

Studies in World History

DR. JAMES STOBAUGH

Vol. 1

Creation Through
the Age of Discovery
{4004 BC to AD 1500}



HISTORY

GEOGRAPHY

ECONOMICS

GOVERNMENT



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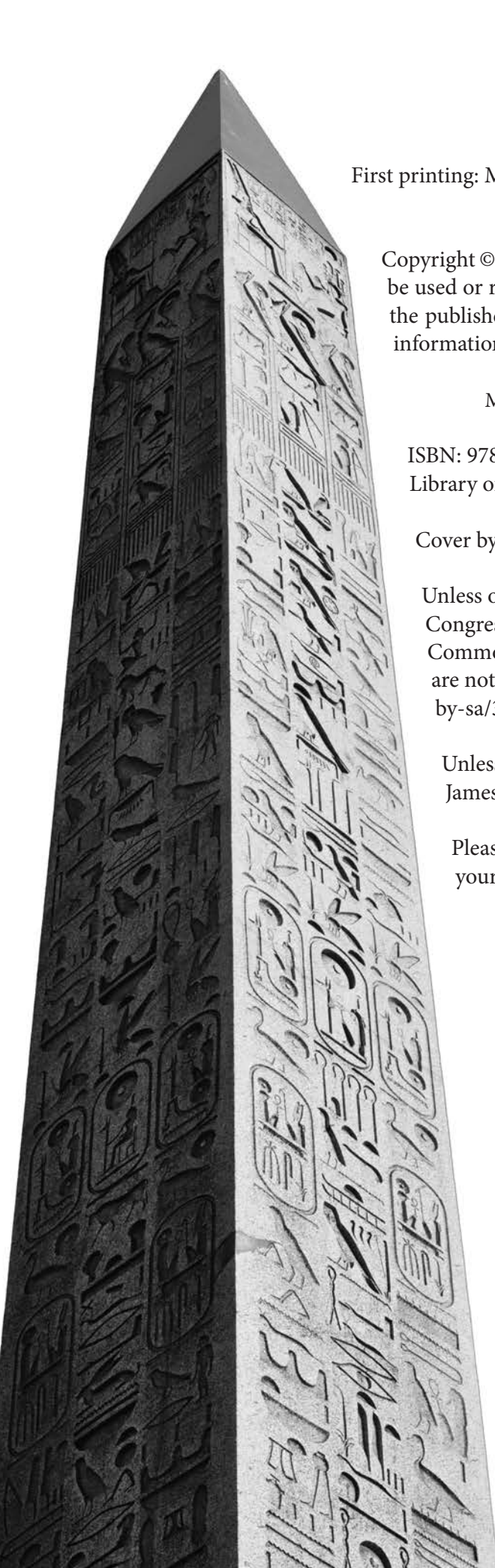
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The conquistadors enter Tenochtitlan by Margaret Coxhead, 1909 (PD).



Preface

Studying history, at its essence, is studying the truth of the ages. And if we discover this truth, the wisdom of the ages, maybe we will live some of it out today. Aristotle wrote, “If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development.” History understands truth’s beginning and its development. The discovery of that beginning, of its development, is ours.

I did not say, “We are on a quest for the truth.” We most certainly are not. We already know that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Rather, we are going to look at history and grasp its application to our lives, to our nation, and to our world.

History, to us, is not merely theory. History, as we see it unfold, is clean and objective. In her book *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society*, Gertrude Himmelfarb warns us that the “abyss is the abyss of meaninglessness.”¹ The interpreter takes precedence over the thing interpreted, and any interpretation goes. The most obvious aim of such a creed is to weaken our hold on reality, chiefly by denying that there is any reality for us to get hold of. Its most probable effect, if we were to take it seriously, would be to induce feelings of despair and dread. This view invites the tyranny of the subjective — anything goes so long as it does not hurt anyone and is believed sincerely.



