† Blessed is our God always, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Through the prayers of our holy Ancestors, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen. Glory to You, our God, glory to You.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, You are everywhere and fill all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

† Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (three times).

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Fresh Beginnings

From fresh insights gained and expressed in papers titled “Forgiveness” and “Introduction” we realized the need to reevaluate this complete paper, for that matter, every paper we have ever written. We must strive to expunge every hint of accusation, condemnation, criticism, or judgment of any of the ancestors who have walked before us. We do not know or fully understand their environment. We cannot even be sure of their original language in many cases. We have not felt the full weight of the pressures with which they had to cope. We will never be able to walk, even a single step, in their shoes. The risks of committing many serious anachronistic blunders surround us.

More than any of these things, we are striving to exemplify the New Testament teachings on forgiveness. As far as we fall from such a goal, how will we ever be able to accomplish this if our very first steps are the criticisms of the very people, our own ancestors, upon whose shoulders we are obliged to stand, in order to obtain a clearer view of reality. There are things we must judge: let not our own ancestors be among them.

Moreover, such unjust criticisms have a way of replicating throughout time. The very ones we have criticized have become the types of our own present behavior. Perhaps this is God’s way of forcing us to walk in bigger shoes and rethink the past.

Whatever our condition, we cannot preach forgiveness from a platform of critical attitudes. On the other hand, we cannot relinquish our quest to identify that which is broken, and seek healing for it. We must redouble our efforts to hate the sin and love the sinner. Yet, forgiveness is the essential element of the healing process. If we cannot apply forgiveness for our own ancestors in these early steps, we will never find healing for our more complex modern problems.

We begin again.

Discord

*From Creation*

The problem of discord, disruption, and division among people in general and the people who call themselves Christians begins with Adam and Eve. Satan, called the serpent in Genesis 3, manages to worm his way between Adam and Eve; had Adam and Eve remained together, as their one-flesh relationship suggests that they must, they might have summoned that confidence and faith in God which should have enabled them to resist Satan’s temptation.[[1]](#endnote-1) We are not told where Adam was, or what he was doing, that distracted him from watching over his wife, or her from watching over him: nevertheless, he was commanded to cleave unto her. We are not even told how Adam got separated from God, Who, previously, seemed to be Adam’s constant companion. Perhaps, such separations were simply necessary to exercise that God-like freewill created in them. In any case, that oldest of all tactics, divide and conquer, worked: we are told that Eve was deceived; Adam, knowingly or unknowingly, wittingly or unwittingly, followed his wife’s lead in embracing the temptation as well; Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise. Thus, according to the available evidence, the whole human race was set at discord, by Satan’s sowing discord, from the very first days.

*Murder*

We blink once, and turn the page to Genesis 4, only to discover that this discord among the earliest people has already progressed to murder: for Cain has slain Abel, and disruption has fallen upon the human race. Now Cain is exiled from the rest of the small human family. Yet, we do not understand the pressures that motivated Cain; God does not judge Cain harshly: we only know that “sin is a croucher at the door Strife escalates exponentially, until, in five generations[[2]](#endnote-2) after Cain, Lamech is seen in his defiant saber dance.

*Delusion*

Seth is born; yet, the implication is that the human race is now developing into two distinct tribes, following very, ethically and morally different paths, in two groups. If we suppose that Seth is the first of the good people, it only requires eight generations[[3]](#endnote-3) after Seth to disabuse us of our error: for, by the time of Noah, the human race has fallen into nearly absolute wickedness.[[4]](#endnote-4) From this tragic report we may glean several things: One. The immoral group of Cain is not as wicked as they possibly could be and seem; Two. The moral group of Seth is not as innocent as they possibly could, and at first appear to, be; the defilement of discord has infected both groups, all mankind equally: there are only a handful of rare exceptions, holdouts[[5]](#endnote-5) against the general tendency of discord.

