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God's Narrative of Redemption: Creation, *Imago Dei*, and Water Imagery

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by

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Approval Sheet

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Abstract

This research demonstrates that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption; this plan is universally expressed to humanity through water imagery in the Old Testament (OT) and in Ancient Near East (ANE) context. The Creator unveils supernatural intent through natural processes and contends that the restoration of *imago Dei* identity represents the conclusive fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. In pursuit of this argument, the research critically explores creational identity, the contrasting biblical notion of idolatry, and the cross-cultural significance of water imagery within the contexts of the OT and the ANE. By understanding the use of water imagery, readers can acknowledge that God works through the created-natural to reveal the ultimate redemptive plan; whereas the enemy uses the superficial to corrupt creation and human identity in an attempt to make humankind irredeemable.

The interplay between the created-natural and supernatural forces underscores a fundamental truth: God utilizes the natural world for supernatural purposes, while antithetical spiritual forces seek to pervert and corrupt the same creation for destructive ends. Nowhere is this dichotomy more evident than in the corruption of human identity, symbolized by the separation of humankind from their Creator. Humanity, originally fashioned in the image of God, experienced both divine communion and subsequent estrangement following the commonly termed "Fall of Man" in Genesis. The enemy's agenda, laid bare in Genesis 3, aimed at corrupting human identity, remains unchanged throughout history. In the OT and ANE, manifestations of this corruption abound, from the intermingling of divine and human lineage in Genesis 6 to the lessons against idolatry and other gods, which fractured humanity's moral fabric and deepened the rift between humanity and its original identity in God. God's redemptive

mission seeks to restore humanity to its *imago Dei* identity and the unity experienced with the Creator in Genesis 1 and 2, counter to the adversary's goal of perpetual corruption. The key to understanding this overarching biblical narrative lies in recognizing God's use of the natural world for communication, restoration, and redemption, juxtaposed against continued attempts to corrupt creation throughout history. The worship of ANE gods and the associated images led to widespread identity confusion, resulting in chaos, psychological trauma, and the downfall of civilizations.

Like the ancients, contemporary society grapples with questions of identity and purpose, often seeking substitutes for the void left by separation from the one true God. The malevolent exploitation of human identity persists, evidenced by advancements in technology and scientific manipulation, which, while potentially beneficial, also harbor the potential for irredeemable harm to human identity and dignity. Thus, the battle for human identity and redemption continues across time and space, with the faithful challenged to discern God's redemptive work amidst the ongoing attempts to corrupt and distort humanity's true image and purpose. Through this research and subsequent analysis, it becomes evident that New Testament (NT) warnings serve as a cautionary tale against repeating the ancient's fate in future eschatological events. Like a caring parent guiding their children away from danger, *Yahweh* seeks to protect humanity and restore the *imago Dei*, ensuring humanity's perpetual well-being and identity through Jesus Christ.

Contents

Excursuses

Figures

Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

God works through the created-natural for supernatural purpose. On the contrary,
antithetical spiritual forces seek to contaminate the created-natural to affect destruction. This
truth is no greater witnessed than in the corruption of human identity at the very beginning, the
separation of humankind from the Creator. Humanity, fashioned in the image of the Creator,
experienced both, a divine oneness with the God and the chasm between Creator and humans
that occurred after, what is most commonly called, the "Fall of Man." The enemy clearly lays out
the original plan of action in Genesis 3 to corrupt human identity, and the playbook has not
changed.

In the Old Testament (OT) and Ancient Near East (ANE) record, the plan to separate
humankind from the Creator is manifested in many ways. After the "fall," Gen. 6 records a
devastating blow to the human genome as the "sons of God" lay with the "daughters of men;"
the result of which produced unnaturally created beings beyond the scope of redemption (Gen.
6:1-7). There was only one uncorrupted human bloodline, which was found in the person and
family of Noah, the progenitor of all humankind that exists unto this very age (Gen. 6:8-8:19). In
this case, God used the element of water as both judgment against depravity and a means of
rescue and redemption for humankind. The enemy used the unnatural to corrupt, and God used
the created-natural to restore. Other manifestations of abject human corruption in the biblical
record lie in lessons against the worship of "other gods" and by idotrolic means; both of which
adulterated practical morality and deepened the divide between humanity, original identity, and
relationship with Creator-God. God's ultimate redemptive goal is to restore humanity unto *imago
Dei* identity and to the oneness mankind experienced with the Creator recorded in Gen. 1 and 2.
Whereas, the antithesis goal is the continual corruption of humanity to achieve an irredeemable

state. The code to unravelling this ten-thousand-foot biblical view is found in the OT. God's use of the created-natural to communicate, restore, and redeem while continued attempts to corrupt creation are on the historical record, spanning space and time, across disparate geography, and among every people group.

In fact, when one fast forwards from antiquity to modernity, the overt exploitation of human identity is on full display. The enemy of God, the enemy of humanity, has more, not less, means to depredate creation's original purpose. Like the corruption of the human genome by the Nephilim recorded in Gen. 6, the weaponization of scientific and technological advances can have the same irredeemable effect. While explorations in gene-editing technologies like CRISPR, neurological implants, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) may very well be funded by those seeking to transform medicine, eliminate hunger through genetically modified food, overcome neurological disease, and to increase computational power, students of the Bible would be remised if not to acknowledge the nefarious counterapplication on human identity, genetic modification, and the makeup of intelligence.[1] Likewise, and from, a social perspective, people today question every aspect of "who they are," from religion and social groupings to hot-topic issues like race, gender, and what constitutes human life. Like the advent of OT idolatry, modern humans still seek to fill the void of separation from the Creator with artificial means and the results have been, are, and will be devastating.

<div align="center">Thesis Statement</div>

This research demonstrates that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption; this plan is universally expressed to

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[1] A background on the technologies is provided in Chapter Seven. Ethical considerations are proposed in Excurses 3.

humanity through water imagery in OT and in ANE context. The Creator unveils supernatural intent through natural processes and contends that the restoration of *imago Dei* identity represents the conclusive fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. In pursuit of this argument, the research critically explores creational identity, the contrasting biblical notion of idolatry, and the cross-cultural significance of water imagery within the contexts of the OT and the ANE. By understanding the use of water imagery, readers can acknowledge that God works through the created-natural to reveal the ultimate redemptive plan; whereas the enemy uses the superficial to corrupt creation and human identity in an attempt to make humankind irredeemable.

Defining Human Identity in Context

Humans inherently experience the need to connect with "something greater," an explanation of purpose, a reason for being, and a need to belong. The journey for personal identity is teleological, a deliberate byproduct of original, divine, human design; as such, the end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption is a return to the Perfect Image. Just as the Triune God exists in community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each with specific purpose, so does *imago Dei* creation necessitate the same for humanity.[2] From the very beginning of time, and across geographical boundaries, history is punctuated with stories of humanity's never-ending search for purpose, identity, and communal belonging. Like the awkward first day of

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:[2] This concept is first expressed in Genesis 1:26-27 which establishes humanity's *imago Dei* creation. "Then God said, 'Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

All biblical passages included in English full text herein are done so in accordance with the following version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted: *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

middle school, every human, in every documented culture, white-knuckles a proverbial lunch tray, hands sweating, and heart palpating, feverishly searching for a place to sit; the reality of human experience finds empirical expression in this "moment," a revealing of the inherent need for belonging physically present, yet the pursuit for identity is measured, not by lunch hours, days, or even years, but by lifetimes. Labels are generated, shed, and regenerated, and each human sojourn is defined by a sense of personal purpose and tribal belonging, or by a lack thereof. People have accomplished amazing and terrible feats in this search, from tumbling the walls of Jericho to terrorism at home and abroad.[3] Identity connects these and other poignant events; belonging is their link.

 Purposefully programmed into humanity's DNA from the genesis of creation, humans are a reflection of a Trinitarian Source.[4] This human identity condition is altogether hypostatic, fecund, and generative.[5] The original image is one of perfect union, and everyone, in every

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[3] The walls of Jericho is a reference to the OT prophet, Joshua working in participatory obedience with the Hebrew God to defeat the Canaanites as portrayed in the book of Joshua. The implication is that identity when founded in participation with *Yahweh* results in victory; the inverse also being true. Outside of the will of the Creator, terror reigns. "September 11: Attack on America," *History.com* (A& E Television Networks, November 24, 2009), last modified November 24, 2009, accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/attack-on-america.

[4] While in biochemistry, DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, which is the molecule that carries genetic information in humans and all other living organisms, the usage here is figurative rather than metaphysical in nature.

 As a matter of presupposition, this research infers that the Bible, in historical and present form, represents the inspired message of the Triune, Hebrew God. Though this inspired Word came into existence through human means, and therefore, is subject to human error. However, the transcendent message of humanity's redemption persists above and beyond space and time, translated through the true *Logos* (Jesus Christ) existent from the creational beginning; therefore, the entirety of the written Word must be tested in and through the life and work of the Savior. In and through God-Manifest, the written Word finds true form in context, exegetically exposited through the filter of the Messiah finding full interpretive value.

[5] The hypostatic condition of human identity as used here is not to overstate the metaphysical construct of *imago Dei* for human nature. The issues of the biblical canon are predominately questions of human identity, and this research does not intend to explore the metaphysical nature of humanity. Instead, the dissertation focuses on the necessity of belonging and identity as a function of *ex nihilo* creational design, and the return to that perfect image as God's ultimate plan for humanity's redemption. Due to the creation of humankind in the perfect image, gifted with the ability and charged with procreation, identity is inherently generative and fecund (Gen. 1:28). The fecundity of image is demonstrated through human intellect and creative "goodness" (Gen. 1:31).

culture, seeks a participatory return to that divine Origin, no matter how the Source is defined by

cosmology or unique worldview.[6] Human participation in this eternal return to perfect identity

has resulted in varying degrees of failure across time. Participation in this divine return is best

conveyed relationally; for ancient Israelites and modern Christians, a covenantal relationship

exists between the Creator and the created.[7] Metaphorically, the closer one is to the source, the

better the reflection; the same is true in transposition. In the words of G.K. Beale, "What people

revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration: we become what we worship."[8] This

philosophical and relational tension is laid bare in OT literature through the inverse concept of

idolatry and is often addressed by a polemic apologetic, testifying to the sovereignty and

goodness of the Hebrew God over and above ANE correspondents.[9] In this way, ancient contexts

work together to provide the foundation for identity reclamation as both the beginning and the

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[6] Though the actual metaphysics is not the charge of this research, the image theology herein is based on an *exitus-reditus* framework. This is discussed further in Chapter One under the subheading, "Progression of Scholarship."

[7] Summarized from: Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, ed. D.A. Carson, vol. 36 (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35. Full text: "In the canon the closest conceptual counterpart to the *imago Dei* are graven images. Idolatry provides the wider canonical context for the *imago Dei* as that which most centrally threatens the security and significance of the covenantal relationship between Creator and creature, between Redeemer and redeemed, between Christ and his people."

[8] G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 16.

[9] These assertions do not denigrate any soteriological or Christological themes; in fact, the concept reinforces the Augustinian view of deification in that humans are deified *ex gratia* rather than *de substantia.* In other words, Christ enables a mortal return essential unity with the Creator; it is the purpose of this research to set this foundation through OT study. For a fuller treatment on human deification: Augustine, "Sermon 192," in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, trans. John Chrysostom et al., vol. 38 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000). Augustine writes, "*deos facturus qui homines erant, homo factus est qui deus e*rat." Many scholars have argued that beyond terminology, the idea of deification is well established in Augustine's writings: Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Concept of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37:2, (1986); Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Vincent Meconi, "Augustine's Doctrine of Deification," *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (May 2014): 208-228; and, Russell who notes that "deification" occurs as a motif more so in Augustine than in any other patristic church father: Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 329-332.

end of God's redemptive plan for humanity, crossing temporal boundaries of geography and culture.