Contemporary Americans are dedicated to the pleasure principle. They yearn to be considered creative and imaginative, casting off the chains of mere causality and chronology. They conceive of history as a form of fiction — postmodernist fiction, to be sure — what one of them has called “a historiographic metafiction.”

The British author G.K. Chesterton writes, “The madman’s explanation of a thing is always complete, and often in a purely rational sense satisfactory.”² While I agree that absolute objectivity has yet to be attained, it is not the same for absolute truth. In any event, the idea of objectivity as a guiding principle is too valuable to be abandoned. Without it, the pursuit of knowledge is indeed hopelessly lost. As Aristotle argues in his seminal work, *Nicomachean Ethics*, “. . . the great majority of mankind is agreed about this; for both the multitude and persons of refinement speak of it as Happiness, and conceive ‘the good life’ or ‘doing well’ to be the same thing as ‘being happy.’ But what constitutes happiness is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers.”

Objectivity is as elusive as happiness, but truth is real. Are people better at making observations, discoveries, and decisions if they remain neutral and impartial? Only if they pursue truth.

1 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

2 G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Chapter II, <http://gutenberg.org> (p. 93).

Scientists know that absolute objectivity has yet to be attained. But ask poets. In *The Poetic Imagination*, theologian Walter Bruggemann writes, “to address the issue of a truth greatly reduced requires us to be poets that speak against a prose world. . . . By prose I refer to a world that is organized in settled formulae. . . . By poetry I mean language that moves, that jumps at the right moment, which breaks open old worlds with surprise, abrasion and pace. Poetic speech is the only proclamation worth doing in a situation of reductionism.”

Knowledge in history will be pursued, but only those who love and find truth will attain it. Are people better at making observations, discoveries, and decisions if they remain neutral and impartial? Absolutely not. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

Today, however, the individual, and by implication, society, compartmentalizes knowledge. The compartmentalization of knowledge and the dissolution of epistemic coherence is a concern for Christians. If knowledge is subjective, then truth will be the next victim. There will no longer be a redemptive narrative for millions of post-modern Americans whose subjectivity has stamped any semblance of metaphysical objectivity from the barn. This social studies text, indeed all this author’s writings, are an attempt to reclaim the rock solid truth that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and the true history of mankind is our acceptance or rejection of that truth.

The loss of a continuous, historically true, biblical narrative in American society has



been disastrous. Post-modernism breaks the subject into moments of subjectivity that do not cohere into an identity. Quite literally, separating the whole into parts means there is no whole.

What does post-modernism really mean? It means that millions of Americans will not know who they are. Their subjective interpretations of who they are — roughly based on perceived needs and desires — will not suffice to create a coherent whole. Like Oedipus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, Americans will rail against the fates while standing squarely in the path of inevitable destruction and not knowing what is happening.

This book is a response to that need to awaken a desire for the truth found only in God’s Word and in history that He guides by His almighty hand of grace; history that began for humanity in the Garden of Eden:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:7–9 KJV).

Using Your Student Textbook

How this course has been developed

1. Chapters: This course has 34 chapters (representing 34 weeks of study).
2. Lessons: Each chapter has five lessons, taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes each. There will be a short reading followed by discussion questions. Some questions require a specific answer from the text, while others are more open-ended, leading students to think “outside the box.”
3. Weekly exams: The Teacher Guide includes two optional exams for the chapter.
4. Student responsibility: Responsibility to complete this course is on the student. Students are to complete the readings every day, handing their responses in to a parent or teacher for evaluation. This course was designed for students to practice independent learning.
5. Grading: Students turn in assignments to a parent or teacher weekly.

Throughout this book are the following components:

1. First thoughts: Background on the historical period.
2. Discussion questions: Questions based generally on Bloom’s Taxonomy.
3. Concepts: Terms, concepts, and theories to be learned that are bolded for emphasis. Most are listed on the first page of the chapter.
4. History makers: A person or persons who clearly changed the course of history.
5. Historical debate: An examination of historical theories surrounding a period or topic.

