

A Layman's Commentary On Genesis

JAMES DEMELLO

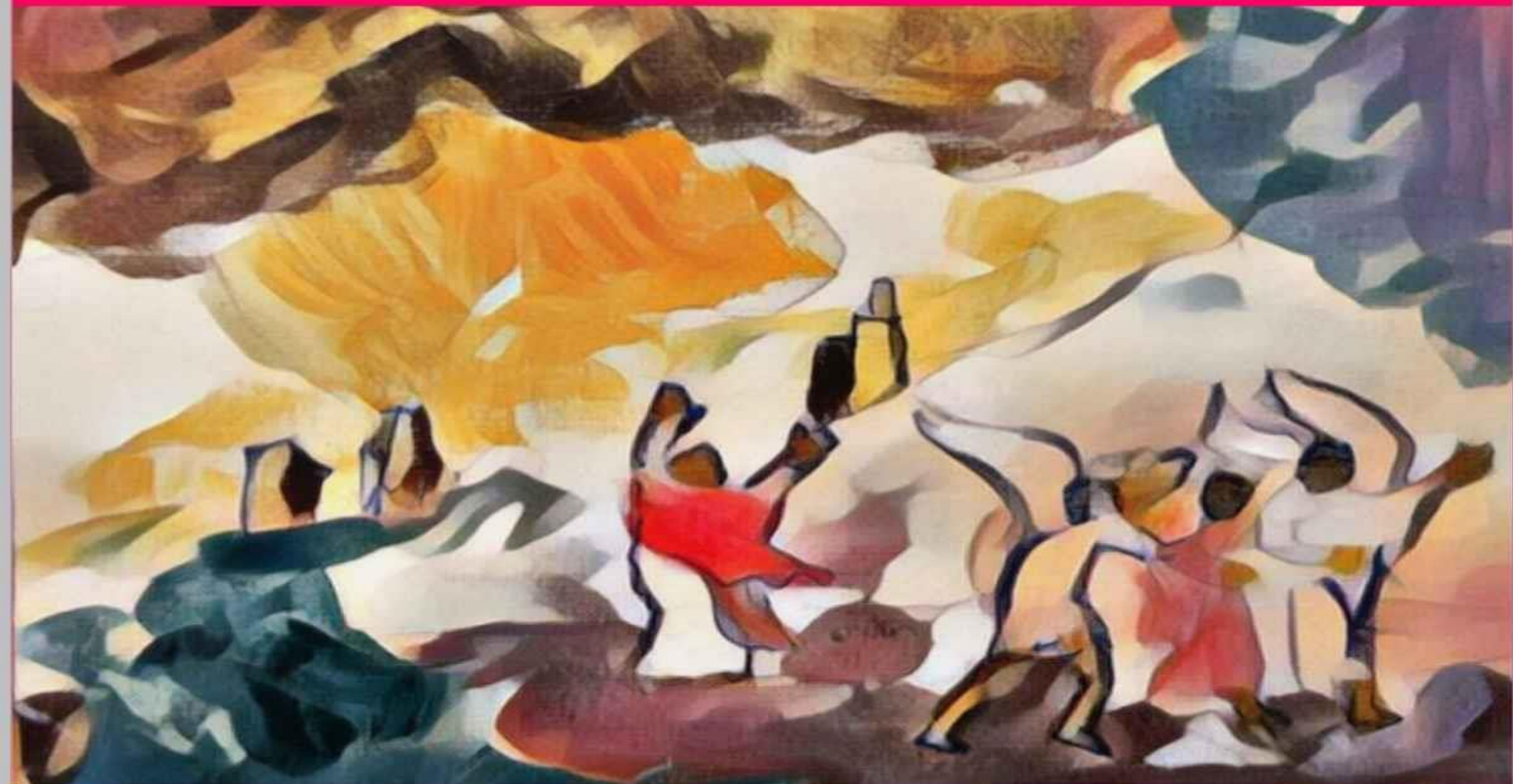


Table of Contents

[Genesis 1: Creation](#)

[Genesis 2: Creation of Man](#)