<div align="center">Imago Dei Restoration</div>

Since God works through the created-natural for supernatural purpose, the goal of the Creator's plan for human redemption (*imago Dei* restoration) can be witnessed through the observation of how God has used creation to communicate the redemptive plan to the masses. If the goal of God's universal plan for redemption is to reinstate humanity's original identity and the inverse concept is idolatry as proposed by this research, then water imagery is one of the means by which this sacred redemptive plan is both biblically and cross-culturally expressed. Indeed, water as an essential element *is* and *has been* experienced by every human existing across the temporal boundaries of space and time. Water intersects otherwise disparate historical and cultural worldviews. Every human understands the physical necessity of water and the essence of water as metaphorical and typological; this is why water is so often used symbolically in literature throughout the ages. Considering Gen. 1:1-2, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." Just as "darkness covered the face of the deep," so does obscurity veil the heart of human identity; the void of God's presence floods the halls of human consciousness leaving a persistent emptiness, a longing for ultimate identity fulfillment. In this way, the very first words of the OT hint at God's plan of redemption as inherently linked to the loss of divine identity in connection with water imagery as creation symbology.[10] Thus, the dissertation sets out to reveal that identity reclamation is the ultimate

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[10] Presuppositionally, this research does not hold to the traditional teaching that image of God was altogether "lost" or "severely corrupted" by the "fall" of humanity; rather, the perfected image of God in mankind was "clouded" or distorted by abject idolatry. Bray concurs with this finding, "In recent years it has generally been agreed that the Bible nowhere speaks of a loss of the image/likeness, and that there are passages which imply that it

state of God's plan for humanity's redemption as originally designed. This is accomplished in a four-fold manner by:

1. Employing a typographical approach to the two tropes of creation-rescue-recreation and identity-inversion-recreation;
2. Historical, literary, and expositional analyses of OT and ANE literature in the same historical stream considering the cross-cultural symbology of water as a creational element;
3. Conducting holistic comparisons between ANE and Semitic texts; and finally, by
4. Assessing the use of polemic theology in the OT to communicate identity reclamation as the primary goal and terminal end-state of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

<div align="center">Chapter Outline</div>

This section provides an outline of the dissertation by chapter.

Chapter One

Chapter One presents an introduction and the thesis statement. This dissertation asserts that God unveils supernatural intent through natural processes and contends that the restoration of *imago Dei* identity represents the conclusive fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. In pursuit of this argument, the research critically explores creational identity, the contrasting biblical notion of idolatry, and the cross-cultural significance of water imagery within the contexts of the OT and the ANE. By understanding the use of water imagery, readers can acknowledge that God works through the created-natural to reveal the ultimate redemptive plan; whereas, the enemy uses the superficial to corrupt creation and human identity in an attempt to make humankind irredeemable.[11] The chapter also defines human identity in the context of biblical truth and the idea of *imago Dei* restoration.

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is still intact. Human beings are created in God's image; therefore, they should not be killed (Gen. 9:6) or cursed (Jas. 3:9). Neither of these texts would have any meaning if the image/likeness had been completely lost at the fall, and so the traditional view cannot be sustained." G.L. Bray, "Image of God," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 575.

[11] Thesis statement from Chapter One of this dissertation.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two provides explanation of preliminary considerations including a definition of research scope, the logical deduction that undergirds the execution of the thesis case, research methodology and structure, and an introduction to the progression of scholarship in the related research areas of *imago Dei*, idolatry, and water imagery. The chapter outlines the overarching idea of water imagery as a literary motif in that the symbology plays an important role in the way God communicates the ultimate plan of redemption to humans. The final section includes this research's contribution to the academy.

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, the research conducts a comprehensive exploration of the study's background through the hermeneutical triad—history, literature, and theology—utilizing a holistic-contextual research model that considers both ancient Israelite and broader ANE perspectives. Aligned with Lints's interpretive journey and human identity framework, the chapter underscores the enduring aspects of human identity across temporal, cultural, and situational differences. Emphasizing the interpretive journey from the original meaning for the biblical audience to contemporary application, the chapter argues for grounding in creational origin and historical-cultural contexts to comprehend God's plan for humanity's redemption. It posits a shared theological structure in the ANE, finding its fullest expression in the Bible. Exploring the historical connection between the OT and the ANE, the chapter acknowledges linguistic, chronological, and cultural points of comparison. The focus on historiography, creational identity, idolatry, and water imagery contributes to understanding *imago Dei* as the beginning and end-state of salvation history. Chapter Three lays a robust foundation for the

ensuing chapters by establishing the historical and theological framework essential for the overarching exploration of the research.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four of the research is a dedicated and thorough exegetical exploration of the Book of Genesis, focusing on key elements such as the creational liturgy, the fall of man leading to identity inversion, creational corruption, and divine intervention. With Genesis holding foundational theological importance, the chapter employs a comprehensive approach, utilizing literary, expressional, and expositional prooftexts. The inner-biblical study in the chapter explores relationships and intertextuality within Genesis, emphasizing identity and water imagery in the context of the creational liturgy. Subsequent sections delve into the expositional foundation of selected Genesis passages, demonstrating how these texts establish the groundwork for recurring tropes—specifically, the identity-inversion-reclamation and creation-rescue-recreation motifs. These tropes are identified as pervasive themes throughout the biblical canon, ultimately leading to the redemption of humanity's *imago Dei* identity. In summary, Chapter Four significantly contributes to the overarching argument by elucidating how Genesis lays the foundation for pervasive themes in the biblical narrative, particularly those related to the inversion and reclamation of human identity and the overarching narrative of creation, rescue, and recreation.

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, the dissertation delves into the enduring presence of *imago Dei* post-creation, undertaking a comprehensive exploration of its theological dynamics through intra-biblical comparative analysis. The chapter meticulously examines the theological tropic unity established earlier, particularly through an in-depth exploration of the Exodus narrative,

reaffirming the consistent theological thread woven throughout the biblical text. Shifting focus to the Psalter, the chapter compellingly argues for the pivotal role of water imagery in *Yahweh*'s communication and the prescription of worship, shedding light on its significance in the worship context.

The thematic exploration of the book of Jonah plays a crucial role in bridging intra-biblical analysis with ancient Near Eastern contextual research. Each case study, including Exodus, the Psalter, and Jonah, posits that God reveals supernatural intent through natural processes, ultimately leading to the restoration of the *imago Dei* identity as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. A common thread running through these cases is the scrutiny of water imagery, unveiling profound aspects of God's character and redemptive plan through the natural realm. The chapter contends that this exploration of water imagery provides unity among Old Testament passages, offering a pathway forward in worship and culminating in the eschatological realization of the restoration of the *imago Dei*—an accessible reality for all of humanity. In summary, Chapter Five contributes a nuanced examination of *imago Dei* post-creation, employing intra-biblical comparative analysis and highlighting the unifying theme of water imagery as a key element in revealing God's supernatural intent and paving the way for the ultimate restoration of human identity.

Chapter Six

In Chapter Six, the dissertation meticulously explores the ANE context surrounding God's redemptive plan, commencing with an insightful examination of the *imago Dei* within the ANE framework. Central to the inquiry is the support for the creation-rescue-re-creation trope, establishing connections between the biblical narrative and ANE cultural narratives. A comprehensive analysis of Babylonian creation stories and a comparison of ancient flood

narratives contribute to a nuanced understanding of the broader ANE cultural and mythological landscape. The chapter concludes with a profound investigation into the character of ANE primary deities and their worship practices, focusing on the crucial concept that "we become what we worship." The narrative takes a disquieting turn as it navigates through rituals associated with ANE gods, revealing practices marked by sexual perversion and human sacrifice. This exploration underscores the cultural and psychological ramifications of these rituals, elucidating why the God of the Hebrew people sought to shield them from such profound impacts. Engaging with scholars such as Bayer, Ammann, and Khadem, the chapter delves into the concept of cultural trauma, unveiling the intricate interplay between psychological trauma, cultural memory, and historical hermeneutics in ancient societies. Ultimately, Chapter Six guides the reader to a pivotal realization that the images people revere shape not only their beliefs and values but also their very essence. This exploration forms the foundation for the subsequent chapter, where the redemptive narrative woven throughout the Old and New Testaments is illuminated, emphasizing the Creator's unwavering pursuit of restoring the *imago Dei* in humanity.

Chapter Seven

In Chapter Seven, the dissertation achieves its zenith by integrating biblical hermeneutics, theological concepts, and the interpretation of natural processes to support the overarching thesis. The chapter systematically elucidates hermeneutical conclusions, emphasizing the foundational concept of *imago Dei* identity established in Genesis 1:26-27 and further emphasized in Ps.139:13-16. It underscores the revelatory nature of natural processes, drawing from Job 12:7-10 and Rom. 1:20, and contrasts the biblical notion of idolatry with the pursuit of understanding God's intent through the created order. Water imagery emerges as a

symbol of cleansing and renewal, exemplified in the Flood narrative and echoed in NT examples. The chapter also delves into the enemy's corruption of creation, drawing connections between the serpent's deception in Gen. 3 and spiritual forces of evil at work in Eph. 6:12. Finally, it culminates in the redemptive narrative, emphasizing the transformative nature of redemption through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, conforming believers to the image of Christ as the ultimate restoration of *imago Dei* identity. The comprehensive exploration of creational identity, the contrast with idolatry, and the analysis of water imagery contribute to a profound understanding of God's redemptive work across the OT and the ANE.

Chapter Two: Preliminary Considerations

Chapter Two provides explanation of preliminary considerations including a definition of research scope, the logical deduction that undergirds the execution of the thesis case, research methodology and structure, and an introduction to the progression of scholarship in the related research areas of *imago Dei*, idolatry, and water imagery. The final section includes this research's contribution to the academy.

Research Scope

This study reveals that the restoration of the *imago Dei* identity represents the ultimate and final objective of God's plan for humanity's redemption. This plan is universally communicated to humanity through the use of water imagery in both the OT and the ANE context. The scope of the research is necessarily limited to the OT, as even the length of a dissertation cannot accommodate a full biblical treatment of the thesis case. Parallels found in ANE literature are explored to demonstrate how water imagery is used to communicate God's plan for redemption to all people.

Just as Jesus teaches parabolically in the New Testament (NT), so does the Hebrew God teach the ancient audience by using the cross-cultural familiarity of water. Study centered upon the trope of water imagery and identity reclamation thereby illuminates biblical interpretive inquiry and the exposition of OT text; this is vital to understanding God's ultimate redemptive plan for humanity and the theological impact of *imago Dei* on salvation history as it unfolds in the NT through the life and work of Jesus Christ.[12]

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[12] Hermeneutical implications are explored in the final two chapters of the dissertation.

Logical Argument

While the research is centered upon the exposition of OT texts, the process from thesis to

conclusion can most clearly be perceived by readers through an understanding of the sentential

logic that undergirds the whole of the thesis-case. This deductive apologetic informs research

structure and is presented as follows in list format: [13]

1. If the ultimate state of God's plan for the redemption of humanity is identity reclamation, then evidence is provided in the OT alongside the inverse concept, idolatry. (P → Q)
2. Identity and idolatry are both predominant and connected adversarial motifs in the OT demonstrating that *imago Dei* reclamation is the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for the redemption of humanity. (Q → R & S)
3. Both identity reclamation and idolatry are often taught in the OT by the use of water imagery symbolizing creation and "new creation." (P)
4. The ultimate state of God's plan for the redemption for humanity is taught through the universal symbology of water because the element is present throughout human experience beyond temporal parameters. (Q) (MP 1, 3)
5. *Imago Dei* reclamation is the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for the redemption of humanity, often taught through water imagery because the element is cross-culturally understood and experienced both physically and metaphorically. (R & S) (MP, 2, 4)
6. Water imagery, symbolizing "new creation," is used to reveal the ultimate state of God's plan for the universal redemption of humanity. (Simp. 5)
7. *Imago Dei* identity is the ultimate end-state of salvation history; the concept and the inverse are presented throughout the OT, and biblical interpretation is illuminated by the universality of water imagery's "new creation" symbolism. (P → S) [14]

The final expression result is: [P → Q (R &S)] = (P → S); the equality deduction

intrinsically informs the thesis and effectually loads research structure and methodology.

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[13] While the dissertation can not effectively cover every issue related to creation and the image of God, the logical flow of the deductive apologetic is presented as the overarching thought process of the author. Note the centralization of the deduction as centralized in (P) the arch or climax of the thesis argument. The equality deduction informs the overall methodology.

[14] Propositional logic with conditional proof demonstrates that if the premise (P) is true then certain conclusions follow as represented by P → Q and Q → R & S; thus, P → S becomes true or at the minimum plausible. MP as used in the logic formulae is *modus ponens* affirming the antecedents which are marked in the reference. "Simp." is used to identify the logical concept of simplification. For a fuller treatment on apologetic, sentential logic, see: James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 30-58.