What the student will need:

1. Notepad: For writing assignments.
2. Pen/pencil: For answers and essays.
3. The Teacher Guide with daily lessons and information for weekly exams and/or to record daily assignments.



Chapter 1

The Fertile Crescent: Nomads to Farmers

First Thoughts

Around the time of the Great Flood (2347 B.C.), mankind stopped merely herding sheep and guarding cattle, and settled into small farming communities. The first place this settlement occurred was in the Tigris and Euphrates River Valley. This development marked the genesis of culture, or that which separates human beings from other species. Art, literature, science, and mathematics emerged from these agrarian communities. Before long, with improved agrarian methods (e.g., the invention of the plow) and improved transportation, cities, like Babylon, were formed. Great masses of people could live in these relatively comfortable and safe places. Farmers provided food, craftsmen provided goods, and priests provided succor to the soul. Agricultural societies, by their nature, were also more cognizant of time. They formed the “week,” the first artificial division of time that was not based on natural phenomenon (e.g., the month was based on phases of the moon). With basic needs met, mankind began to look to the cosmos to find answers about critical things like birth and death, fate and peace. Only the Hebrews, neighbors to the southwest, really found the answer, but that did not stop Mesopotamian sages from searching.

CONCEPTS

Civilization

Antediluvian

Mesopotamia

Tigris and Euphrates
Rivers

Sumer

Babylon

Hammurabi Code

Rule of Law

Agrarian Societies

The Concept of Time

Nomadic Societies

Monotheism

Polytheism

Marduk

Chapter Learning Objectives

Chapter 1 explores the emergence of human communities in the Mesopotamia region before and after the Great Flood.

As a result of this chapter you should be able to:

1. Trace the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia.
2. Analyze the importance of agrarian communities.
3. Observe the emergence of aberrant religions.
4. Understand the importance of geography on economics.

History: The Fertile Crescent

Antediluvian

topography refers to the geography and natural land forms before the Flood.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:21–24).

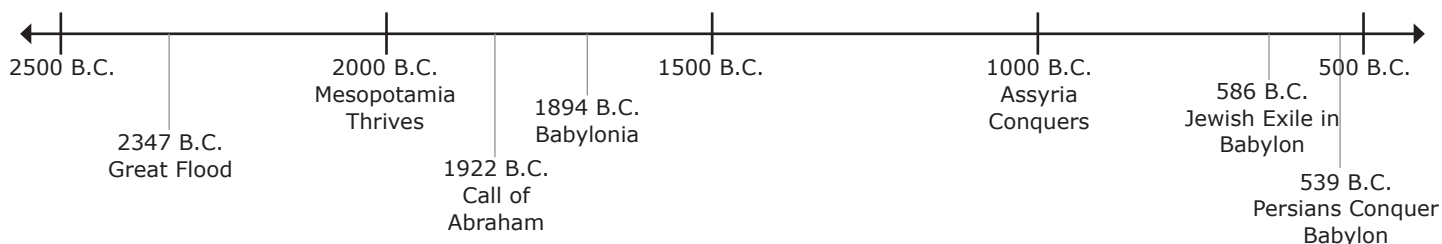
No one is certain about where the Garden of Eden was located, but many historians believe it was in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, called Mesopotamia.

Where was the Garden of Eden and where did Adam and Eve live their lives after the Fall? This question has plagued generations of historians and theologians. No one

knows. We will probably never know because the Flood destroyed all antediluvian topography.

Nonetheless, our story begins in the Mesopotamian crescent, where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers join. There were many different civilizations that lived in and conquered the Mesopotamian region: Sumer, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. We will merely explore the region generally.