[Genesis 3: The Garden – A Wondrous Place](#)

[Genesis 4: Cain Kills Abel](#)

[Genesis 5: From Adam to Noah](#)

[Genesis 6: A Dragon Is Coming](#)

[Genesis 7: The Flood](#)

[Genesis 8: The Flood Abates](#)

[Genesis 9: What Did Ham Do?](#)

[Genesis 10: The Grandparents of the World](#)

[Genesis 11: The Tower of Babel](#)

[Genesis 12: Abraham, a Fallible, Faithful, Follower of God](#)

[Genesis 13: God Blesses Abraham in What At First Glance Seems a Poor Choice](#)

[Genesis 14: Melchizedek – the Mysterious](#)

[Genesis 15: Abraham – Man of Doubt and Faith](#)

[Genesis 16: The Coming of the Arabs](#)

[Genesis 17: Circumcision](#)

[Genesis 18: God Promises Abraham a Son – Judges Sodom](#)

[Genesis 19: Destruction of Sodom](#)

[Genesis 20: Abraham Deceives Abimelech](#)

[Genesis 21: God Loves Everyone](#)

[Genesis 22: Abraham Shines and Christ Foretold](#)

[Genesis 23: Burial of Sarah at Mechpelah](#)

[Genesis 24: The Procurement of a Wife for Issac](#)

[Genesis 25: Jacob and Esau and the Birthright](#)

[Genesis 26: Issac the Negotiator](#)

[Genesis 27: Esau's Blessing Comes to Jacob](#)

[Genesis 28: Jacob's Ladder Who is Christ](#)

[Genesis 29: Jacob Labors to Get Two Wives](#)

[Genesis 30: Jacob Increases in Children and Cattle](#)

[Genesis 31: Laban Pursues Jacob](#)

[Genesis 32: Jacob Wrestles With God](#)

[Genesis 33: Jacob and Esau Reunite](#)

[Genesis 34: The Rape of Dinah](#)

[Genesis 35: Jacob Now Called Israel](#)

[Genesis 36: Edom, the Land of Esau](#)

[Genesis 37: Joseph Begins His Journey](#)

[Genesis 39: The Imprisonment of Joseph](#)

[Genesis 40: Joseph Interprets Dreams](#)

[Genesis 41: Joseph Becomes Most Powerful Man in Egypt](#)

[Genesis 42: Joseph's Pretense](#)

[Genesis 43: Joseph's Brothers Return to Egypt](#)

[Genesis 44: Joseph Continues the Trial of His Brothers](#)

[Genesis 45: Joseph Reveals Himself](#)

[Genesis 46: All of Israel Moves to Egypt](#)

[Genesis 47: Pharaoh Comes to Own Egypt](#)

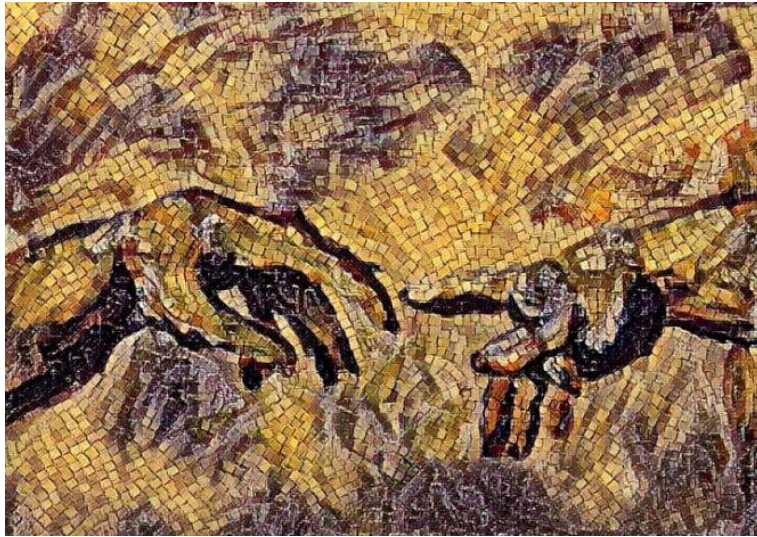
[Genesis 48: Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons](#)