Research Methodology and Structure

Reiterating the thesis case, this research demonstrates that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption; this plan is universally expressed to humanity through water imagery in OT and in ANE context. In order to consummate the thesis, this research examines creational identity, the biblically antithetical concept of idolatry, and the cross-cultural symbology of water imagery as used in OT and ANE context. Research methodology and structure are vital to thesis realization and resulting hermeneutical implications; thus, the methodology and structure of the writing are offered in the following subsections to demonstrate the efficacy of the thesis case.

Methodology

Because this research compares Israelite and ANE history, literature, and iconography, the comparative process must be both fair and reasonable. At the macro-level, there is a question that one must first answer before treading down a path of comparative methodological research: "Does the Bible steal or borrow from the ideas and writings of ANE literature?" There are two extreme positions on this matter: 1) ANE history, literature, and iconography are the primary source for the OT and Hebrew religious belief,[15] 2) Israelite history, literature and iconography are the source for ANE writings and religious practice.[16] A third position, and the premise of this

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[15] ANE priority was introduced by Friedrich Delitzsch in the Babel and Bible lectures at the turn of the twentieth century. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible: Two Lectures*, trans. K. C. Hanson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007).Since this time, the question of borrowing has gripped audiences of biblical scholars, theologians, archaeologists, and ANE specialists, alike. Under the guise of synthesizing Mesopotamian archaeology and Assyriology for the general public, Delitzsch's work from the Babel and Bible lectures and after was themed as a comprehensive apologetic for Babylonian spiritual and moral superiority over that of the Hebrew religion.

[16] Opposite of Delitzsch and in the same time frame, fundamental Bible scholars turned the proverbial cheek to parallels between ANE and OT texts in fear of watering down belief in the Bible as authoritative. In *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations,* Chavalas and Younger concur "…by the end of the nineteenth century Old Testament scholars still ignored much of the textual material that might have put Babylonian civilization in a good light. They naively argued for the great superiority of Hebrew monotheism." Mark W.

research, applies specific parameters to finding ANE and Hebrew parallels so that the research remains as unbiased as possible throughout the discovery and comparative process.[17] Rather than take an extreme position favoring ANE or Israelite priory, this dissertation takes a more nuanced approach. The process of Israelite and ANE comparison is determined by cognitive environment criticism in that the approach "involves successfully integrating background studies - literature,

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Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 32.

Walton describes this position of absolute denial as "minimalist" and "typical of traditional evangelical interpretation. John Walton, "Creation," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP InterVarsity Press, 2008).

[17] Since the turn of the twentieth century, finding parallels and connections between the Bible and ANE archaeological findings and literary texts has been met with intellectual fervor. Samuel Sandmel coined the term "parallelomania" describing the "extravagance" applied to finding connection between ANE texts and biblical ones. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (1962), doi:10.2307/3264821.

Sandmel's work considerably contributed to the corpus of comparative methodology as applied to biblical and ANE texts. Extreme positions and overstated ideas naturally resulted in a refining of the comparative method into a repeatable approach; likewise, "sourcing" and "borrowing" rhetoric has softened in more recent years to give way to more palatable terms like "relationship," "connection," "association," "correspondence," "similarity," and so on. This position is supported by: Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993), 12.

Likewise, Jones summarizes the most recent and sorted history of the comparative method: "Looking back on the twentieth century and even at the last ten years, one cannot help but observe the war-trodden wastelands that remain in the wake of the promotion, destruction, and reconstruction of the comparative method." Jordan Wesley Jones. "Who Maketh the Clouds His Chariot: The Comparative Method and the Mythopoetical Motif of Cloud-Riding in Psalm 104 and the Epic of Baal," *M.A. Thesis*, Liberty University, 2010.

Promoters and critics alike have asserted that when comparing OT and ANE texts, the most difficult hurdle is the legitimization of said parallels. In other words, just because a parallel may seem to exist, 'does not necessarily make an academic pursuit of that allegation worthwhile.' In *Literary Studies*, Talmon asserts that a "set of rules" must be applied to the content in order to effectively consider comparative possibilities across biblical and ANE literatures. One of these "rules" are the existence of the literary works in the same "historical stream," which Talmon defines by referring to people groups that share "aspects of historical and geographical proximity as well as those of cultural affinity." Talmon, *Literary Studies*, 48. In other words, "The closer the affinity of one language to another, in structure and other basic features which point to a common historic origin, the wider the scope for the comparison of their respective vocabularies." Talmon, *Literary Studies*, 19. These bounds of linguistic and historiographical reason are typically referred to as the holistic approach to the comparative methodology. In this research, Talmon's holistic approach is used when defining cultural and linguistic parallels between biblical and ANE literature at the exposition-level; this is explained under the subheading, "Cognitive Environment Criticism" and further refined by the application of the hermeneutical triad on literary analysis.

archaeology, history from the ANE - with biblical interpretation of OT passages."[18] This dissertation follows Talmon's historiographical approach to cognitive environment criticism by considering water/new creation symbology as a literary motif indicative of the antithetical pairing of divine identity and idolatry in the Hebrew Bible.[19]

Pursuant to Talmon's holistic approach, this research addresses aspects of historical, geographical, and cultural affinity as married with Hallo's contextual approach; to wit, the goal, "is not to find the key to every biblical phenomenon in some [ANE] precedent, but rather to silhouette the biblical text against its wider literary and cultural environment."[20] The wider environment is largely set upon the stage of cosmology and creation accounts.[21] These accounts serve to reveal divine identity reclamation as the ultimate end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption. Simultaneously, water imagery used in these cosmological accounts symbolizes creation/new creation and universally communicates to the broader audience of humanity outside of space, time, religion, culture, and other temporal boundaries. Typologically, this makes God's plan for humanity's redemption through divine identity reclamation accessible to all people.[22]

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[18] Jordan Wesley Jones, "Short Paper: Methodology Assignment Instructions," in *OBST800: Old Testament Backgrounds (B01)* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, Fall, 2020).

[19] For a fuller treatment on literary motifs framing the comparative methodology see: Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible Collected Studies* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

[20] William W. Hallo, "Biblical History in Its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John Bradley White (Pittsburg, PA: Pickwick Press, 1980), 1-26. Over-parallelism is avoided pursuant to the tenets of: Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (1962).

[21] A summary of the historical stream considered in this research across the geographical regions of Israel, Egypt, and Mesopotamia is included in Appendix A and is compiled by information in: Victor H. Matthews and Donald C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2016), 397-402.

[22] Though there is dissent between those scholars employing a more historical approach to the comparative method and those who choose a typological approach, this research combines the two types pursuant to Talmon's holistic methodology. Jones refers to Frazer's typological approach when contrasting the two methods: The

This brings the reading to an explanation of dissertation structure pursuant to the methodologies discussed and as further refined by the hermeneutical triad.

Structure

Through cognitive environment criticism, this research examines OT creational identity, the antithetical concept of idolatry, and the universal symbolism of water imagery through the lens of the hermeneutical triad as applied OT and ANE context. The hermeneutical triad consists of history, literature, and theology and is introduced by Andreas Köstenberger and Richard Patterson in *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*.[23] According to Köstenberger, "The core proposal [of the hermeneutical triad] is this: for any passage of Scripture, regardless of genre, it is necessary to study the historical setting, the literary context, and the theological message."[24] The author concludes that "such a triadic approach is grounded in an authorial-intent hermeneutic that embraces the common-sense notion that successful communication depends

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"typological approach asks whether there is some underlying unity to mankind—a question posed by Frazer." Jones. "Who Maketh the Clouds His Chariot," *M.A. Thesis*.

According to Jones, this mental "unity" dismisses historical connections, at least in the present comparative methodology debate; though this research disagrees with said rejection. If the holistic method is applied pursuant to cognitive environment criticism, biblical and ANE parallels can be considered worthy of academic pursuit. Likewise, the typographical method can add to the determination of theological and hermeneutical principles that were applied in the past and can be understood in the present; this is accomplished simply with the presumption that God is both the designer of human beings, the cause for existence, similar/identical phenomena, and the supernatural author of the Bible; as such, God delivers a message of redemption in a way that can be understood beyond temporal boundaries. This dissertation considers this mental unity by direct design through the typographical approach as communicated through water imagery and similar understandings that cross geographical, cultural, religious, historical barriers for supernatural purpose. This typographical understanding is pursuant to Malul's explanation of the typographical approach: Meir Malul, "The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies," in *Alter Orient Und Altes Testament* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1990), 13.

[23] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Duane Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021).

[24] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Invitation to Biblical Interpretation & the Hermeneutical Triad: New Hermeneutical Lenses for a New Generation of Bible Interpreters," *Criswell Theological Review* 10, no. 1 (2012): 3-12, 3.

first and foremost on discerning an author's or speaker's communicative intent."[25] Pursuant to

this trifocal lens, the research structure is split into major discovery units to cleanly effectuate the

hermeneutical triad and accomplish the thesis case. These units have been previously discussed

in the structural outline presented in Chapter One.

<div align="center">Progression of Scholarly Research</div>

Image and identity predate common-knowledge history and have, thus, been dissected

like an archetypal lab-rat from the broad instances of philosophical query unto formulaic,

mathematical equations, and everywhere in between. This author, while leaning into definable,

sentential logic, and an arguable apologetic, also appreciates the typological nuance of biblical

truth; this typological shading reaches beyond temporality and into expositional linguistics to

communicate universal human experiences that defy pragmatic definition: like love, hate, fear,

and death. To every tribe, community, nation, and person across history, these experiences are

very real. The expressions, symbology, and reticent human emotions are so completely evident,

that academia must acknowledge the cross-cultural, religion-bounding, irreputable presence of

existence, even if not empirically definable. In this way, this academic venture may verge upon

the borders of the mysticism, if only by inherently seeking the wonder and inspiration of *creatio

ex nihilo*. Still, the research argues that these mortal features are reflective of an imaginative but

critically thinking Designer/Engineer. The patristics are historically in agreement with this

finding. While the burden of this research is the ancient realm and is thus explored throughout

the dissertation, this subsection is focused on Church Fathers and forward to show consistency in

interpretive inquiry for image theology, idolatry, and water imagery; the first accord of which is

found with Augustine.

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[25] Ibid.

Augustine's Theology of Image

Augustine's philosophical immersion against the Plotinian accounts of *imago Dei* affirm both a Triune God in relationship and the human *persona* in analogous community.[26] In this way, Augustine's theology of the *imago Dei* was a significant departure from Latin "pro-Nicene" theologies only a generation earlier.'[27] Though Augustine's theology of image builds on that of Hilary of Poitiers, Marius Victorinus, and Ambrose of Milan, the Church Father was able to draw on Plotinian influence to reconcile divine and human identity. Augustine's predecessors largely embraced a "pro-Nicene" stance on *imago Dei*, in that the image was primarily Christological in application, distinctly separating the divine as perfect image and the created lesser.[28] For the Latin patristics, *imago Dei* was only applied to the human identity in derivation. Augustine reconciled the two through a Plotinian participatory framework; that is, the reflected image is more "true" when "it exist[s] in a participatory union with its source…when the temporal, material order is not absolutized, but is recognized to be a reflection of ultimate

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[26] The burden of this research is the ancient realm and is thus explored throughout this research. The "Progression of Scholarship" subsection here is thus focused on the Patristics and forward to show a consistency in interpretive inquiry for image theology, idolatry, and water imagery.

The concept of image is central to Plotinus's cosmology, particularly in *Enneads.* Plotinus writes, "[I]t is proper to an image since it belongs to something else, to come to exist in something else." Plotinius, *Ennead*, III.7. Greek: ὥστε πάντα εἶναι ἴχνη νοήσεως καὶ νοῦ κατὰ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον προϊόντων καὶ μιμουμένων τῶν ἐγγὺς μᾶλλον, τῶν δὲ ἐσχάτων ἀμυδρὰν ἀποσῳζόντων εἰκόνα.