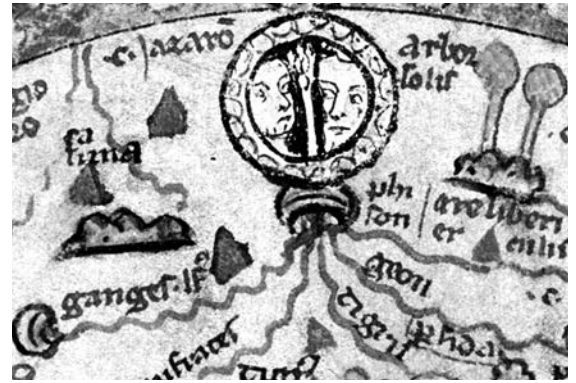
Somewhere, perhaps in the fertile agricultural utopia between these two rivers, after Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, their descendants herded sheep and made their living. Soon, though, they built houses from reeds or mud-brick and grouped in villages where they tended their crops. Additionally, they built barns called granaries to store their grain, and began developing a token system to record trade and accounts. In short, they created a **civilization**. For reasons still not well understood, the civilization of Southern Mesopotamia underwent a sudden growth and change, centered



in the cities of Ur and Uruk. Perhaps the Great Flood caused these changes. People gathered into fewer, but larger, locations. The plow, the potter's wheel, and the introduction of bronze were invented. In this same period came the beginnings of writing and arithmetic. The name of this early civilization was Sumer.

Discussion Questions

Read Genesis chapter 1 and contemplate how God took a barren void and filled it with life, preparing Earth to be the homeplace of humanity. What astonishes you most about God's special relationship with people from the very beginning?



A detail of the Psalter World Map, 1265 A.D., featuring the Garden of Eden; many medieval maps used placement of the city of Jerusalem and other details like the Garden of Eden, Tower of Babel, or Noah's Ark to reveal a biblical connection to the geography of a world created by God.

Lesson 2

Geography: A River Civilization

One of the people groups populating Mesopotamia was the Babylonians. Babylonians, like most ancient people, did not think much about what existed beyond the horizon. Inhabitants of Mesopotamia could reach the ocean in almost any direction in which they traveled — the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, or the Persian Gulf. Therefore, in a sense, they felt hedged in. Accordingly, the oldest map of the world that has been found is one accompanying a cuneiform inscription, representing the plain of Mesopotamia with the Euphrates flowing through it and the whole surrounded by two concentric circles, named *briny waters*. Outside of these circles were seven detached islets, possibly representing the seven zones or climates into which the world was divided according to the ideas of the Babylonians.¹

The most important city in Mesopotamia was Babylon. Babylon rested on a level plain with the Tigris and Euphrates flowing right through it. Mountains surrounded the east and north sides of the plain, the Zagros chain and Kurdistan, and the Syrian and Arabian deserts guarded the west and the south. In short, it was an ideal place for a civilization to thrive.

In the summertime, the climate was hot and dry, but the winter was cold and wet. Average temperatures in Mesopotamia ranged from higher than 48°C (118.4°F) in July and August to below freezing in January. Inevitably, in the spring, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flooded great portions of the plain. That was a good thing. In ancient times, proper control of water enabled man to produce abundant crops, mostly barley and wheat, and the same water provided abundant grazing land in the rich meadows for livestock.

The **Babylonian civilization** was urban in character, although based on agriculture. The country consisted of a dozen cities surrounded by agricultural settlements. At the head of the political structure was the king.

¹ Joseph Jacobs, *The Story of Geographical Discovery: How the World Became Known* www.gutenberg.org, p. 19.



Map of the world. c. 6th century BC. British Museum (CCA-SA2.5).

The success of the Mesopotamian civilizations was due to proper water management and resulting plentiful food supplies.

Because Babylon was situated on the river Euphrates, and all of Mesopotamia had access to river traffic, it was an ideal place for river trade. Mesopotamians could trade up the river to Syria and beyond and could act as a staging post with the cities of Sumer to the south. When Babylon became important, people would have wanted to live there because of the economic benefits it offered. It was the city, of course, in which Daniel and Esther lived. Babylon would have also given a greater degree of security to its inhabitants. Mesopotamia — Babylon in particular — was not easily conquered. Protected by inhospitable mountains and deserts, it was a determined foe that only those who would weather those obstacles could conquer.

Discussion Questions

Can you identify the following map locations?