[Genesis 49: The Final Prophecy and Death of Jacob](#)

[Genesis 50: The Burial of Jacob and the Death of Joseph
Afterward](#)

A Layman's Commentary oN Genesis
James R. Demello

**Dedicated to my wonderful wife
Angela**



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Genesis 1: Creation

In the beginning, 6000 years ago or 12.5 billion years ago, God creates the universe from nothing and then he relates to the writer of Genesis that He made the following on their respective days:

1. light
2. sky and water
3. seas, land, plants
4. sun, moon, and stars
5. sea creatures and birds
6. land animals and man

Many doubters get hung up on the sun and moon and stars being made or placed on the fourth day. How is it that plants can grow without the sun? How could the Earth be made before the sun? It just isn't conventional science. If one had to come up with a speculative explanation, one could suppose that this story was being recounted by Moses who actually experienced the entire creation from a physical perspective of standing on earth and seeing the process over a six-day period. Sort of a virtual reality experience. If in fact the early earth had a cloud of water surrounding it, then perhaps the heavenly lights would not even be visible until his fourth day. And though the process could have taken millions of years, his experience lasted just six days. In fact, though, I do not have to understand the how or when these things happened. All I have to know is that God did it and that my belief in God does not rest on my having a perfect understanding of the science of creation. Even in my ignorance, my salvation is assured.



Genesis 2: Creation of Man

It is kind of hard to describe what God is like but what He *likes* seems apparent. In Genesis chapter 2 God does several things that must have some meaning or importance to Himself and us:

1. He rests from His labor.
2. He makes the earth to require the care and maintenance of Man.
3. He allows man to eat of the tree of life (eternal life) yet he does not want him to know so much as to not need the knowledge and help of God (do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil). God wants us to rely on Him, not ourselves.
4. He wants man to be in command of the animals and creation.
5. He does not want man to be alone.

So, in sum, God wants man as an eternal companion to do meaningful work. And just as He does not want to be alone, he knows that man cannot be alone. God allows us knowledge enough to do our work of taking care of the planet but not so much knowledge as to construct a universe without Him (thus a possible corollary would be that man will always have an incomplete knowledge of how the universe operates – the bane of scientism).

The atheist commits the most foul crime of all, imagining a universe devoid of God – who invites us to be His partner. The curse and reward of atheism is in fact: eternal loneliness.

If in fact, the original plan was an eternal partnership with God, then we can perhaps extrapolate to His future plan: an eternal working relationship in a new environment – the New Heaven and Earth.

Genesis 3: The Garden – A Wondrous Place

The third chapter of Genesis is about the fall of Man. It is striking to me how incredible the garden of Eden must have been. The chapter begins by saying how crafty the serpent was. This makes me wonder if perhaps all the animals were able to communicate with Adam and if they had personalities and characteristics of which only the faintest attributes remain today – such as the loyal and loving nature of the dog.

Even when God observed Adam and Eve, it seems He physically moved in the Garden because Adam could hear him stirring there, and He had to ask, “Where are you?”, as if He could not actually find Adam and Eve where He expected them to be (though I am sure He knew.)

The garden was watered by ground-water. Hopefully, it wasn’t a swamp and even if it were, the mosquito had probably not yet arrived until the world was fallen.

Is the garden of Eden still in the “east” today or was it destroyed by the flood?

And in a spiritual sense have we not returned to the Garden when we get married – as a loving couple lose all sense of shame when they are naked before each other.

Genesis begins with the tree of life which gets taken away from men when Adam and Eve are thrown from the garden. But, in the end, we will once again have access to the Tree of Life in the new heaven and earth.

Genesis 4: Cain Kills Abel

Adam and Eve bore Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer and Abel a shepherd. And each of the brothers brought an offering to God and God was pleased with Abel's but not Cain's. We aren't sure why, perhaps Cain's was not the best of the crop. Cain in a jealous rage kills his brother. God curses Abel and he leaves for the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain has several children and grand-children who are instrumental in beginning cities, cattle herding, art, technology. Adam and Eve have another son, Seth who has a child Enosh and then men begin to worship God.

