conversation, and our criticism. . . . Wrestling with the texts shows that we trust them and God enough to talk back” (*Preaching the Women of the Old Testament* 5-6).

Cain & Abel's Story in Genesis 4

“The short narrative of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 raises some puzzling issues. One is why Yahweh preferred Abel’s offering to Cain’s. Although postbiblical tradition will attempt to fill in the blanks with a moralizing expansion, such as that Abel gave the best he had but Cain gave a lesser offering, the text is silent.”
(Dr. Michael Coogan, Lecturer at Harvard Divinity, The Old Testament, 60)

What information is added in Moses 4 that helps us to understand why the Lord rejected Cain’s sacrifice & why Cain killed Abel’s story?



The First Fruits were considered an acceptable sacrifice (see Leviticus) – so why was Cain’s sacrifice unacceptable to the LORD?

*Prevalent idea in Scholarship:
Cain and Abel as an allegory for
the traditional rivalry between
herders and agriculturalists?*

How do these verses help us understand why the Lord rejected Cain's sacrifice?

Moses 5:13 And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; **and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God.** And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.

16 And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. **But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?**

18 And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord.

25 And it shall be said in time to come—That these abominations were had from Cain; for **he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God;** and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent.

26 And Cain was wroth, and **listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord.**

28 And it came to pass that Cain took one of his brothers' daughters to wife, and **they loved Satan more than God.**



How do these verses help us understand why Cain killed Abel?

- Moses 5:29 And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.
- 30 And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.
- 31 And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.
- 33 And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: **I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.**
- 38 And Cain said unto the Lord: **Satan tempted me because of my brother's flocks.** And I was wroth also; for his offering thou didst accept and not mine; my punishment is greater than I can bear.



“focus on discerning God’s action in these stories. How is God being gracious?

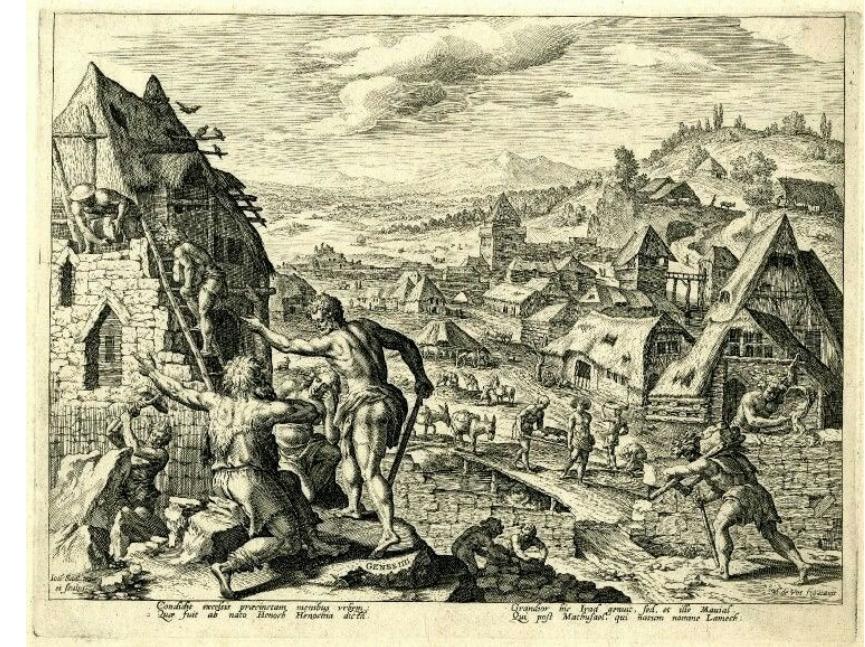
- **Genesis 4:14** Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; **and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.**
- **15** And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. **And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.**
- **Moses 5:41** And Cain was shut out from the presence of the Lord, **and with his wife and many of his brethren dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.**
- **42** And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch, **and he also begat many sons and daughters.** And he builded a city, and he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.