[27] The term "pro-Nicene" does not infer that this research is subscriptive of the stance; rather, the terminology is adopted from: Lewis Ayres, "Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Introduction," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007), 141. Ayers affirms that a "pro-Nicene" theology carries with it three trinitarian identity principles: (1) "a clear version of the person and nature distinction," (2) a "clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son occurs within the… divine being," and (3) a "clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably." Ayres, "Nicaea and Its Legacy," 236. Augustine's application of Plotinian principles to arrive at mature *imago Dei* application can be traced through *Contra academicos*, *Solioquia*, *Diversis quaestionbus octoginta trubus*, *De quantitate animae*, *De vera religion*e, and finally *De trinitate*. Boersma conducts a brilliant, modern treatment of the development of early Augustinian image theology, providing a fuller treatment: Gerald P. Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of pro-Nicene Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[28] Boersma, Augustine's Early Theology of Image, 1.

reality."[29] Though Augustine was not operating out of an Aristotelian theory of hylomorphism,[30] the Christian philosopher was nonetheless able to avoid dualistic thinking, affirming the "integrated nature of the body-soul composite."[31]

Plotinian cosmology, though devoid of Christian theological necessity, expresses the origin of the universe as a movement of an image away from the Source and as ultimately returning to back to the Source.[32] The *Enneads* are particularly devoted to answering how the One is present to all without being a particular being, and this is the starting point in any theistic cosmological account. Plotinus writes:

> For the soul now knows that these things must be, but longs to answer the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity *flowed* from

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[29] Ibid, 135. On the influence of Plotinus on Augustine's image theology, Brown writes, "It was a reading [of Platonic literature] which was so intense and thorough that the ideas of Plotinus were absorbed, 'digested' and transformed by Augustine… Plotinus and Porphyry are grafted almost imperceptibly into his writings as the ever-present basis of his thought." Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 95. Pierre Courcelle offers an important piece of the puzzle, delineating between Aristotle's access to Plutonian writings and the general ebb and flow of intellectual currents in Milan, The author also notes the direct influence of Ambrose and Simplicanus on Augustinian theology; Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation De Philosophie Dans La Tradition littéraire: Antécédents Et posterité De boèce* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1967); cf. Pier Franco Beatrice, "Quosdam Platonicorum Libros: The Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43, no. 3 (1989): 248-281. Pursuant to Courcelle's lead, Boersma notes a fluidity between Augustine's Christian and Platonic thought, particularly regarding participatory ontology and divine image. Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, 137-139.

[30] For Aristotle, the soul bears the same relation to the body which the shape of a statue bears to its material basis; therefore, common features should be expected. The realization of matter is described through four *aitiai*: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause. Aristotelian hylomorphism considers the soul as the form of the body, which in turn is the matter of the soul. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Christopher John Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2020); Aristotle, *Aristotle's De Anima: In the Version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Kenelm Foster, Silvester Humphries, and Ivo Thomas (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007).

[31] Boersma, Augustine's Early Theology of Image, 223. Summarized from: Michael P. Foley, Review of Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology, by Gerald P. Boersma, Nova et vetera 17, no. 4 (2019): 1287-1291, 1287.

[32] Plotinus, *Ennead*, V.8.12.

(ἐξερρύη) it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One.[33]

Rooted in an understanding of Plotinian cosmology, Augustine's *imago Dei* constructs the view on human identity as an expression and reflection of the One, derived from the One, with a desire to return to the One, an *exitus-reditus* framework. Boersma traces a shift in Augustinian thought from earlier Latin patristics, as undergirded by Platonic and participatory evaluation:

> Initially, in the *Soliloquia,* Augustine proposes a definition of image as something false: an image is a reflection claiming [to] identify with its source when, in fact, it is other than its source. As the dialogue progresses, an image is discovered to be "true" rather than deceptive when it is recognized to exist in a *participatory union with its source*— that is to say, when the temporal, material order is not absolutized, but is recognized to be a reflection of ultimate reality.[34]

This participatory ontology is vital to understanding *imago Dei* identity Augustine forward.

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[33] Plotinus, *Ennead*, V.1.6 (emphasis added). Take note of the metaphorical "flow" terminology used in Plotinus's words in relation to water symbology as present throughout historical literature and philosophy. Of the material order, Plotinus writes, "Certainly, then, since it is weak and false, and falling into falsity, like things in a dream or *water* or a mirror, it necessarily leaves matter unaffected." Full Greek text: Ἀσθενὲς δὴ καὶ ψεῦδος ὂν καὶ εἰς ψεῦδος ἐμπῖπτον, οἷα ἐν ὀνείρῳ ἢ ὕδατι ἢ κατόπτρῳ, ἀπαθῆ αὐτὴν εἴασεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι. Plotinus, *Ennead*, III.6.7. The water metaphor expressed causality rather than necessity. Of this O'Meara notes, "Plotinus himself uses images of water or light 'emanating' (flowing) from a source in order to describe things coming from the One. However he is well aware that emanation is a material process which cannot properly be attributed to immaterial entities: emanation may function as an image of processes that occur at higher levels of being; it is not itself these processes." Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 60-61. Boersma's treatment reads, "[Plotinus's] varied language of causality moves freely between "to make" (ποιέω), "to proceed" (πορεύω), and "to flow" (ῥέω). To take one example: 'But how is that One the principle of all things? Is it because as principle it keeps them in being, making each one of them exist? Yes, and because it brought (ποιήσασα) them into existence.' Statements such as this Augustine could certainly affirm." Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, 157.

[34] Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, 136.

Addressing *Theosis*

The Latin term *theosis* is often met by biblical theologians with a semblance of disdain,

ringing in the ears with sounds of blasphemy, but the patristic notion of the concept runs in

concert with any number of theological rubrics, including that of restoration of the *imago Dei*.[35]

"Most boldly, *theosis* is described as a transforming union of the believer with God and Christ

usually, if inadequately, translated as 'divinization' or 'deification.'"[36] For this research,

deification takes on the patristic conceptions of *imago Dei* reclamation and rejects any claims of

'divination' to impart a "perfect nature" on the mortal side of God's plan for humanity's

redemption.[37] As Mosser rightly notes:

> In the ancient world generally, and the Greco-Roman world especially,
> the word 'god' was used more plastically than by most moderns. The
> patristic writers did not intend to teach that believers become the sort of
> being that the one true God is. Rather, their view was that believers,
> through union with the one true God, come to possess certain attributes
> that are natural only to deity, not humanity. Primary among these are
> immortality and incorruptibility. There are, however, limits. Creatures
> can never become the kind of being the uncreated Creator is, no matter
> how many divine qualities they are allowed to partake of.[38]

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[35] One such critic was Adolf von Harnack in the 18th Century who spoke out against *theosis*; Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?: Sixteen Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter-Term 1899-1900*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Mansfield, TX: Martino Publishing, 2011). Of Harnack, Mosser writes, "Harnack viewed deification as a prime example of the corrupting influence of Greek philosophy upon Eastern Christianity. He grudgingly admitted that Augustine had at one point taught deification. But he also claimed that it was Augustine who brought the doctrine `to an edifying end' in the West. Yet as far as I am aware, no major Western theologian has ever repudiated the patristic concept of deification. More significantly, a fact increasingly recognized by recent scholarship is that Augustine did not bring deification to an end in the West. It is now clear that deification played an important role an important role in Augustine's theology, including his mature theology." Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (2002): 36-57, 37-38.

[36] Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing," 36.

[37] To reiterate, human identity rather than human nature is the *locus* of the research.

[38] Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing," 37.

"Deification, then, focuses not on humanity, but on the God who invites humanity to share divine life."[39] In this way, Augustine's theology on image and participatory ontology is consistent with the patristic, Latin definition of *theosis*.[40] The persistence of *theosis* is likewise noted in the theological image constructs of: "Aquinas, Luther, early Anglicanism, early Methodism and Jonathan Edwards - all fountainheads of Western theology."[41]

Thomist Contributions

With the salient features of the patristic doctrine on *theosis* in mind, the Thomist discussion on happiness is viewed through the lens of participatory ontology:

> Now man's happiness is twofold…One is proportionate to human nature, a happiness, to wit, which man can obtain by means of his natural principles. The other is a happiness surpassing man's nature, and which man can obtain by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead [*ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest secundum quandam divinitatis participationem*], about which it is written (cf. 2 Pet. 1 4) that by Christ we are made partakers of the Divine nature. And because such happiness surpasses the capacity of human nature,

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[39] A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999); cf. Luke Davis Townsend, "Deification in Aquinas: A *Supplementum* to the Ground of Union," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (July 2015): 204-234.

[40] Cf. David Vincent Meconi, *One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2018).

[41] The direct quotation is derived from Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing," 36. For a fuller treatment on the leaders of Western theology see the following resources organized by theologian. Aquinas: Williams, *The Ground of Union*; cf. Townsend, "Deification in Aquinas," 204-234. Luther: Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); cf. Olli-Pekka Vainio, "Luther and Theosis: A Response to the Critics of Finnish Luther Research," *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 4 (2015): 459-474. Anglicism: Arthur M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988). Methodism (Arminian and Calvinistic): Allchin, *Participation in God*, 24-44; Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017); cf. Sung Wook Oh, "Reconsideration of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Theology of John Wesley from the Perspective of the Church Renewal," *Theology and Mission*, no. 56 (2019): 181-217. Edwards: "As with many, though not named as such, deification is an overflow from Edwards's contemplation of the Trinity and the incarnation." Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing," 39; cf. Robert W. Jenson, "Theosis," *Dialog* 32, no. 2 (1993), 111.

man's natural principles which enable him to act well according to his capacity, do not suffice to direct man to this same happiness.[42]

M. Brown summarizes Aquinas's theology on image well:

> Thomas insists that the image of God exists most perfectly in the acts of the soul, for the soul is that which is most perfect in us and so best images God, and the soul in act is more perfect than the soul in its potentiality. Following Aristotle, Thomas holds that we only know the essence of the soul by knowing its powers; we only know the powers of the soul by knowing the habits of first principles; and we only know the habits of first principles by reflecting on the acts of the soul and the objects of those acts. As the Trinity is not static but a procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit, so the image of the Trinity in our souls consists of the active processions of word and love.[43]

These active processions of word and love are held in sharp contrast to the active processions away from the Trinitarian image through idol worship, which is explored as the antithetical concept to the worship of God and as the research thesis.[44]

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[42] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. David John Bourke (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), I-II.62, 1.

[43] Montague Brown, "*Imago Dei* in Thomas Aquinas," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 10, no. 1 (2014): 1-11, 2.

[44] With regard to modern *imago Dei* research advances, Karl Barth has been considered one of the most important figures advancing the research in the twentieth century. Barth was suggested as the premier scholar on *imago Dei* studies between 1919-1960 by Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, trans. Lorraine Svedsen (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1988), 146. In *Church Dogmatics*, Barth writes that, "'In our image' means to be created as a being which has its ground and possibility in the fact that... in God's own sphere and being, there exists a divine and therefore self-grounded prototype to which this being can correspond." Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. I (London: T &; T Clark, 2010), III/1, 183. Barth has been criticized because of the duality of gender imposed on the perfected image, but this aspect of Barth's findings is not the focus of this research. In Barth's own words "…we cannot say man without having to say male or female and also male and female. Man exists in this differentiation, in this duality;" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 286. As Niskanen outlines, "Even though the theological and philosophical underpinnings of Barth's exegesis were called into question, his dialectical model would prove to be the most influential interpretation of the *imago Dei* for almost half a century, and its influence can still be seen today in the work of a number of exegetes." Paul Niskanen, "The Poetics of Adam," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 3 (2009): 417-436, 418. A development in Barth's dialectical understanding of the image of God is found in the work of Claus Westermann; Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016). Though Westermann's work gets into the exegetical weeds of Genesis, some of which is exposited later in this research, the importance here is that author follows Barth in stressing the relational and participatory nature of human beings in God's image, which is pursuant with the patristic leads discussed herein.

Idolatria

According to OT and ANE context, idolatry is defined as, "The worship of an idol or of a deity represented by an idol, usually as an image."[45] Augustine understood *idolatria* as a rejection of the divine image, a disruption on the human-side of participatory *imago Dei* form, and as "an anti-social dynamic that corrodes human community and causes injustice."[46] Aquinas agrees considering the worship of idols required human processions unto immoral behavior. Thomas defines the Latin term *latria* to differentiate between worshipping the Creative Source and created images.[47] *Latria*, according to the Church Father, is twofold. 1) the reverence worthy only of the Creator, and 2) the signification of worship to "whomsoever it be shown."[48] *Idolatria*, as it where in Aquinas's time, resulted in observable, depraved activity including human sacrifices, "homicides, mutilations, and so forth."[49] Consistently, though more than a century later, Martin Luther asked of the first commandment, "The simple meaning of this commandment is, You shall worship me alone as your God. What do these words mean and how

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[45] Walter A. Elwell, "Idolatry," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2017), 588.