So many interesting questions prompted by this chapter: What was Cain's sin against God? What was the sign placed upon Cain? Was Cain and his descendants wiped out completely by the flood or did one of them become one of the wives of Noah's sons? What was Lamech's boast about and what prompted it? What does it mean that people began to call upon the name of the Lord (and why Lord and not God)? Why mention that the sons of Cain were creators of music and technology – is there something evil about entertainment and technology? All of these questions have prompted a lot of speculation, discourse, and argument.

What I found interesting is that Cain talks to God directly with God, possibly appearing to him in the form of a man and that he is seemingly not fearful of Him. Also, that Cain was truly evil in that he premeditatedly invited Abel to the field specifically to kill him.

Genesis 5: From Adam to Noah

This chapter lists the generations from Adam through Seth to Noah. Interesting that they lived about 800 years – perhaps the food at that time still retained some potency from the Garden or the environment was naturally conducive to longer life through higher air pressure and oxygen content or the cloudy atmosphere was more UV resilient?

It seems that Methuselah died the same year as the flood. Some think he died before the flood (so that he could be considered righteous) but regardless, he did not seem to stay with or help Noah, and his other children were not considered for salvation from the coming flood. Nor was Lamech's other sons or daughters saved, though he died a few years before the flood. Noah was an exceptional man.

We seem to get so caught up in the details of Genesis. We argue and fight with each other over those details and suffer righteous indignation if anyone disagrees with us, often going so far as to judge our opponent's eternal fate. Silly. The thief on the cross probably had a poor understanding of biblical history and the process of salvation and yet was saved. Lord, save me in my ignorance too.

Genesis 6: The Nephilim

The generations of men had turned evil and the Nephilim were the worst. So God determined to destroy all men through a world-wide flood, except the family of Noah whom He instructed how to build an ark.

The theories surrounding the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men or humans” abound and produce some pretty entertaining stories. Who were the Nephilim? Were they fallen angels? Perhaps the Nephilim were not fallen angels – just evil men, men of renown – but not renown by God. How did they survive the flood if they were mentioned as being alive in Numbers? Was someone being referred to as a Nephilim just as a metaphorical reference resulting from the collective memory of Noah’s family? A metaphor for a giant of evil?

Some folks believe the Flood was not a global event but rather a partial flood as there seems to be geological evidence for many partial floods but, for many, questionable evidence for a global one. Well, I am no geologist. But a partial flood seems not to fill the bill as God wanted to destroy everything and everyone and one only had to wander outside the flood area to survive.

Would I have been saved if I were alive at the time of the flood ? I suppose not unless I had been Noah or one of his sons. And now it is our time and God will again rearrange the earth and the heavens and we will be destroyed if we are not made righteous through Jesus Christ – we have the choice again to be saved through the simple expedient of belief. A global flood is coming again but this time not with water but fire. And not just the earth, but the heavens too – so no spacecraft or future colony on Mars will provide a way of escape as it would have in the time of the flood.

I see why atheists laugh at us – it sounds crazy.

Genesis 7: The Flood

The animals come, Noah and his family enter the ark, God shuts the door, it rains for 40 days causing a flood to cover even the highest mountains and everything that wasn't in the ark dies, except the fish, though some versions even mention the things that swim died too, so not sure what to make of that.

It does strike me strange that Noah's sons were 100 years old – but had no children of their own? Was that God's plan to limit the number of occupants of the ark? Did they marry late just before the flood? Perhaps Noah had grand-children but they were not saved.

Many commentaries make much of the symbolism of 40 as in 40 days of testing and trial. Also, a natural question arises as to where did all the water come from. One commentary stated that the oceans floors could have been raised and then the amount of water would be sufficient, and also that the flood may have included the water locked up in the polar ice caps. There is also scientific evidence for oceans of water under the earth's mantle. Well, if one believes in God, we know He could have turned dry land into water as easily as water into wine.