Babylon

Euphrates

Tigris



Government: Rule of Law

The rule of law is a legal maxim stating that governmental decisions should be made by applying written laws with minimal discretion in their application. Rule of law has a great deal of influence on the legal system and its relationship with political powers and individuals. This maxim was implemented in Babylon through the Code of Hammurabi.

The Code of Hammurabi is one of the oldest deciphered writings of significant length in the world. King Hammurabi, the sixth Babylonian king, enacted the code. It consists of 282 laws, with scaled punishments, adjusting “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” according to concerned parties’ social status.

Nearly one-half of the Code deals with matters of contract, establishing, for example, the wages to be paid to laborers. The rest of the Code addresses social behavior.

The Code of Hammurabi is significant because it allowed men, women, slaves, and all others to read and understand the laws that governed their lives in Babylon. Laws of other civilizations were not written down, and thus could be manipulated to suit the rulers dictating them. The Code is particular to its time. For instance, it demands a trial by judges. It also advances laudable goals in society, like peace and security. In the words of Hammurabi: “Let any oppressed man who has a cause come into the presence of my statue as king of justice, and have the inscription on my stele read out, and hear my precious words, that my stele may make the case clear to him; may he understand his cause, and may his heart be set at ease!”²

Mesopotamia did not have a central national government until Babylon conquered all neighboring cities. The region mostly consisted of highly controlled city-states, in which priests and councils of male nobles ruled. This changed later when the city-states grew to unmanageable proportions and a king, called a suzerain, took over.

Discussion Question

Societies can have two types of laws: written and unwritten. Make a list of the written laws of your home or school and a list of the unwritten laws. For example, lying is a written law code violation, whereas playing soccer before finishing your homework might be a violation of an unwritten law.

The notion of a **king**, or **suzerain**, was a relatively late development in Mesopotamian history. Certainly nothing like it existed in the Sumer regime. It appeared during the Babylonian reign. Ironically, nomadic societies preferred a more democratic government ruled by groups of elders.



Code of Hammurabi, Louvre Museum, (CCA-SA3.0).

The Sumerian King List is revealed on a handful of ancient artifacts and manuscripts. The kings include pre-flood kings, those who reigned before the global deluge related to the biblical account of Noah.

² C. H. W. Johns, MA, *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World*, #282. www.gutenberg.org

Economy: The Development of the Concept of Time

Nomadic people are communities of people who move from one place to another rather than settling permanently in one location. Nomadic cultures are hunter-gatherers or pastoral nomads. Abraham was a nomad.

An economy consists of the economic system of a nation or other political entity. An economy includes labor, capital (money), and land resources. It also includes the manufacturing, trade, and consumption of goods and services. Goods and services are exchanged according to demand and supply between participants by barter or a money exchange with a credit value accepted within the contracted groups.

The economy involves all aspects of a society: history and social organization, as well as its geography and natural resources. These factors give context to a developing economy and set the conditions and parameters in which an economy functions.

Much of what we think of as human history inevitably revolves around agriculture. It was mostly farmers who built cities, wrote books, and developed culture. Sometime before the Great Flood, Mesopotamia evolved into an agrarian society (a society of farmers).

Farmers developed a concept of time, a concept of “the week.” The week, in contrast to the concept of a “month” (which is based on the stages of the moon), was based on God’s creation as outlined in Genesis. Thus, weeks were started or stopped by religious events, market days, and other non-agrarian events.



Ruins in the town of Ur, Southern Iraq (CCA-SA 2.0).

Agriculture spawned ancillary economies such as cottage industries (small entities that produced products in their homes) and a religious class. Agriculture and improved transportation enabled cities separated from adjacent farms to emerge. Agricultural societies were usually very religious and were very focused on male leadership.



Hanging Gardens of Babylon - 16th century engraving by Dutch artist Martin Heemskerck (PD-US, PD-Art).