Cain fears reprisal and the Lord marks him to prevent repercussions. In Biblical times death was repaid with death, leading to lasting family feuds

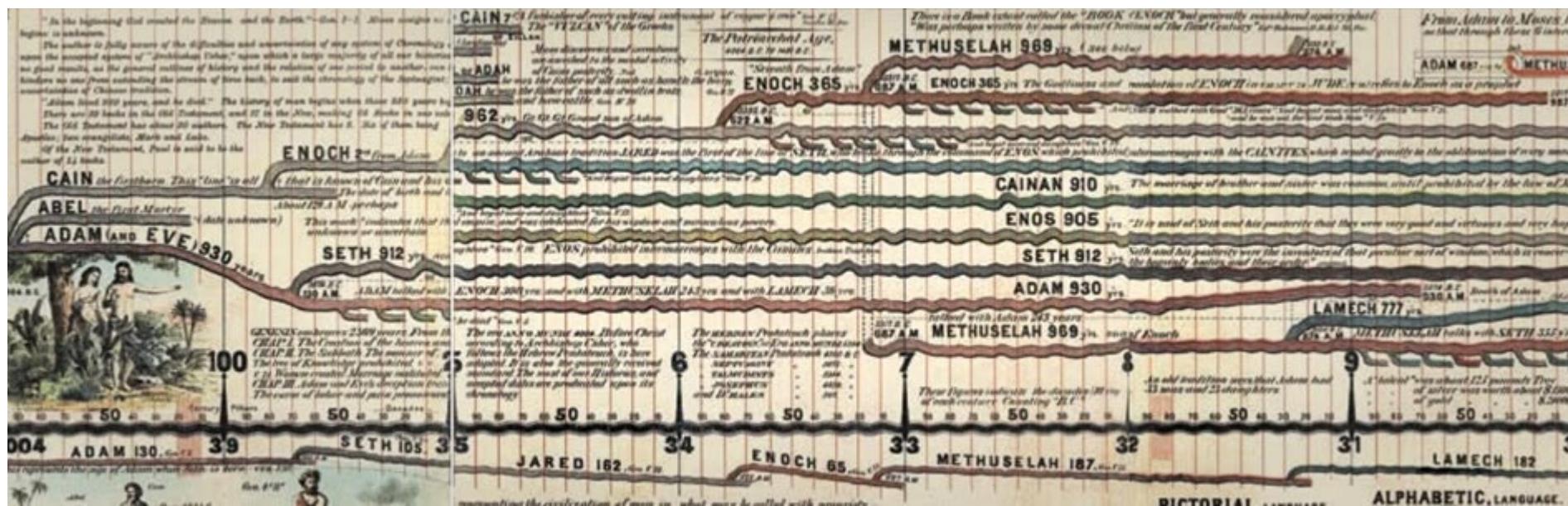
Progressive Human Corruption

- “The creation accounts reveal that God created a good physical universe, and the account of Adam and Eve’s rebellion explains how sin and death came into the world (Gen. 3). **The evil that people experience in themselves and from each other has nothing to do with how God created human beings, but rather with human choice to rebel rather than submit to God. . . . These stories depict humans as thoroughly sinful and deserving of punishment. God is described as one who judges sin, but also as gracious as he continues to pursue reconciliation with his human creatures”** (Dr. Tremper Longman III, Introducing the Old Testament, 12).
- Another theme in the primeval history is the increasing corruption of humans. The disobedience to a divine command by the man and the woman in the garden of Eden is followed by the first murder by Cain and the building of the first city by Cain’s increasingly violent descendants. This culminates in the summary that precedes the narrative of the Flood: **“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.** (Genesis 6:5-6)” (Dr. Coogan 61)



All of this sets up why
the flood was necessary
to God's plan

"From our present-day perspective, the period of time between the fall of Adam and the ministry of Abraham is the most mysterious time in scriptural history. Although it lasted over two thousand years and many tremendous things occurred in it, it is the period concerning which our scriptures say the least. The Bible devotes only eight chapters to this period (approximately ten pages in modern translations), and three of those chapters are lists of genealogies, containing the familiar 'begats'" (Dr. Kent P. Jackson, BYU, "Genesis and the Early Experiences of Mankind," 29).