I speculate that those who were accustomed to seeing Noah's ark gradually taking shape probably thought he was a nut case but what do you think they were thinking when the animals just started appearing out of nowhere and then march into the ark? Atheists today are no different than the scoffers and nay-sayers in Noah's time. They laugh at us who believe in the literal accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible and all we can do is pray for a change of their heart – a gift of faith – as one day whether alive in this world or from the grave, they will witness the destruction and rebirth of the universe. So, who are we going to be, a Noah or a son of Cain?

Genesis 8: The Flood Abates

The flood waters slowly subside and the fountains of the deep reclaim their water. Noah abides in the ark until God lets him out. Noah initiates altar sacrifice and God promises to never flood the world again, not that He does not promise to not destroy the world.

I take from this chapter that God can change His mind, especially if we implore Him. He wanted to destroy all men at first, yet He reneged. Though the future is transparent to Him, it is not cast in stone and we can have a say in it if we but prevail on His goodness and mercy.

And Noah left the ark and sacrificed. How many times have I received answers to my prayers – and then promptly forgotten who answered them.

It is interesting that Josephus and other ancient writers mention that parts of the ark were still present in their time.

It seems a telling witness to the actuality of the flood is that there are petrified closed clamshells found on the highest mountain in the world. Of course skeptics have their theories to explain the unlikely occurrence just as they have theories to explain the unlikely fact that our universe is finely tuned to support life.

Even though Noah's ark or the Ark of the Covenant were to be found and authenticated even to a skeptic's satisfaction, they still would not accept the inspiration of the Bible.



Genesis 9: What Did Ham Do?

In Genesis 9 God gives all beasts into the hands of men, even as food, with a caveat: don't eat the life blood and if a man or beast kills another man, then the life of the killer is required. The rainbow is given as a sign the earth will not endure another world-wide flood. Ham performs some mysterious offense against Noah. Noah curses Ham's son Canaan. Noah lives a long time and then dies.

I guess the most engrossing and titillating story within the stories of this chapter is about Ham disrespecting Noah and then Noah cursing (or prophesying about) Ham's grandson, Canaan.

There are many theories bandied about what exactly did Ham do to Noah and most of them involve some sexual impropriety on Ham's part (and perhaps on other players as well). The story goes that Noah, at some time after the ark landed – we don't know how long – could be years, cultivated a vineyard, made some wine and got drunk. He ended up naked in his tent, Ham saw or said or did something to Noah and then told his brothers who would not even look upon Noah's nakedness. Noah then awoke, knew somehow what had transpired and cursed, not Ham, but Ham's grandson Canaan.

Now the theories or speculations on what exactly transpired in the tent between Noah and Ham ranging from Ham observing his father's drunkenness and nakedness, to Ham having incestuous intercourse with his father or his mother, to Ham castrating his father. When I read about these speculations I at first dismissed them out of hand as musings of a salacious and vulgar imagination. Then... I read this:

<https://saintpatrickslascruces.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/hahn-bergma-noahs-nakedness-and-the-curse-on-canaan.pdf>

Now, I wonder what took place in the tent. And the speculation that Noah got drunk, and Ham took advantage of the situation to have sex with Noah's wife, in a lewd power-play, and which made the mother of the Canaanites, Noah's wife, is intriguing. But again, we just don't and won't know for sure what happened in my lifetime.

Noah seems to have cursed Ham's grandson Canaan. And an interesting fact about the Canaanites is that they, and their various tribes, were guilty of sexual sins. Was Noah cursing or prophesying?

What can I take home from this chapter? These kinds of stories make the Bible real and believable to me. You just can't make up this kind of drama. And regardless of mankind's foibles, God is able to work it all out to His satisfaction or desires. Therefore, when I am in turmoil over some personal stupidity, I know that He is able to make it all right and He is not going to consign me to Hell because I acted human (like Noah) BUT, if I persist in playing the evil game (like Ham) – I may not be the only one to suffer – my actions may damn my friends, family, nation, and world.

Genesis 10: The Grandparents of the World

Genealogies are boring but the sons of Noah populated the world and there were only three family lines that we came from – unless Noah had other children after the flood.