Farming communities had much higher birth and survival rates than nomadic, herding communities. When farming began in earnest, the world's population mushroomed to between 60 and 70 million people.³

Nonetheless, agriculture (or farming) brought some problems. Namely, as people lived sedentary lives in close proximity to one another, diseases and plagues had available hosts to infect and terrorize. Cities struggled with normal problems that large, closely packed, contiguous housing communities always face: how to deal with the social and physical needs of its people. Sewage, garbage control, and water acquisition all became concerns. In fact, wealthy Babylonians, because of these issues, moved outside the city and created the first suburb.

Mesopotamia was primarily an agrarian community after the Great Flood. In the arid but fertile river valleys, agriculture was possible only with irrigation, a fact that had a profound effect on the Mesopotamian civilizations. The need for irrigation meant that Mesopotamians built their cities along the Tigris and Euphrates and the branches of these rivers. Major cities, such as Ur and Uruk, took root on tributaries of the Euphrates, while others, notably Lagash, were built on branches of the Tigris. The rivers provided the benefits of fish, organic fertilizer, weaving reeds, and clay for building bricks. There is no doubt that Mesopotamia supported a thriving economy for most of its history and still does today.

In summary, the Mesopotamian economy moved beyond subsistent farming. It appears to have been the first society to do so. For the first time in history, a civilization reached such a stage of prosperity and excess that it could afford to indulge itself in luxuries.



From *Compilation of the Chronicles and Histories of the Bretons* by Pierre Le Baud, a 15th century chaplain in France. Images include the death of Abel, Noah's Ark, and Tower of Babel.

Discussion Questions

Psalm 126 is an agrarian song. King David, or an Israelite farmer who is talking about both the joy and the sadness of planting time, writes it.

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. (NIV)

Who is the primary speaker in this verse? What is his vocation? What is his relationship with God?



³ Peter N. Stearns, *World History in Brief* (New York: Pearson Publishing Co., 2010), p. 13–14.

The farmer saved seed grain through the winter. He often had to watch family members starve—but he dared not use the seed grain. If he did, there would be no crops the next year and all would starve. What observation and conclusion does he draw from this long winter of sacrifice?

What application can you make to your own life?

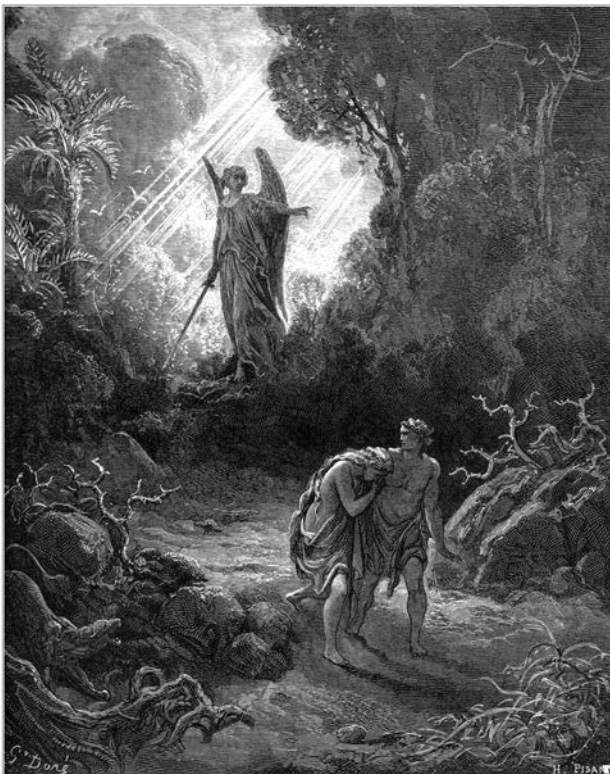
Lesson 5

Religion: Polytheism

Monotheism is the belief in one God.
Polytheism is the belief in several gods.

From the beginning, Adam and Eve knew God, His grace and power revealed clearly to them. When they were driven from the Garden because of their sin, they and many of their ancestors continued to follow *YAHWEH* (Hebrew word for Almighty God) — the one and the only God. However, many forgot this and followed other gods. They abandoned **monotheism** for **polytheism**.