*Caprice?*

We also note that God will destroy the whole human race except for eight people; which some claim is arbitrary and unjust of God. Elsewhere in Scripture, God promises that He will not permit unbearable temptation to exist.[[6]](#endnote-6) We believe that this answers the claim that God acts in arbitrary, and unjust ways. Even though Noah is obviously somewhat less than perfect, he does love God, and is obedient to Him. The rest of the human race is given one hundred twenty years to repent; yet, no one does…. So, the grace that Noah finds is no way dependent on any righteousness of his own; rather, Noah sought God’s righteousness, and God happily gave it to him. However, Noah with his family do obey God out of the freedom of their own wills; while the rest of the human race, choose to ignore God, also from their individual free wills. As the condition deteriorates, had God left the bulk of the human race alive; Noah’s little party of eight would have been confronted with that very irresistible temptation which God cannot allow: for it would mean that the freedom of will would have now been destroyed in Noah’s party as well as among the wicked. The state of the wicked, having the free will to disobey, removes any claim against God as being arbitrary and unjust; since, the wicked have nobody to blame but themselves for choosing to act in their wicked manner; and God is perfectly justified in maintaining a standard of right and wrong: especially, since He patiently withheld judgment for one hundred twenty years. The charges against God are completely unfounded.

*Fresh Start*

Nevertheless, discord, disruption, and division have not been removed from the human race. Before long, Noah is drunken.[[7]](#endnote-7) With all due fairness to Noah, he may not have known that fermentation would take place, or how it might affect him; Scripture does not ever condone drunkenness, it does permit drinking; nor does Scripture condemn or even scold Noah for his actions: we simply cannot draw any conclusions about Noah’s guilt or innocence. That being said, grandson Canaan Ⅱ was somehow involved in an immoral act, which may have also included Ham; as a result, Canaan Ⅱ is cursed: but, Ham is not cursed.[[8]](#endnote-8) Now there is even more discord in the human race and Canaan Ⅱ[[9]](#endnote-9) appears to be ostracized by being reduced to slavery.

Very possibly the oppression of Nimrod[[10]](#endnote-10), as well as the discord at Babel[[11]](#endnote-11) were coincident with Canaan’s or Ham’s ostracism; all of which were important factors in the mass migrations that would take many of the earth’s people out of Mesopotamia and into other regions of the world.

*Downward*

We need not summarize in detail the rest of Genesis to complete the picture. The reader may easily complete the study for himself. The families of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob continue to be plagued with the strife of discord, disruption, and the necessary ensuing division: Lot divides from Abraham with disastrous consequences; Ishmael divides from Isaac with similar results; Esau divides from Jacob. What startles us is that Jacob’s little family holds together in Egypt under the new name Israel or Israelites. Thus, when Paul summarizes the Genesis eras, we are compelled to concur.

“Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam [????] to Moses [1406-1366 BC], even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him who is to come.”[[12]](#endnote-12)

*Redemption*

So, when we flip another page into Exodus we are hoping for a brighter, better future: redemption from slavery in Egypt at Pesach (Passover); a new constitution, law, and nation at Sinai in Shabbat (Pentecost); a new land of peace and rest at Jordan in Sukkot (Tents)[[13]](#endnote-13)… the gasp for fresh air never seems to arrive. The old generation has perished in the desert; neither Aaron nor Moses will enter the land; the hopeful entrants are immediately met by opposition; they are not principally an attacking force: rather, they are attacked by the Canaanites and compelled to defend themselves in a series of brief skirmishes. Ironically, they overcome larger, better equipped and trained, well-established, military forces… great coalitions of battle hardened troops. Still, they remain at Gilgal, for the most part, and do not immediately move to occupy the land. Instead, the occupation seems to drag out, on-and on…, in slow, reluctant stages; which, is a far, far better understanding of Judges, than any idea of quick, complete, and thorough occupation.[[14]](#endnote-14) Joshua and Judges tell a tragic tail of external, as well as internal ongoing discord, disruption, and division. Joshua (1366-1356 BC) bewails this condition before his death.

“And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”[[15]](#endnote-15)

*Kingdom*

Subsequently, it takes a full seven years for David (1010-970 BC) to build a national consensus. Long after David’s death, the boundaries of the kingdom are being expanded by Solomon (970-930 BC). Then, the wheels come off the wagon. The kingdom falls to pieces under discord between Jeroboam Ⅰ and Rehoboam; it will never recover from this disruption and division: in the outworking of the political, worship is also wounded critically: Jeroboam creates a new mixed cult with two new idol-worship centers.