Sons of God & Daughters of Men

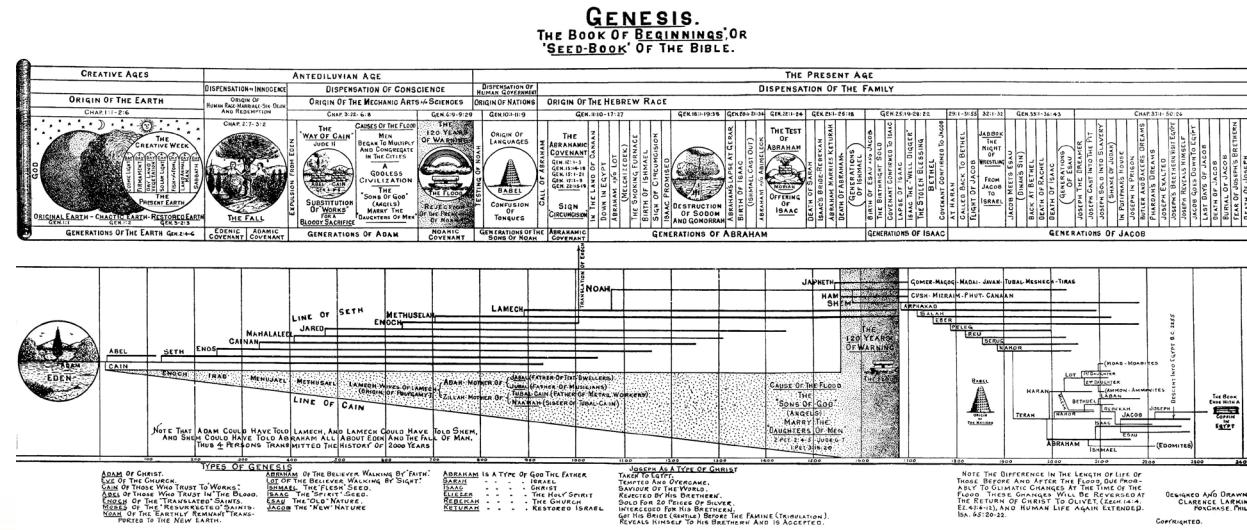
- Genesis 6:1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 **That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.**
- 3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be *an hundred and twenty years*.
- 4 There were **giants** in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.



- Moses 8:13 **And Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God.**
- 14 And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the **sons of men** saw that those daughters were fair, and they took them wives, even as they chose.
- 15 And the Lord said unto Noah: **The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men**, for they will not hearken to my voice.
- 16 And it came to pass that Noah prophesied, and taught the things of God, even as it was in the beginning.
- 17 And the Lord said unto Noah: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he shall know that all flesh shall die; yet his days shall be *an hundred and twenty years*; and if men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them.
- 18 And in those days there were **giants** on the earth, and they sought Noah to take away his life; but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him.

Antediluvian Prophets (5:1–32)

- Genesis 5 is an example of genealogy lists [*toledot*]
 - “This is the book of the **generations** of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and **called their name Adam** [humankind], in the day when they were created.” (Genesis 5:1-2)
 - Note “generations” can also mean “stories”, and Adam can also be translated “humankind”
- Thoughts on the ages of the prophets from your outside reading?
 - When dealing with these passages, Bible commentators and students quickly divide into two broad categories: those who accept that there is some historical reality to the very long lives reported for these early generations, and those who do not



Progressive & Relentless Human Corruption OR a Time of Remarkable Contrasts?

These stories depict humans as thoroughly sinful and deserving of punishment. God is described as one who judges sin, but also as gracious as he continues to pursue reconciliation with his human creatures" (Longman 12).



"While it is clear from scriptures that the world as a whole in those ancient days could be characterized as extremely evil, still the sacred records tell us that at the same time there were people who were extremely righteous. It is, in fact, most interesting that the same generation that produced humanity at its lowest level also produced men and women whose disposition to obey and serve God is unparalleled in human history. It was between the days of Adam and Abraham that two entire societies, those of Enoch and Melchizedek, were found worthy to be taken from the earth as a group to escape its corruptions and enjoy the blessings of a more sublime sphere (Moses 7:69; JST, Gen. 14:32-34; see also Moses 7:27)" (Jackson 31).

JST 14:32, 34 And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. . . 34 And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken. . . Moses 7:27 and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

Gospel Preached from the Beginning

- Moses 5:58-59 And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was. Amen.
- Moses 6:52 And he also said unto [Adam]: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

As children and children's children came to Adam, he taught them carefully all that had been taught him, so that the knowledge of the law might remain upon the earth. The ordinances of the Gospel were practiced, the righteous were organized into the Church, even as today, and the authority of the Priesthood was transmitted by Adam to his children, and by them to their children, so that the precious gift might not be lost. In those days the Church was organized according to the patriarchal order; at least in the days of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, it seems quite clear that the Church was established with all of its essential parts. The Gospel was first revealed to Adam and he taught it to his children. (Moses 6:51-58.) -- John A. Widtsoe in Priesthood and Church Government



The Book of Moses helps us see that Christ & God's Plan of Salvation were always taught

Book of Remembrance Moses 6:5-6

Moses 6:5-6 And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration; And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled.