[46] Veronica Roberts, "Idolatry as the Source of Injustice in Augustine's *De Ciuitate De*," *Studia Patristica* LXXXVIII (2019): 69-78, 69. Augustine's finding is consistent with the premise of this research in that participation in idolatry corrupts human behavior; this topic is explored later herein under the OT and ANE analyses sections. Augustine's position on *imago Dei* has been already discussed well here, though the theologian's virtues against idolatry are most well unpacked in: Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, trans. P. G. Walsh (Liverpool: Aris & Phillips, 2009). Likewise, there have been a number of political scholars that have discussed Augustine's position on *idolatria* in the area of political theory. Some examples of writings that analyze this topic well include: Roberts, "Idolatry as the Source of Injustice;" Dean Hammer, *Roman Political Thought from Cicero to Augustine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Peter Kaufman, "Augustine and Corruption," *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 46-78; and, Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[47] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II.1.94.1, Obj. 2 and Reply.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II.1.92.4, Obj. 3 and Reply. *Latria*, in a patristic sense, infers a reverence of worship to be afforded to God alone, differing greatly from adoration or honor (*dulia* or *hyperdulia*).

are they to be understood? What is it to have a god, or what is God?"[50] Rhetorically, Luther

answers:

> A god is that to which we look for all good and where we resort for help
> in every time of need; to have a god is simply to trust and believe in one
> with our whole heart. As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the
> heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and confidence are
> right, then likewise your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your
> confidence is false, if it is wrong, then you have not the true God. For the
> two, faith and God, have inevitable connection. *Now, I say, whatever
> your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.*[51]

Similarly, Christopher Wright provides a modern, scholarly, and biblical assessment on

the divine reality behind idols and false images.[52] Wright underscores the fundamental

distinction between the living God and idols by suggesting that idolatry blurs the distinction

between the two, directly damaging both creation and humanity. According to the author, God's

redemptive mission is to restore creation to original purpose; thus, emphasizing the seriousness

of the issue and the Bible's passionate condemnation of idotrolic practice. Wright contends that,

"God battles against all forms of idolatry and calls us to join him in that conflict…[W]e need to

understand the whole breadth of the Bible's exposure of the deleterious effects of idolatry in

order to appreciate its seriousness and the reason for the Bible's passionate rhetoric about it."[53]

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[50] This research presumes throughout that the OT commandments are known by the audience. The first commandment is offering in Ex. 20:4 and further elaborated in v. 5. Ex. 20:4 in full English text is as follows: "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth." The Luther reference is drawn from: Martin Luther, *Luther's Catechetical Writings: God's Call to Repentance, Faith and Prayer*, trans. John N. Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: Luther Press, 1908: 2011), 44.

[51] Luther, *Luther's Catechetical Writings*, 44, (emphasis added).

[52] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 2018), Chapter 5, "The Living God Confronts Idolatry," Kindle. Evidence for this assertion is provided in later chapters.

[53] Ibid.

What the patristics and Wright observe is the OT and ANE context of idolatry as replacing the divine image in mortality to fulfill the human sense of belonging instead of the participatory union with the Source and processionary results. The good news is that God reconciles image-bearers back to the *imago Dei* in the end; in the meantime, participatory union produces the qualities of love and goodness reticent to the Creator that are so vehemently represented in the OT text as antithetical to the divine and through a polemic apologetic. Of this and considering Augustine, Aquinas, and other patristics in the divine redemptive economy, Feingold explains that the ability to see God face-to-face and to fully comprehend the Creator's essence is not attainable by any creature, regardless of intrinsic nature; the privilege is exclusive to God, himself. The eternal beatitude of God lies in the Creator's infinite knowledge and love of innate goodness, which constitutes the ineffable inner life of the Holy Trinity. Feingold describes the beatific vision as a mysterious participation in God's divine life and happiness for rational creatures. [54]

In Thomas's own words, "Now the end to which man is directed by the assistance of divine grace is above human nature. Therefore, there needs to be added [*superaddatur*] to man a supernatural form and perfection, by which he may be fittingly ordered to that same end."[55] Indeed, the yearning that underwrites patristic image theology also describes the longing of humanity for the return to divine identity: "The soul's longing for God: a longing that is a longing to return, to return to the One who made it, a longing that is experienced as restlessness,

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[54] Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010).

[55] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.109-114.

inability to settle and rest anywhere, a pressing sense that in all created things there lies something beyond, something that calls us to God."[56]

Symbology and Water Imagery

Up to this point, much ink has been spilled on *imago Dei* and idolatry, which was immediately necessary to form the foundation of the research; however, water imagery as a motif plays an important role in the way God communicates the ultimate plan of redemption to humans. If *imago Dei* is the origin of creation and the return to the perfect Image is the terminal redemptive state of God's plan as proposed by this research, then water imagery is a primary way in which the Creator shares this plan across temporal boundaries.[57]

Using Symbology and Imagery for Ancient Motif

"A motif, by definition, is a recurrent element or imagery that is related to a theme or reinforces one."[58] According to Freedman, an author may convey a motif in imagery in that the motif 'carries symbolic significance, extending beyond a literal interpretation to represent various aspects of the work such as structure, events, characters, emotional impacts, or moral and cognitive themes.' [59] The motif is depicted both through direct description and, more frequently, through the narrator's imagery and descriptive language. 'Likewise, the motif requires a certain level of recurrence and rarity in appearance to be perceptible and to convey intended purpose.

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[56] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 134.

[57] Evidence of this motif is presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation by overviewing OT and ANE creational tropes, then unpacked in Chapters 3-6.

[58] Dieudonné Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms," *Ph.D. dissertation*, (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 1-232, 1.

[59] William Freedman, "The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 4, no. 2 (1971), 128.

Motif-through-imagery effectiveness lies in the careful management of frequency and rarity, placement in meaningful contexts, and the coherence of individual instances towards a shared objective.'[60] Longman affirms, "Images speak to us more fully than regular literal language. They stir our emotions, attract our attention, and also stimulate our imaginations, as well as help us discover some new truth about the objects compared."[61]

Symbology was an integral aspect of communication in the OT and ANE. Deeply engrained in ancient culture, imagery was often used to convey complex ideas, beliefs, and narratives. Understanding these symbols was essential for effective communication within society. In a predominantly oral culture, where writing was limited and literacy rates were low, symbols provided a visual means of communication that could transcend language barriers. Symbology allowed people to convey ideas and concepts through images, icons, and motifs that were universally understood within cultural context.

Many symbols in the OT and the ANE also had religious and spiritual significance. Imagery was used to represent gods, divine attributes, cosmic forces, and sacred rituals.[62] Symbols were also used for political and social communication, conveying messages of power, authority, status, and identity. To this day, archaeologists continue to recover ancient royal inscriptions, official seals, architectural designs, and public monuments that shaped ANE perceptions across societies.

There is no wonder that God would use symbology to communicate across time, space, and cultures as one of the most effective ways to reach the hearts and minds of his people. God

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 116.

[62] For example, symbols like the sun, moon, stars, and animals were often associated with specific deities or cosmic powers.

met and continues to meet people "where they are." God chooses created-natural elements, like water imagery, so that he alone is glorified. Ideas and materials that can be fabricated by human hands bring glory to self or "other" idotrolic images like fallen angels or the Devil, himself. Since ANE imagery was used to represent gods and cosmic forces, OT symbology demonstrates God's sovereignty over the created natural order and dominion over those other maleficent "forces."[63] Likewise, OT imagery shows that God supersedes the political leaders of the ancient age and creation itself in direct contrast with king's lists and monuments dedicated to battle victories.[64]

Water Imagery in the OT

Overall, water imagery in the OT serves as a powerful symbol that communicates God's redemptive plan to restore humanity's *imago Dei* eschatologically, particularly through themes of purification, renewal, and restoration. The Noahic flood story demonstrates how creation was purified and restored to created natural order through water. Other OT examples can be found in passages like Ez. 36:25-27 and Jer. 31:34; water is associated here with the forgiveness of sins and the removal of impurity. In each of these illustrative passages, water communicates God's desire to cleanse humanity from sin and restore them to a state of moral purity, reflecting the original image of God.

OT water imagery also connects themes of renewal and rebirth. The Red Sea crossing ultimately frees the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and draws God's people back to his purpose

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[63] Examples of gods and goddesses as cosmic forces that influence the universe and ancient human existence include the *Enuma Elish*, Egyptian Pyramid Texts, Hindu Temple Carvings, Greek pottery, the Dresden Codex and other Maya codices.

[64] King's lists such as the Sumerian King List from Mesopotamia, the Palermo Stone from Ancient Egypt, and the Assyrian King List from Assyria. Battle victory examples include the Victory Stele of *Naram-Sin* from Mesopotamia or the Rosetta Stone from Egypt.

in spiritual renewal. Just as water brings life to dry land and rejuvenates the earth, it symbolizes God's transformative work in restoring humanity to new life. This concept is expressed in passages like Is. 44:3 and Ez. 47:1-12, where water flows from the temple, bringing life and healing to the land. Here, water imagery conveys God's redemptive plan to renew humanity and bring about spiritual rebirth.

Water imagery in the OT is also associated with the restoration of creation. In passages like Is. 35:6-7 and Joel 3:18, water is depicted as transforming the desert into a fertile land, symbolizing the restoration of God's creation to its original harmony and abundance. This imagery suggests that God's redemptive plan extends not only to humanity but to the entire created order, fulfilling the eschatological restoration of the *imago Dei* in all of creation.

Water imagery in the OT often carries eschatological significance, pointing towards a future restoration and renewal of all things. Passages like Is. 55:1-3 and Zech. 14:8 speak of a time when living waters will flow abundantly, bringing life and healing to the nations. Water imagery conveys the eschatological hope of God's ultimate redemption, where humanity will be fully restored to their *imago Dei* and dwell in perfect communion with God.

Generally, water imagery in the OT serves as a powerful symbol that communicates God's redemptive plan to restore humanity's *imago Dei* eschatologically. Through themes of purification, renewal, and restoration, water imagery conveys God's desire to cleanse, renew, and ultimately redeem humanity, bringing them into full communion with Himself.

Understanding the transcendence of *imago Dei* and studying the Bible in ancient context, through refined cognitive criticism lens, illumes interpretive inquiry. When the symbology of water, imagery, and iconography is considered in historical and literary context, the clarity of God's redemptive plan is universally revealed in such a way that has not been adequately,

academically explored. Even though there is research specifically regarding water and Psalm interpretation,[65] the prototypical flood in the NT,[66] and water symbology in the NT books of John and Revelation[67], as of this writing, there is no monograph that draws together *imago Dei*, antithetical idolatry, and water imagery to interpret the water motif from both an inner-biblical and parallel ANE standpoint. Thus, this research fills a chasm in academic research in BCE ancient milieu; altogether demonstrating that the ultimate end-state of God's redemptive plan is the return to perfect image. To wit, Lints posits, "God has chosen to be reflected in creation and thereby granted to everything meaning and value, the pinnacle of which is his reflection in humans."[68]

Academia and Summary

Not only is OT and parallel ANE literature steeped with water imagery, but the element is also "the only natural resource to touch all aspects of human civilization - from agricultural and industrial development to the cultural and religious values embedded in society."[69] Because this symbology crosses all generations and people groups, of course the Creator would communicate his redemptive plan for humanity's restoration of identity in this way.

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[65] Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms," 1-232.

[66] Scott T. Yoshikawa, "The Prototypical Use of the Noahic Flood in the New Testament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2004).

[67] Sherri Brown, "Water Imagery and the Power and Presence of God in the Gospel of John," *Theology Today* 72, no. 3 (2015): 289-298; Sandra Marie Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publications, 2003).

[68] Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 31.

[69] UNESCO, "Report: Water for People, Water for Life" (The United Nations, 2003), last modified 2003, accessed April 14, 2022, https://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/WWDR_english_129556e.pdf.

