

NOTES ON GENESIS 1-11

#1 Written with aim to displace the polytheistic world view of the Mesopotamians and of the Egyptians. We would have liked more for our time in the 21st Century but God's priority was the people who were the first recipients of His revelation, the Israelites. When you see the trouble He had with them in the centuries following over the worship of the idols of the surrounding nations after they came to the promised land you can see the wisdom of the wording of Genesis 1-11 to displace the world view of these nations. So we have to make do without statements about evolution and the expanding universe. However I will point out that the science that is in the Bible is of very good quality with no silly errors, all good common sense stuff. Genesis 1-11 is also ready for the later Greek philosophers with their various atheistic scenarios. Its statements about one God Who is a Person not an impersonal force and Who created everything including us and Who desires to interact with us give a firm foundation for human life and purpose.

#2 Genesis 1 is topical, a series of topics, rather than a straight line account of creation. Genesis 2-3 lists a series of fundamental ideas that are carried on through the whole Bible. [See below]

Eden with its 4 rivers whereas 2 are now dry beds as the area dried out after 3000BC, I suggest a long hunter gatherer period is passed over and Genesis 4-11 covers the Neolithic [New stone age] period from 8000 to 2000 BC during which the earliest civilisations came into being. Genesis 10 is an impressive map of the nations of the Middle East by 2000BC.

Early Christians discussed whether the Garden of Eden story was intended to be an allegory Tree of Life= trusting and obeying God tree of knowledge of good and evil= disobeying God, trying to be independent of God, trying to be gods of our own instead of servants of God. Interestingly in Revelation 22 there is restoration and the tree of life reappears in heaven.

Flood mentioned in Mesopotamian King lists. By the way the long lives attributed to ancient people in the King lists, Egyptian King lists and Genesis 5 of real people. The figures must be symbolic of the person's importance. Extent of the Flood.. ? Mesopotamia [eres, earth meaning the land rather than tebal, the whole earth]. Sons of God= rulers of the small early cities who claimed the divine right to enslave the people physically and sexually incurring God's extreme displeasure resulting in the judgment of the Flood. Before 3000 BC

Appearance of new languages around southern Mesopotamia after the time of the Tower of Babel story ? before 3000BC.

Writing came into widespread use after about 3000BC so there is uncertainty for archaeological evidence about very early events.

Finally in Genesis 11 we arrive at Abraham in around 2000BC where the Bible's story takes off from the runway of Gen 1-11

#3 Unique insights of Genesis 1-11

One God Who created the Heavens and the Earth, referred to as We, hinting at a plural Person

We are created in the image of God, unique anywhere in religious documents. Our aggression and co-operation are not left overs from the animal, we can use them for good or evil, the choice is ours.

Institution of marriage, Eve described as Adam's helper. The word ezer is also attributed to God as Israel's helper. So we have here an equal partnership between a man and his wife!

Genesis 3.15 the promise of a deliverer to come the seed of the woman Who would crush the devil's head while incurring a wound, to His heel.. the Bible's first prophecy of the Messiah Jesus

Reality of the evil spiritual world with the devil and his evil angels. It is fashionable today to deny this unpleasant thing but the Bible is clear about this.

The Morality of God shown in the 2 stories, Flood [about the abuse of people by the Sons of God, the early kings] and the Tower of Babel [about pride and independence from God. We were created to be dependent upon God but we blew it when we defied Him at the instigation of the Serpent in the Garden].

We have already by Genesis 11 seen the Character of God, His justice [Moral goodness] and His Love or Mercy even though we have failed.