*Abandonment*

By 586 BC, or shortly thereafter, the Israelites and Judeans have, for the most part, lost any interest in God; according to Ezekiel, God has abandoned them.[[16]](#endnote-16) By 516 BC the Israelite-Judeans have been absorbed into the Babylonian and Assyrian cultures; only to emerge as a new identity, the Jews; with the old language, paleo-Hebrew (1010-586 BC) transitioned into the new language, the block Aramaic form, which we now mistakenly call Hebrew (516-200 BC);[[17]](#endnote-17) and a new religion, Judaism. The average Jew can no longer understand the reading of the Bible: it has to be translated and interpreted to him.[[18]](#endnote-18) Only a tiny band of Jews returns to Jerusalem, where they are immediately met by more discord, disruption, and division. It takes years to complete the inferior second temple. Still, God does not return.

[[19]](#endnote-19)

1. We are suggesting here, that 1 Corinthians 10:13 expresses the distinct possibility that being overly tempted is more than a New Testament concept; it could very well be a universal principle which explains Adam and Eve’s behavior, as well as God’s actions at the Flood: it suggests that believing people together may resist temptation; people separated from others are unable to resist temptation; and that God must intervene at some point in the temptation process, lest all of creation be destroyed.

   If this is not true, then the freewill nature of people in the image and likeness of God cannot be maintained. There seems to come a point in the lives of the willfully rebellious, when human wills become so scarred, that they either can no longer operate at all, or else they can no longer operate freely.

   We have no other explanation for God’s justification in destroying a massive portion of the human race at the Flood: people brought it on themselves by willfully resisting God’s humility, kindness, love, and patience. While God’s patience is inexhaustible; human resistance to temptation is not inexhaustible: it constitutes a danger to the whole human race: for God has designed the human race to function freely around One New Man, Jesus Christ… if the human race is obliterated by temptation, then God’s plan of incarnation, along with everything that follows, is made void. God simply did not, could not allow this to happen. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. There may be more than five generations involved: genealogical tables do sometimes seem to omit names. Nevertheless, the intensity and brevity of the record indicates an alarmingly rapid growth of rebellion: from Cain: 1 – Enoch; 2 – Irad; 3 – Mehujael; 4 – Methusael; 5 – Lamech. These may merely be six epitomes of evil: yet, the point is still made. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Note the similarity of some of the names; which may indicate that communication between Cain and Seth was not completely severed: from Seth: 1 – Enos; 2 – Cainan; 3 – Mahalaleel; 4 – Jared; 5 – Enoch Ⅱ; 6 – Methuselah; 7 – Lamech Ⅱ; 8 – Noah. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Genesis 6:3, 5-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. These themselves are far from perfect: for we note that even Noah gets drunk. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 1 Corinthians 10:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Genesis 9:21 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Which is why we presume Ham’s innocence and Canaan’s guilt; yet, the details of the account are not perfectly clear. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. possibly, the same name as Cainan [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Genesis 10:8-9; 1 Chronicles 1:10; Micah 5:6 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Genesis 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Romans 5:14 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Tents remind us that “this land is not our own, we’re just passing through” (Jim Reeves song). We seek a better city and nation thats “builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10; Revelation 21). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. These are Kenneth Kitchen’s observations about Joshua and Judges found in, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*; they are not mine. It just seems to us that Kitchen is obviously right: so, we bow to his wisdom and insight here. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Joshua 24:15 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. This is the second such abandonment. We recall that God abandoned Israel during the Days of Sampson, Eli, and Samuel, when the Ark was taken by the Philistines. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. It was revived only among scholars by the Masoretes (circa 400-1300 AD), made living around by the establishment of modern Israel (1948-present): but, otherwise a dead language for most of modern history. This deadness explains the disjointedness and uncertainties of so-called Hebrew grammar, lexicography, and syntax. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Today we cannot begin to fathom, nor are we able to imagine the enormity of differences in a society devoid of popular books; a society where no one reads except for scholars and scribes; where the normal practice is to be read to, and listen, rather than seeing for one’s self with one’s own eyes. Evidently, even many of the kings lived with such a handicap. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)