Oestigaard affirms, making the connection between human identity and water very clear:

> [Water] is an intrinsic part of people's identities, cultures, religious perceptions of themselves and the Otherworld or the life thereafter. Water in its many facets matters for humans, while the social, cultural, ideological and religious roles of water include deep ontological relations and identities ranging from personal perceptions and gender relations to rainmaking and fertility rites for the benefit of the whole society as well as perceptions of cosmological realms and religious beliefs.[70]

With this understanding and the foundation provided throughout Chapter One, the dissertation proceeds to demonstrate that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate, terminal state of God's plan for humanity's redemption by examining creational identity, idolatry, and water imagery as used in OT and ANE context.

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70 Terje Oestigaard, *Water, Culture and Identity: Comparing Past and Present Traditions in the Nile Basin Region* (Bergen: BRIC Press, 2009), 11.

Chapter Three: Background Studies

Chapter Three does the necessary work of explaining the background of the research by using the hermeneutical triad. History, literature, and theology are explored as a general overview in this section primarily from an ancient Israelite perspective, though ANE backgrounds are also mentioned. The dominant Hebrew focus in this chapter is consistent with the holistic-contextual research model as resources from ANE archaeological and literary discoveries are examined with attention given to informing OT interpretation. The research agrees with Lints regarding the interpretive journey and human identity:

> It is naive to suppose that the world has changed but our human identities have remained relatively unchanged.... Equally naive is the supposition that there is nothing enduring about human identity, that all of what it means to be human is fluid. The Interpretive Journey moves from the meaning of the text for the biblical audience across the river of differences (e.g., time, place, culture, situation) by means of [this] principlizing bridge to the application of theological principles" in modern context. [71]

So then, in order to understand God's ultimate plan for humanity's redemption as divine identity reclamation, there is a necessary grounding in creational origin and similar historical-cultural contexts in the ancient world. Beyond rote parallelism, this research proposes that there is a 'shared theological structure of ideas in the ANE, a structure that finds its most complete and true form in the Bible.'

A historical connection between the OT and ANE is presumed; as is the existence of "linguistic, chronological, and cultural points of strong comparison between [the] civilizations— not all of which might be said to fall under the umbrella of a [standard] historical connection." [72]

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[71] Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 18.

[72] Jones, "Who Maketh the Clouds His Chariot," 2010.

Historiography within the ancient world is investigated with an emphasis on creational identity, the biblically antithetical concept of idolatry, and the cross-cultural symbology of water imagery. The study of the peoples, movements, and cultures surrounding the world of the OT and the impact of background material on the ancient Hebrew text informs the idea of *imago Dei* as the beginning and end-state of salvation history, universally revealed through water imagery.

<div align="center">Historical Considerations</div>

Defining History

Exploring ancient history in a modern age, whether reading the Bible or another ancient text, participants are transported to distant lands, cultures, and ages to participate in: 1) an exercise of self-discovery, 2) an experience of communal belonging, and 3) theologically divine disclosure. In any attempt to draw out theological significance from a text, 'there is an inclination to read our own cultural biases and our own perspectives and worldview into the meaning.'[73] When imparting theological significance to the Hebrew Bible, the process necessitates a historical-cultural consciousness toward ANE ways of thinking. Since God chose to disclose his own supernatural identity in a revelatory fashion; the soteriological end-state of humanity's *imago Dei* reclamation follows the same revelatory mode.

For this research, *imago Dei* is a purposeful idea imposed at creational origin in the Hebrew text. The *imago Dei* is perfectly realized in mortality only through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Divine identity, then, is left open for humanity's reclamation in "the end of all things" through God's discerned schema. This ultimate redemptive plan is universally communicated, often through the symbology of water.

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[73] John H. Walton et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

Communicating History

Before establishing Hebrew protohistory as a framework and exploring shared ANE

cosmological understandings, the research must first note the nature of historical reality and

define certain parameters that are persistent across the discipline of history writing. "[Any] given

historical record represents a particular perspective about the events of the past. The shape of any

given historiography is determined by the questions the compiler seeks to answer. We cannot

legitimately speak of 'right' perspectives or 'wrong' perspectives concerning history."[74] Since an

absolute criterion did not exist in the ancient age, nor does the criterion exist in the present, all

written history must be evaluated as a "perspective on history" rather than empirical fact.

Instead of asking, "What really happened?" history writers are often left with answering

more propogandist questions like "What can make this king/queen/pharaoh/royal

leader/president be considered good and successful?" In modernity, this effort is largely

consummated by social and mass media. In ancient times, this practice fell on a scribe,

stoneworker, hagiographer, amanuensis, scrivener, etc. who was under the employ of someone

powerful, rich, and likely a part of the ruling class; thus, the historical "truth" as it were, was

written in order to enhance the likeness of the progenitor.

For instance, ancient kings would rarely admit defeat; any critique was only provided by

later kings whose purpose was to promulgate the legitimacy and supremacy of their own rule.

This separates the historical OT from other ANE accounts in tone and purpose. The history of

the Israelites is written with countercultural humility. According to Matthews *et al*., 'the

historical literature of Israel shares similarities with chronographic texts and occasionally

resembles royal inscriptions or historical literary texts. However, the primary purpose is

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[74] Matthews et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed.

theological rather than merely historical.'[75] The locus of Hebrew history was the revelation of

God's identity and the Israelite people's identity in and through *Yahweh;* whereas other ANE

cultures focused more royal affirmation, though deific involvement in human activity was a

given by all accounts.

Israel shares with the ancient world the idea that events are revelation, that is, the

evidence that the gods were at work, but the Hebrew perspective is unique in the understanding

and communication of that revelation:

> The worldview represented in Israel's historiography is one in which the
> directive activity of God is of primary importance. This view extends far
> beyond the recognition of occasional supernatural interventions to see
> God's activity in natural occurrences as well. In fact, it insists that all
> events are woven into the plan of God, which is the driving force of
> history. [76]

Contrastingly, "In Mesopotamia, it is assumed that deity plays an active part in the cause-and-

effect process that makes up history. The gods are capable of intervention and are, in fact,

expected to intervene. Oswalt describes this ANE polytheistic intervention in humanity: "the

gods are known through their identity with the great natural cycles of the cosmos; the gods have

no purposes except those that humans have: survival, dominance, comfort, and pleasure; humans

exist to provide these for the gods; if humans do care for the gods, the gods will reward them;

and if they do not, the gods will punish them."[77] Likewise, "the causation of the [Mesopotamian]

gods and the intervention of the gods are understood to be ad hoc rather than in accordance with

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[75] Matthews *et al., The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament.*

[76] Ibid.

[77] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths,* 24.

any overarching plan."[78] This is because polytheism abjectly obstructed ANE belief system

development in accordance with any type of grand design; whereas the Hebrew account of deific

involvement centers upon the action of *Elohim* on behalf of humanity's redemption. Jonker and

Lawrie give scope to ancient Hebrew history, writing that:

> Israel's history as it is reflected in the Bible is much more than simple
> history: *salvation history* would be a more accurate description. This
> means that the historical events were not recounted for their historical
> value, but to bear witness to *Yahweh*'s great redemptive deeds among His
> people.[79]

While ANE cultures were left up to deciding what the gods were up to and why, the OT bore

witness to God's action and the interpretation of the action; as Matthews et al. conclude:

> God took it upon himself not only to act but to provide an interpretation
> of his acts, communicating why they were done and what purposes they
> served. In this way *Yahweh* was both the cause of the events and the
> source of the interpretation of the events. In theological terms we would
> say that the *general revelation* of history was supplemented by the
> *special revelation of historiography*.[80]

For the ancient Israelites, there is no secular history; OT authors recorded the most important

events, because these events were vital 'for understanding who God is, who humanity is, and

what his people are to do in response to this knowledge.'[81]

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[78] Matthews et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed.

[79] Louis C. Jonker and Douglas G. Lawrie, eds., *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), 42.

[80] Walton et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. Italics added for emphasis.

[81] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 29.

Hebrew Primeval Protohistory as a Framework

Gen. 1-11 provides the record of the main primeval protohistory for the focus of this

dissertation. This biblical passage provides the Hebrew answer to prehistory before the time of

Israel's first fully, historical people, that began with the patriarchs. Discussing the Genesis

record, Kitchen writes:

> [Before] Terah and Abraham left Ur, we will find ourselves in a very
> different, and wider, world. Outside the Hebrew Bible, in the ancient
> Near East, we have a further thousand years of emerging and increasingly
> coherent history in both Egypt and Mesopotamia and (in the second half)
> in Syria and Anatolia also. Beyond roughly 3000, going back to the
> beginnings of recognizable human civilization toward roughly 10,000 or
> 9,000 B.C., we today can see (through archaeological endeavor) the
> unfolding of successive cultures and periods of change before writing
> gave an explicit voice to the very ancients. [Even] before that, the
> "human" story tails back into multi-millennia of which we know less…[82]

While Bible scholars do not agree with any consistency on the dating of the primordial, Gen. 1-

11 is nonetheless a crucial part of salvation history, reflecting historical realities that shape the

present world.[83] Gertz concurs and notes that "The Primeval History in the Hebrew Bible uses

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[82] Kenneth Anderson Kitchen, *On the Reliability of The Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006), Chapter 9.

[83] Dating biblical primordial history is not a primary burden of this dissertation, except to establish parallel literature for the comparative methodology. This research holds to a primary Mosaic authorship following the literary tradition of cuneiform culture according to Kitchen, *On the Reliability, Chapter 9.* For a fuller understanding of Gen. 1-11 dating, this research refers readers to the work of Kitchen, Oswalt, Walton *et. al.* previously cited. It is important to note that there is some general disagreement among biblical scholars holding to the Documentary Hypothesis and the Tablet Model among variances between the two. For further research on this topic and an understanding of opposing viewpoints, this research refers readers to the following resources: Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2007); Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017); Allan A. MacRae, Stephen T. Hague, and Robert C. Newman, *JEDP: Lectures on the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1994); Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense: The Best of Josh McDowell* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2021); and, Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on The Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2009).

exemplary narratives to engage questions about the genesis of the world as well as about the

origin of humankind and the beginning of culture."[84] The author continues:

> This is not a naïve form of historiography that somehow replaces
> historical and scientific inquiry with beautiful narratives. Rather, these
> narratives constitute a statement of basic belief, fairly widespread in
> ancient cultures, emphasizing that everything (present and future)
> received its essence at the beginning. The corresponding linguistic form
> of expression might be 'mythical relation.' That humanity is at the centre
> of such an essential definition is derived from mythical reason. Humanity
> thus exists in manifold relations to each other as well as to the non-human
> creation and to God. From the beginning the report of the genesis of the
> world and of its chronological and spatial order is focused on the cosmos
> of human experience and on humanity's destiny in such a world. [85]

In this way, the biblical text provides the interpretive framework necessary for understanding

human history through Revelation. Moreover, the Bible is the very record of God's plan for

humanity's redemption by *imago Dei* identity reclamation, the foundation for which is set in OT

primordial history and a shared tripartite ANE cosmological heritage.

Ancient Cosmological Beliefs

In Jewish-Christian cosmology, water is a fundamental element of creation (Gen:1, 6–9).

Further, in the biblical tradition, control of the waters, the forces of primeval chaos, is the

prerogative of God alone.[86] Likewise, series of ANE lists and narratives combine to exhibit a

profile of primeval protohistory similar to what is found in the book Genesis with gods and

goddesses antithetically subjugate to the created-natural.[87] Regardless of belief system, the need

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[84] Jan Christian Gertz, "The Formation of The Primeval History," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017), 107-135, 107.

[85] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 29.

[86] Job 9:8, 38:16; Ps 77:20; Hab: 3:15; Isa 51:9–10.

[87] The topic of comparative primeval protohistories is covered in detail in Chapter Four: ANE Historical Literal Analysis.

to define cosmological and personal meaning in time and space is expressed by all people across time. This subsection sets the stage for this discussion by analyzing philosophical underpinnings, a diversely-shared, tripartite cosmological heritage, and details on ANE cosmographies.