Japheth fathered probably the Europeans, Shem the Hebrews and Middle Easterners and Ham the North Africans and Asians. I found it interesting, since I live in China, that a grandson of Ham was Sin from which perhaps the Sino (China) people came. It is also noteworthy that many of the early cities of these tribes still retained various spellings and derivations of the names of the sons of Noah.

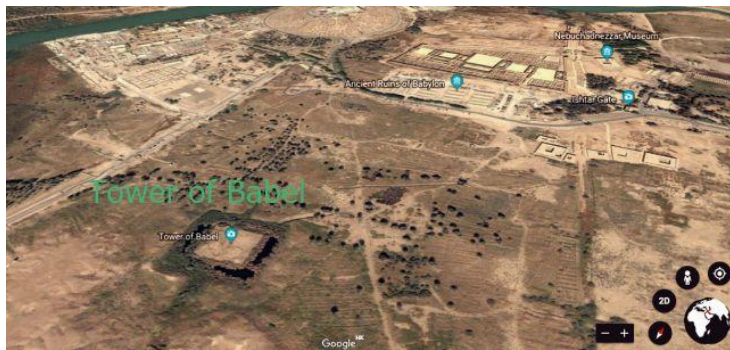
We European stock probably came predominantly from Gomer (the Gauls and Germans), the grandson of Japheth.

Why would God include such a detailed genealogy? First to show the descent of Jesus directly from Adam, the first man, through Noah and Shem. Also I believe that it shows that we are all brothers and sisters – regardless of our color and differences. The world is one family, related by blood to each other and to God. We are all related to Jesus through his grandparents who are also ours – Noah (and wife). It also shows that Jesus was NOT European though we like to portray him as such in our biased and egocentric paintings and movies. And finally it provides a reasonable and believable source for our family tree and all cultures.

Genesis 11: The Tower of Babel

God told men to fill the earth, but they decided to stop at Shinar because they were afraid of being scattered over the earth. And then they decided to build a temple to join earth with heaven and as a monument to themselves, not to God. How we still have not learned our lesson. As others have related, it is interesting that what is perceived as a monument to pierce the heavens, is from Gods perspective – barely perceptible.

I did some reading and Youtubing and it seems that the original Tower of Babel foundations can still be seen today in the following Google Earth photo.



It is possible Nimrod began building the original Tower of Babel and later it was completed by Nebuchadnezzar II. Regardless of mans folly, God confounded their plans and completed his original plan of populating the Earth, and to prevent a future attempt to halt His intent, He confounded their languages. Smart! Had not men been so intent on uniting themselves in one city/state with one language, we might today all just be speaking various dialects of a single language. Many languages today still retain traits and obvious references to the time of Noah.

On an archaeological note: the Tower of Babel remnants are of brick and bitumen. Just like the Bible says.

Only in Jesus have men been united into a single culture – the indwelling of the Spirit in each one of us bonds us through a single language and culture of Love and obedience to God.

The chapter finishes with a few more genealogies, the length of men’s lives growing shorter and the stage being set for Abraham.

Genesis 12: Abraham, a Fallible, Faithful, Follower of God

Abraham encounters God, leaves his Chaldean homeland and fails a trial in Egypt.

God knows that Abraham will fail a test when he goes to Egypt and tries to deceive the Pharaoh into thinking his wife is his sister. Yet, God blesses him in the end anyway. This is a great comfort to me because I fail every day but, because of Abraham, I can be confident in the love of God in spite of my stupidities, misgivings, errors, vanity, fear and just baby-like selfishness. God is faithful as long as I don't give up on his faithfulness. I often say, "even if I must go to hell, I will go praising His name."

There will be consequences of our sin. Often we do not think ahead about the possible results of what our actions may entail. Not only do we hurt ourselves – we may hurt our loved ones and in hurting our enemies we build an environment that is more hostile to our daily lives and our family members as well.

It is a pretty basic formula: we will be tested, we must make choices and there will be consequences. The difference in a worldly/materialistic response is that while they can only choose based on their desires and perceived needs, we as Christians can choose with the help of the Spirit to achieve a Godly response. The world is alone but we are never alone.

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