Adam and his posterity kept a book of remembrance in which sacred things were recorded. Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah, and all the holy men who lived before the flood wrote down what the Lord said to each of them. Shem and Melchizedek, Abraham and his descendants, and the mighty men of old—who saw God, heard his voice, entertained his messengers, saw within the veil, and knew the mysteries of the kingdom by revelation—all these were the proud possessors of authoritative writings long since lost among the children of men. In due course, as part of the restoration of all things—which Peter promises shall include all things “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21)—we shall receive again the Book of Enoch, the Book of Joseph, the remainder of the Book of Abraham, plus unnumbered and unknown volumes. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 1:269

Antediluvian Prophets (5:1–32)



- Enoch
 - “And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And **Enoch walked with God**: and he was not; for God **took him**.” (Genesis 5:23-24)
 - In the sense of rapture or “snatching”
 - The only mention of Enoch in Genesis, yet there are many apocryphal stories and various books of Enoch **and of course the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price with 114 verses devoted to Enoch**.
- What it means for Enoch to walk with God: “*Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you;* therefore **walk with me**. And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see. And he did so. *And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye*” (Moses 6:34-36).

Age of Great Contrast

Satan's Control

- Moses 6:15 And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.



The creation of Zion

- Moses 7:18 -19 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.
- 69 And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.
- **Other individuals between the days of Enoch and Noah were also taken up, or translated, when found worthy to do so (JST, Gen. 14:32; Moses 7:27).**



Zion=Fortress in Hebrew



“We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object.”
(Joseph Smith, TPJS, 160)

Record of Nephi⁴, Son of Nephi³

(c. A.D. 34–110; 1:1–18)

Unity in Faith: All Converted to the Church of Christ (1:1–12)

All Things Held in Common (1:1–3)

Peace and Prosperity in the Land (1:4–11)

the New Order of Worship: Meeting to Fast, Pray, and Hear the Word of the Lord (1:12)

Unity in Society (1:13–18)

No Contention (1:13)

Nephite Nine Pass Away, Nephite Three Tarry, New Disciples Chosen (1:14)

No Wickedness or Divisions (1:15–18)

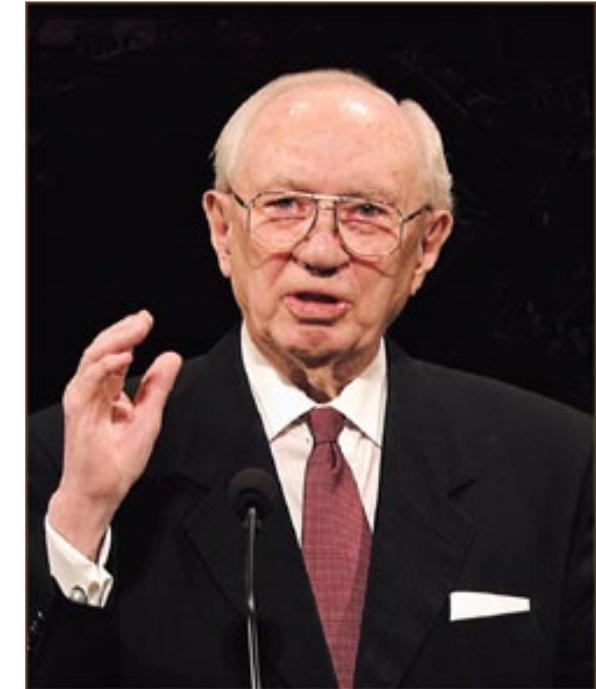
“There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of –ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.” (1:18)

Application: how do we obtain unity today in the Church and how do we address inequality, needs, and divisions?