Philosophical Underpinnings

In every culture across the ages, all people need to know 'where they came from, their place in history.'[88] Every culture, no matter how 'primitive,' seeks to define identity and pass that information on to future generations; for centuries, the answers have laid across the cosmos. Charles Taylor aptly captures the idea of prescientific cosmologies:

> I use 'cosmos' for our forebearers' idea of the totality of existence because it contains the idea of an ordered whole. It is not that our own universe isn't in its own way ordered, but in the cosmos the order of things was a humanly meaningful one. That is, the principle of order in the cosmos was closely related to, often identical with, that which gives shape to our lives.[89]

Consistent with Taylor's definition, Batto writes:

> The ancients, no less than many moderns, were conscious of the tenuousness of existence on earth. Accordingly, with their theories of creation they sought explanations for at least two issues: (1) how the world in which we live came to be, including not only an accounting for its physical origins but also how and why it acquired its present configuration, and (2) the origins of humankind and its relation to its "creator" and to the rest of "creation." At times, these two were treated as distinct issues; at other times, they were intimately linked.[90]

Vainio agrees and offers a theological perspective for how cosmology is naturally connected to philosophical questions:

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[88] Modern expressions used for emphasis.

[89] Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[90] Bernard Batto, *In the Beginning: Essays on Creation Motifs in the Ancient Near East and the Bible* (University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 10.

> As we approach our own time, cosmology starts to focus more on things like the structure and evolution of the universe and the origin of matter. Nevertheless, questions concerning the nature of consciousness and the origin and the meaning of life are always lurking around the corner, and many cosmologists find it hard not to say something about these issues, which lie outside proper scientific method. It is, in fact, hard to tell when a cosmology is purely scientific and when it borders on the philosophical or religious. Cosmological questions are, and always have been, deeply connected with existential questions.[91]

Likewise, this research refers to the pursuit of cultural, communal, and individual identity through cosmological origin as "creational identity;" the consummation of which is the eschatological return of humanity to the perfect *imago Dei.* To demonstrate this finding, a shared cosmographical structure is discussed in the section that follows.

Tripartite Cosmological Heritage

Though modernity is informed by centuries of observation and technological advances, and cosmological conceptions conjure images of planets, black holes, galaxies, and entire solar systems; the universe still seems immeasurably vast and mysterious. Even though the ancients did not have the benefit of moon landings, space stations, the Hubble Telescope, and the Hadron Collider, cultures were no less intrigued by what lay beyond the observable; to people groups residing in the ANE, the universe equally seemed immeasurably vast and mysterious. Writing on ancient cosmologies, Vainio concludes that:

> Prescientific cosmologies included some claims about the nature and movements of the heavenly bodies, but they were not exclusively interested in stars alone; they sought to tell a story about everything that exists. This is common for all origin myths; they tell where we came from and what our relation to the whole is, while the most advanced ones

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[91] Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Cosmology in Theological Perspective: Understanding Our Place in the Universe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 17.

typically point us in the direction of how we should go about living our lives.[92]

Indeed, even without the benefit of today's technological advances, ancient civilizations still had distinct and confident solutions regarding the structure of the cosmos; albeit from an anthropocentric perspective. The ancient anthropocentric perspective takes "what a person sees and experiences, which was then inserted into a [creational] framework."[93]

In light of archaeological evidence, modern scholars of the ANE have been able to deduce a fairly consistent picture of how the ancients viewed their universe."[94] Clearly, the ancients shared cosmological heritage included three general parts: earth, heavens, and sea. Discussing these commonalities, Greenwood emphasizes the centrality of the earth in ancient people's lives, serving as the foundation of existence. [95] The author describes the earth as a stable platform from which the ancients perceived the celestial bodies and the sea. The earth, or *terra firma,* was the backdrop for daily activities and held the remains of the deceased. Additionally, Greenwood highlights the vital role of water, both from above (rain, snow) and below (dew, springs, rivers), as a pervasive and life-sustaining element that enveloped the cosmos.[96]

Dyssel agrees, offering that:

> The cosmos in the ANE had generally been depicted as a threefold division: the heavens and the waters above the firmament, the skies under the firmament with the earth consisting of land and waters such as lakes and seas, wherein the animals of the sky, land and water dwell, with the waters under the earth forming the third tier. These waters under the earth

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[92] Vainio, *Cosmology in Theological Perspective*, 17-18.

[93] Ibid, 18.

[94] Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology*, 39.

[95] Ibid, 39-40.

[96] Ibid.

were distinguished by subterranean fresh waters (fountains and springs) and the abyss, the waters of the deep—the underworld. This description of the ANE cosmology is congruent with all the cultures represented.[97]

That this tripartite cosmological heritage is shared among ANE cultures is an essential preliminary finding. Understanding commonalities across geography and cultures, allows Bible readers to sort out what elements in the text have theological significance, the tropes that are common to humankind, and how rituals and practices of the same historic milieu illuminate expositional inquiry.[98]

Understanding that this threefold picture of the universe was shared across the ANE, also expresses the primary deviation; for the ancient Hebrews, this departure was more theological than functional. In Walton's words, "[As] in the rest of the ancient world, the Israelites were much more attuned to the functions of the cosmos than to the material of the cosmos… significance lay in who was in charge and made it work."[99] "Who was in charge" and "who made it work" was a revelation about *Yahweh*-God's character and thereby an assertion of humanity's character and identity from creational origin.

Walton goes on to discuss how eloquently God uses every means to reach his people through the created natural: "As we encounter all of this information, we must be impressed with how often God uses the *familiar to build bridges to his people*."[100] In this dissertation those "familiar bridges" can be viewed as God's created-natural communicative mediums: elements

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[97] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol, a Sea-Monster Associated with The Primeval Sea?," *Journal for Semitics* 28, no. 2 (February 2019), 1-19, 4.

[98] The tropes of creation-rescue-recreation and identity-inversion-reclamation are discussed later in this chapter. Expositional inquiry begins in detail in Chapter Three of this work.

[99] John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 161-162.

[100] Ibid, emphasis added.

like earth, water, and heavens, all of which transcend geography, culture, and across temporal lines to disparate people groups. As such, *Yahweh*'s plan for humanity's return to *imago Dei* can be universally expressed and experienced through the divinely created-natural. Comparatively, the Hebrew God had and has full and complete control of the elements, while other gods and goddesses in ANE creation stories were subjugate to the same elements.

ANE people groups had no concept of creation *ex nihilo* outside of Hebraic origination; thus, ANE gods and goddesses were bound by existing created material. Creation *ex nihilo* seems to have "made its appearance no earlier than the second century BCE."[101] Batto explains that, "[ANE] peoples assumed either that some kind of primeval matter preexisted creation and that this primeval substance spontaneously generated into the present universe, including the gods, or that primeval matter coexisted with a divine power, with the latter transforming the former into the present universe."[102] Perhaps, this is one reason the Hebrew God chose to speak through the natural, demonstrating *Yahweh*'s sovereignty over all that is created, in polemic contrast to those 'gods' that were in subjugation to created elements.

Correspondingly, the artificiality of idotrolic worship in the ANE stands in diametric opposition to worship required by the God that controls the wind and the seas. First, idols themselves were hand-made, owing to humanity's efforts. Second, and more importantly, the goodness of the Hebrew God and his desire to be known in and among his people through worship contrasts with the sometimes-violent measures of worship (e.g. human sacrifice, sexual proliferation, etc.) required by those gods who were seen as initiators of origin in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and even across the Levant.

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[101] Batto, *In the Beginning,* 10.

[102] Ibid.

Cosmological Conclusions

The shared cosmographical tripartite heritage, functional ontology of creation, and humanity's pursuit of philosophical purpose informs the thesis. That the entirety of the ANE shares a three-part cosmography including heavens, earth, and water should cause no surprise. The tripartite divisions of the cosmos, even without the technical benefit of the modern age, intricately link humanity's origin to the Creator and the created natural order, through which God speaks. How else could disparate people groups share a cosmological heritage? Using symbology, God speaks to all people groups across space and time; and water imagery plays an integral role in this communication.

Even if the material properties of the cosmos could not be fully understood at the time, the virtue of having a functionally ordered system helped people to make sense of the world in context. People and cultural groups were far from ignorant in understanding the functional ontology of the created-natural (water, heavens, earth). As an example, "water came down, thus there must be water above." Another example, "waters come up from the ground so there must be water below." The question for ancient cultures was how significance was assigned. To the ancient people, the ontological "structure" of the world was in place so that the operation of the world would commence and continue. This functional ontology provided ancient peoples with a sense of meaning and purpose in the world. They believed that their actions, rituals, and endeavors were interconnected with the larger cosmos. Philosophically, this led to questions about the significance of human existence within the grand scheme of the universe. These beliefs influenced their ethical values, sense of meaning, and quest for wisdom, contributing to the rich tapestry of ancient philosophical thought.

Many ancient philosophical traditions placed a strong emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment, which was often tied to understanding the nature of the cosmos and one's place within it. This quest for wisdom involved contemplation of cosmological principles and the search for ultimate truths about existence. Through the act of creation, God alone has the ability to communicate cosmography across disparate geography, cultures, belief systems, and beyond technical advance. Where ANE gods and goddesses are bound by the elements, the Hebrew God speaks through water imagery to communicate the accessibility of his redemptive plan to all people, across language barriers and geographic disparity.

<div align="center">Literary Overview: Two Main Literary Tropes</div>

Ancient tripartite cosmography provides the framework for a high-level literary review that illuminates the thesis inquiry; for when ANE and biblical texts are read contemporaneously, patterns emerge providing an overview of God's communication of humanity's ultimate redemption. These tropes can be applied historically, presently, and into eschatological revelation. Likewise, the tropes work together in ANE texts to show God's redemptive plan to restore *imago Dei* in humanity and demonstrate how God uses the water imagery reach diverse cultures and people groups.[103]

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[103] The tropes presented in this section are detailed further in Chapter Three and Four through the expositional process.

Creation-Rescue-Recreation

When Gen. 1-11 is read closely, a clear pattern emerges, and the trope is repeated through other OT and ANE writings. Put simply, the pattern reveals the trope of Creation-Rescue-Recreation visualized in Figure 8. The trope is also present in the parting of the Red Sea found in Exodus, the Psalter, and in the story of Jonah, all of which are exposited in Chapter Four of this dissertation. Consequently, the trope of creation-rescue-recreation, in Genesis and throughout the OT, coalesces with human identity, inversion, and divine reclamation as God's ultimate redemptive plan for his people.

Creation | **Identity**

↓ | ↓

Rescue | **Inversion**

↓ | ↓

Re-creation | **Reclamation**
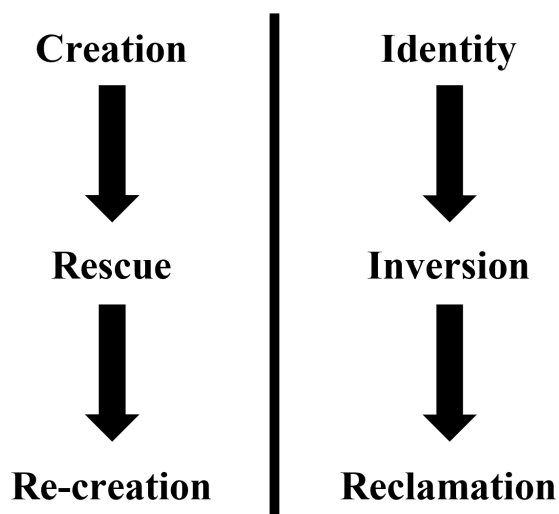
Figure 1: Illustrated Overview of Two Main Tropes[104]

Consider the detail of Table 1 on the following page as an overview of the trope of Creation-Rescue-Recreation through the Genesis record.

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[104] All figures and tables included herein are original work of the author of this dissertation unless otherwise noted.