Like so many pagan religions of antiquity, the Mesopotamian religion had its roots in the worship of nature. Quite literally, Mesopotamians, particularly the Sumerians, created images of nature in approximate form. This was an attempt to appease, if not control, the forces of nature.



A paradise as created by God during the creation week is at the heart of the biblical account of the Garden of Eden.

Early man paid particular attention to their dead. They hoped that the cessation of human life was not the final answer. Religion explained the unexplainable to its people. It provided needed succor in time of stress and grief. Because religion invested so much in humanity, it was the source from which writing, reading, and art emerged. In short, there could be no culture without religion.⁴

The Sumerians regarded the universe as consisting of two realms, heaven and earth. Earth was a flat disk surrounded by a hollow space. This was enclosed by a solid surface which they believed was made of tin. Between earth and heaven was a substance known as **lil**, which means “breath.” The cosmos adhered to established rules. Mesopotamians enjoyed an ordered universe.

The world below was known as the nether world. The Sumerians believed that the dead descended into the nether world, also known as the underworld. A person could enter the nether world from a special entrance, but could not leave unless a substitute was found to take one’s place in the world below. The nether world was ruled by two gods: Nergal and Ereshkigal. After descending into the nether world, a soul had to cross a river with the aid of a boatman who ferried them across. They then con-

⁴ Todd Carney, *Cliffs AP World History* (New York: Wiley Publishing, 2010), p. 20.

fronted Utu, who judged their soul. If the judgment was positive, the soul would live a life of happiness. Nonetheless, Sumerians generally believed that life in the nether world (hell) was dismal. No one really wanted to go there.

The gods of Sumer were immortal, but human in form and demeanor. They could be hurt, and no one wanted to be the one who hurt them.

Each god adhered to a set of rules of divine authority known as *me*. They ensured that each god was able to keep the cosmos functioning according to a master plan. Thus it behooved Sumerians to appease the gods.

Sumerians had hundreds of gods. Many gods had spouses and children, and the more powerful gods had lesser gods as servants. Yes, the gods were organized into a caste system, or hierarchy, a sort of “pecking order” where the more important gods/goddesses ruled the lesser gods. The four most important deities were An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursag. These were the four creator deities who created all of the other gods. An was initially the head of the pantheon, though he was eventually seceded by Enlil. Enlil is seen as the most important god. He is known as “the king of heaven and earth,” “the father of the gods,” and “the king of all the gods.” Enlil developed the broad designs for the universe. However, it was Enki who further developed and carried out his plans. Ninhursag was regarded as the mother of all living beings.



Austen Henry Layard's "Monuments of Nineveh, Second Series," London, J. Murray, 1853 (CCA-SA3.0).



Image of the war-god Nergal
by Ernst Wallis et al, 1875
(PD-US).

Sumerians, like all ancient people, believed that their role in the universe was to serve the gods. To this end, the ancient Sumerians devoted much of their time to ensuring their favor with the gods through worship, prayer, and sacrifice. Generally speaking, though, the gods were mischievous and unpredictable in their responses. There was no concept of a loving, personal God that the Hebrews knew so well.

The temple was the center of worship. Each city usually had a large temple dedicated to its favorite god or goddess and might also have small shrines dedicated to other gods. Daily sacrifices of animals and foods were made. Anything would do (e.g., wine, milk, and meats); it was the thought that counted. Additionally, special occasions called for spectacular festivities that would sometimes last for days.

The most famous Mesopotamian god, the one most Hebrew captives would have learned about in their captivity, was Marduk, the son of Enki. He was without a doubt the most important and most powerful of the Mesopotamian gods. In Babylonian legend, Marduk destroyed all other gods, particularly evil Tiamat, and became the head god. This was the closest that Mesopotamian worshipers came to believing in one god (monotheism).

Discussion Question

Contrast the God of the Old Testament with the gods that the Mesopotamians served.