Moses 7:18 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

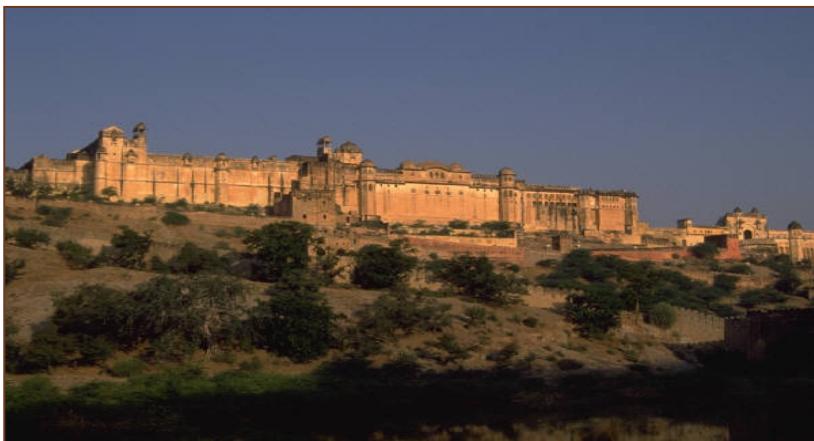
“If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God.”

Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Mission of Saving,” *Ensign* (Nov. 1991), p. 59.





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Understanding the *Why* behind the Flood Story

Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and **that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.



Moses 8:22 And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the **imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually.**

23 And it came to pass that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words;

24 Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not.

25 And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart.

“Repent” = nikham (Hebrew) = to be sorry, moved with pity or compassion

Age of Great Contrast

Satan's Control

- Moses 6:15 And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.



The creation of Zion

- Moses 7:18 -19 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.
- 69 And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.
- **Other individuals between the days of Enoch and Noah were also taken up, or translated, when found worthy to do so (JST, Gen. 14:32; Moses 7:27).**

How does Enoch's vision help us to better understand the *Why* behind the Flood Story?

Moses 7: 26-27 **And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.** And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

33-36 **And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . . and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren.**

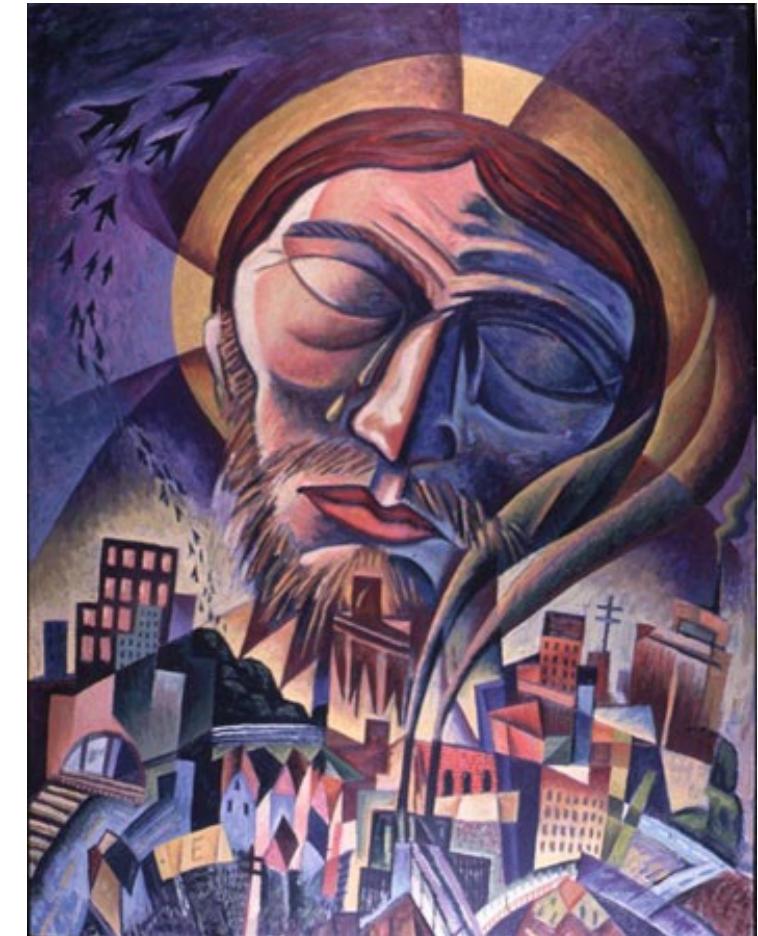
Because of the wickedness of men, Satan rejoice and laughed, while God, in contrast, watched his children with sorrow and wept.

And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept (Moses 7:28)

"Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: **Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children.** When shall I rest, and be cleansed...? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest...? **And when Enoch heard the earth mourn**, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: **O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? Wilt thou not bless the children of Noah?**" (Moses 7:48-49)

“This generation was found to be so wicked that its people were no longer allowed to pollute the earth by their presence on it or to bring innocent sprits into its decadent environment. . . The Flood was an act of mercy, not an act of vengeance. The generation of Noah was so wicked that only an act of cleansing of immense magnitude could allow the next generations a chance to live by higher principles” (Jackson 31).

“The other nations are not held accountable for idolatry in the Torah as Israel will be. But all peoples, Israelites and non-Israelites alike, by virtue of having been created by the one god and in his image—even though they may not know or worship that god—are bound to a basic moral law that preclude murder and all forms of physical and social violence. **What better way to drive home the point that inhumanity and violence undermine the very foundations of society than to describe a situation in which a cosmic catastrophe is the result of human corruption and violence!** This idea runs through the entire Bible and much of later Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thought. The Psalmist makes use of this motif when he denounces the exploitation of the poor, the fatherless, the afflicted, and the destitute, for through such wicked deeds, he says, “all the foundations of the earth are moved.” (Ps 82:5)” (Hayes 53-54).



Noah additional information

Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah. (D&C 107:52)



And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Moses 8:27)

Doublets repeating the same story with consequent contradictions

Weaving together two previous versions of the Flood Story, J source and P source

J

Noah's special status

Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. [7:1]

P

Noah's special status

"For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." [6:17-18]

Animals by pairs and seven pairs

"Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. [7:2-5]

Animals by pairs

"And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. [6:19-22]

Duration of flood

The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. [6:12]

Duration of flood

And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days. [7:24]

End of flood

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove ... He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove... Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more. [8:6-12]

End of flood

In the six hundred first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. Then God said to Noah, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you....[8:13-16]



The Deluge (7:11-24)

The Near Eastern/Mesopotamian model of the cosmos (waters above and beneath the earth) made a universal flood easy to accomplish.

Still, conservative Protestants and Latter-day Saints generally do not have a problem with God being able to do anything . . .

A universal flood has considerable symbolic potential (baptism of the earth, etc.)

Rather small populations would allow massive, local flooding to still have the same effect: destroy a wicked society



Exposition: An act of mercy?

Why kill all the animals to punish wicked humanity?

A similar pattern will be seen with the Israelite conquest of Canaan: not only the wicked but all of their possessions (including livestock) were to be destroyed

- Particularly for “P,” sin was seen as a contaminating agent, an invasive filthiness that corrupted everything it came in contact with

Still, difficult to understand from with modern sensibilities

Perplexing Moment with Noah and Ham

Genesis 9: 22-25 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

Sexual relations? Priesthood garment?



Consequences: Used to explain why Shem and Japheth's posterity should have rulership over Canaan's posterity. & "[Ham's descendant Pharaoh sought] to imitate that order...of Noah, his father, who... cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham." (Abraham 1:26-27)

The Curse of Ham (Genesis 9:20-27)

Beware of twisting Scripture to justify your sinful desires. False teachings are attractive because some love what they promise. The curse of Ham is a form of the prosperity gospel that provides theological justification for pride, greed, racism, and partiality. Loving their sin, its proponents raised the volume on their Genesis 9:20–27 interpretation while muting texts condemning man-stealing (Ex. 21:16; 1 Tim. 1:10)

False teaching always comes at another's expense. The “curse of Ham” not only fueled the slave trade and the church’s blood-handed involvement—it has also poisoned generations with racist thinking.

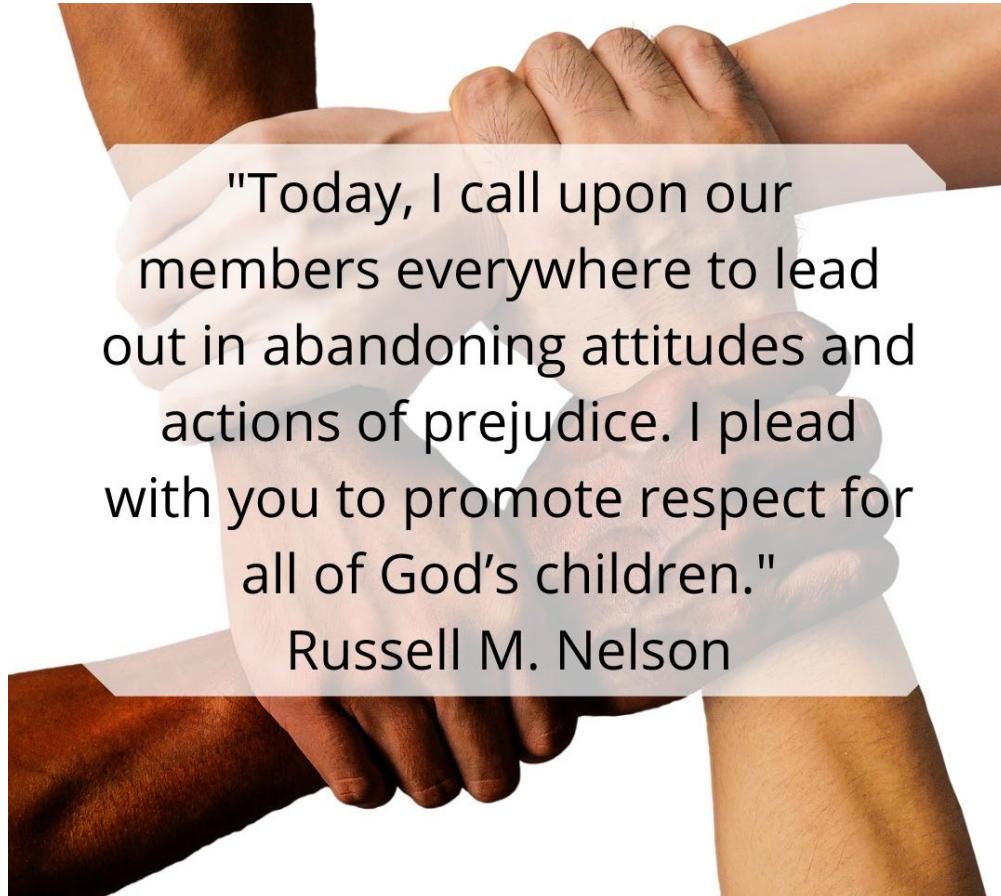
Why does this misinterpretation continue to be dangerous?

First, bad biblical interpretation hurts people. Bad interpretations justify unjust institutions, perversely motivate immoral behaviors, and encourage harmful attitudes. Misogyny, child abuse, warmongering, and greed join racism as evils that bad interpretations of scripture have undergirded. In this case, misinterpretations perpetuate the abhorrent notion that God endorses the systematic oppression and subjugation of any given group of people.

Second, the proslavery interpretation of Gen 9 exhibits the major characteristics of flawed hermeneutics. It does not take the text seriously; it engages in logical trickery and a kind of reorientation by substitution (Ham for Canaan, then all black persons for Ham); it does not consider the broader context of scripture (Gen 10, for example); and it overlooks the fact that **Noah pronounced the curse, God did not.** This observation is particularly telling. Gen 9 does not grant divine authority to Israel’s oppression of the Canaanites—or of anyone else.

Third, it fails to acknowledge the situation-bound character of much of the Bible. In this case, there are no Canaanites left in the world to whom this curse could possibly apply. The Canaanites disappeared as a distinct people long ago.

The Prophet's Call to Root Out Racism



"Today, I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God's children."

Russell M. Nelson

"The church calls on all people to abandon attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group or individual. Members of the church should lead out in promoting respect for all of God's children. Members follow the Savior's commandment to love others (see Matthew 22:35–39). They strive to be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting prejudice of any kind. This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation."

General Handbook, 38.6.14, "Prejudice"



Zion=Fortress in Hebrew
“If ye are not one ye are not mine.” (D&C 38:27)



Tower of Babel

“The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech ...And they said, ‘...Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name’ ...And the LORD said, ‘...This they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth...Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.” (Gen. 11:1,4,6-9)

Why was God so angry with them?





“Nimrod built the tower of Babel...in an attempt to contact heaven... The impetus in building this temple was to make themselves a name. In other words, Nimrod was proposing that they build a temple to receive the name of God without making eternal covenants ... In Babylonian or Akkadian, the meaning [of the word ‘Babel’] was ‘gate of God.’ Nimrod and his people were building their own temple, their gate to heaven, without divine approval or priesthood keys.”

Dr. David R. Seely, BYU, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign* (Feb. 1994), p. 60.