Table 1: Genesis Trope Creation-Rescue-Re-Creation

Creation	1:1-2:4-45		*Rich water - dry land imagery*
Universal	1:1-2:3		
Particular	2:4-25		
Corruption of Created Natural	3	Fall → Estrangement from deity	*Malfeasant created-divine intervention and human acquiescence*
Crisis	3:1-6	Corruption of Creation / created natural	
Judgment	3:7-19, 24	Estrangement from deity	
Rescue	3:20-4:1	Practical provision and Generational Succession	*Divine Creator Intervention though created natural*
Eve's Seed	3:20-4:1	Eve's Seed → Generational Succession	
Provision	3:21	Divine provision for human practical need	
Re-creation	4-5	Generational Succession → Noah's progeny +	
Through Cain	4	Adam/Eve via Cain to Lamech I and progeny	
Through Seth	5	Adam/Eve through Seth to Noah and progeny	
Corruption of Created Natural	6-8	Natural human -generational succession corrupted	*Malfeasant created-divine intervention and human acquiescence*
Crisis	6:1-6	Nephilim intervention in created-natural human generational succession	
Judgment	6:7-8:19	Flood → Estrangement from deity / Death of all corrupted life except Noah's progeny	*Rich water - dry land imagery*
Rescue	6:9-8	Practical provision (Ark, food)	*Divine Creator Intervention though created natural*
	6:8-22	Practical provision (Ark, food)	
	7	Protection of the created natural (Noah's family, natural animal pairs and plants for generational succession)	
Recreation	8:20-11	Noahic Covenant → Created-Natural Generational Succession	

Identity-Inversion-Reclamation

To quote a modern movie, "It is purpose that created us. Purpose that connects us. Purpose that pulls us, that guides us, that drives us. It is purpose that defines us. Purpose that binds us."[105] This idea harkens back to Plotinian cosmology with Augustine's view on human identity as an expression and reflection of the One, derived from the One, with a desire to return to the One and subsequent participatory ontology. In fact, the search for purpose is derived from humanity's innate desire to return to *imago Dei* original identity and reveals God's ultimate plan for redemption. Peterson makes an analogy to assert this statement:

> Every human person's identity is determined by the reality described in Genesis 1:26-28: A human knows who she is and how she is oriented within creation when she recognizes that she is made in God's image. Of course, each person has many secondary and tertiary aspects to her identity that give shape to the particularities of her life and its distinction from another person ‖s life. But everyone's "fundamental orientation" is established in the fact that they are made by God to represent God in the world.[106]

"Regardless of context, 'Image' or 'likeness' language argues for a dependence upon an original. Whatever else may be said of an image, it must be clear that the image depends upon whatever it is an image of for its meaning."[107] The nature of human behavior both moral and immoral is a function of how people relate to God; the positioning of this behavioral identity world may be best noted semantically by the term "orientation." Charles Taylor addresses both identity and orientation in *Sources of Self*; the author writes, "[There is an] essential link between identity and a kind of orientation. To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space

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[105] *Matrix Reloaded* (Warner Home Video, 2005).

[106] Ryan S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 3.

[107] Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 59.

in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial or secondary."[108] From a religious perspective, one could conclude, "We become what we worship;" worship being the expression of the relationship between the image-reflector and the image-of-desired-reflection.

The liturgy of creation found in Gen. 1 provides clues to the meaning צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים, through the reflection of the divine image by humankind through relationship and worship, and the pattern is repeated in canonical examples like: God's unique connection to Israel, Jesus's relationship with the Father, and how the Christian church is charged to go into the world in relationship to the Trinitarian Redeemer. The same can be said of interpretation from Augustine-forward via participatory ontology. As previously mentioned, image theology is marked by "an expression and reflection of the One, derived from the One, with a desire to return to the One, an *exitus-reditus* framework."[109] Thus, the inversion of identity is the move away from God (the source) and created nature; the results are the human projection of personal power over creation and one's own designed identity.

Throughout the OT, idolatry was a way to abdicate the Creator's power to a humanly designed image. In modernity, the same is still true though idols take the form of wealth, social media, body image, gender identity, and identity politics; the manifestation of this truth can be witness through the observation of "worship," that which takes up the majority of someone's time and energy. The contemporary move away from God as the source of all can be exampled by addiction in reference to idolatries. Lints writes, "The idol becomes a nasty taskmaster whose

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[108] Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 28.

[109] See Chapter One of this dissertation, subsection titled Augustine's Theology of Image.

power seems almost limitless to the idolater, comparable to the way an addict is enslaved to alcohol or drugs or sex or shopping."[110] 'Addicts feel powerless against their compulsions, which gradually take over their lives. Despite being voluntary choices initially, addictions escalate into uncontrollable urges, leading to loss of self-identity. The root of addiction lies in the pursuit of satisfaction, deeply ingrained in human nature. However, true fulfillment is not found anywhere or with anyone but in what is ultimately good, true, and beautiful, which is God. Idolatry's mistake lies in seeking fulfillment in false gods, as these manmade images are devoid of true divinity (Jer. 2:11).'[111]

The observation of OT and ANE works serve to clearly identify idolatry through graven images, pantheons of gods and goddesses for specific human needs, and the worship thereof. While modern idolatry may be a "softer" comparison the same is true through worship-type behaviors that harm individuals and mar true human identity, replacing the idea with human power and control. Referencing the OT, actionable damage to personal identity is substantiated through amoral and perverse acts of god/goddess and graven image worship. These acts include, but are not limited to, cannibalism, the sacrifice of adults and children, and sexual performance/worship via orgy activities, among other atrocities. These activities of false worship grieve the heart of the true Creator because they are harmful to the people practicing idolatry. Likewise, idotrolic worship separate peoples from God and mar the participant's true identity and divine purpose. Lints articulates that there exists a relational dynamic between the image (humankind) and the original (God), emphasizing that this connection is fundamentally one of

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[110] Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 39-40.

[111] Summarized idea from Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 39-40.

worship and honor. [112] Throughout redemptive history, the image is consistently called to honor God, and the t*elos*, or ultimate purpose, of humankind is found in the honoring relationship with the original, who is God the Creator. This theme holds true both at the beginning and the end of the biblical canon. The narrative suggests that the primary dimension of the creatures' relationship with their Creator is that of worship and honor. Conversely, any subversion of this relationship implies perversion, corruption, consumption, and self-worship. Humans are inherently designed to yearn for something beyond themselves for significance, particularly in relation to the God who made them in His image. Additionally, it notes that God places humankind in His earthly sanctuary, where all of life is considered sacred, and fundamentally related to God.

The worship of "softer," modern idols may not be as cut and dry as what is found in the OT, but the effects remain the same, a sabotaging of identity moving individuals and people groups away from the Creator source. "The image finds its flourishing in its relationship to the original. Creatures find their satisfaction in the God who made them. The idol represents both a false fulfilment and a perversion or corruption of the creature."[113] The result in today's society can be seen through statistics, astronomical increases in suicide rates, the demoralization of the populace, and a never-ending search to define "who we are" as collective humanity and as individuals.

The trope of identity-inversion-reclamation is authenticated, not just in the OT, but in the New. Image bearers find purpose in worship, not as the object of worship, but through the significance and security found in the reflection and representation of God. Whereas image

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[112] Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*. 61-62.

[113] Ibid, 39.

inversion moves image bearers away from the Creator toward self-fulfillment, thereby replacing the Creator with the created. The climax of this trope is found in the arrival of Jesus Christ on the scene, the revelation of the perfect image in mortal flesh. The arc of the trope is realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus to save humanity, from self-corruption, from the marring personal identity, ultimately calling image bearers back to the source. In the end, this thread is realized by restoring humanity's divine identity through God's redemptive plan. "By drawing attention to this biblical-theological thread woven across the canon we will more fully appreciate the depth and the richness and the surprise in the manner in which redemption plays out in the great epic of Scripture."[114]

Tables #2 and #3 on the following pages demonstrate how the trope of identity-inversion-reclamation begins in the Genesis record.

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[114] Ibid, 46.

Table 2: Genesis Identity-Inversion Trope (Part A)

Identity	1-2			Rich water - dry land imagery precedes and proceeds
	1:26	Then God said, "Let us make man[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."		
Created natural divine identity	1:27	So God created **man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**		
	2:7	then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.[115]		
Inversion	3:4-7	But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.** And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.[116]		Malfeasant created-divine intervention and human acquiescence resulting in identity-inversion
Corruption of created natural divine identity				
Crisis				
Recognition	3:22	Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"		Divine recognition of human identity-inversion
Judgment	3:14-19	Estrangement from deity, division of tasks, division in marriage		

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[115] Emphasis added.

[116] Emphasis added.

Table 3: Genesis Inversion-Reclamation Trope (Part B)

Reclamation	4-5	Generational Identity Succession → Noah's progeny +		*Reclamation of identity through divine intervention and generational succession*
Through Cain	4	Adam/Eve via Cain to Lamech I and progeny		
Through Seth	5	Adam/Eve through Seth to Noah and progeny		
Inversion	6-8			*Malfeasant created-divine intervention and human acquiescence*
Corruption of Created Natural	6-8	Natural human -generational succession corrupted		
Crisis	6:1-6	Nephilim intervention in created-natural human generational succession		
Judgment	6:7-8:19	Flood → Estrangement from deity / Death of all corrupted identity except Noah's progeny	*Rich water - dry land imagery*	
Reclamation	7	Protection of the created natural (Noah's family, natural animal pairs and plants for generational succession)		*Reclamation of identity through divine intervention and generational succession*
	8:20-11	Noahic Covenant →Created-Natural Generational Succession		
	7	Protection of the created natural (Noah's family, natural animal pairs and plants for generational succession)		

Trope Correlation

The previous subsections described the trope of creation-rescue-recreation and identity-inversion-reclamation by exampling the presence of the tropes in the Genesis record. Arguably, the most interesting part of the tropes is the correlation between the tropes and the overlap of Scriptures supporting the same ideas. One the page that follows, Figure 2 uses the findings of the previous subsections to provide a simplification of the two trope's correlation to one another, while Figure 3 shows a cyclical relationship of corruption and divine intervention therein. Both tropes are expounded upon in Chapter Four to reiterate that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity

is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption and the

expression of the plan through water imagery occurs foundationally in the Genesis record.
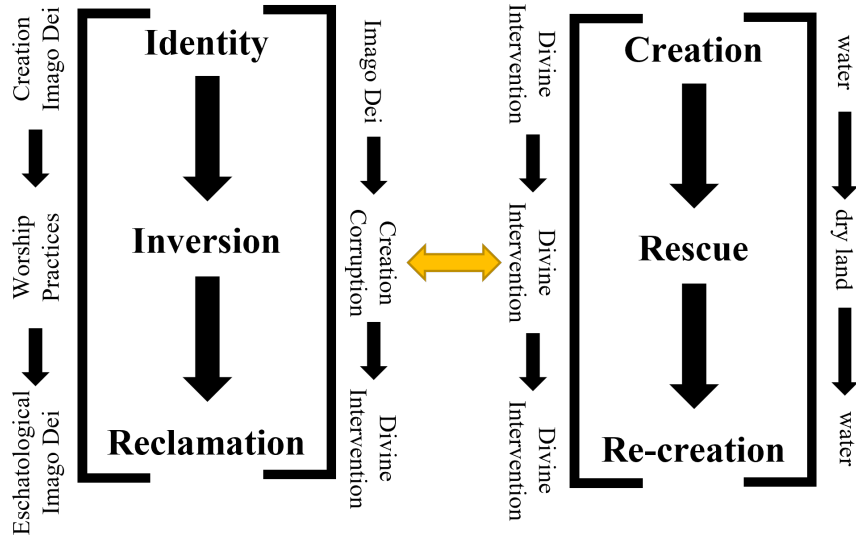
Figure 2: Simplification of Trope Correlation
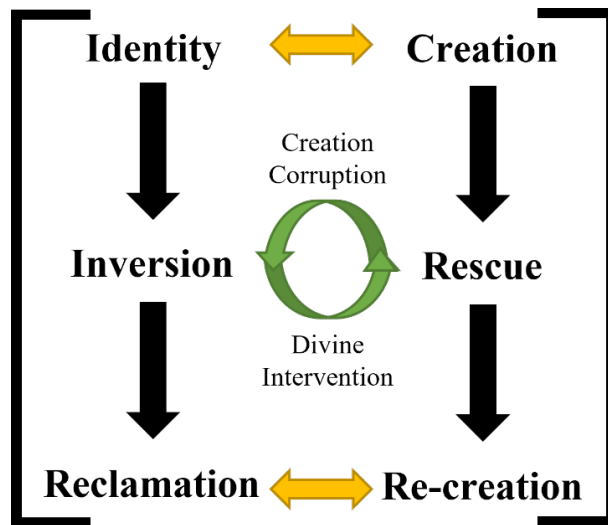
Figure 3: Cyclical Nature of Corruption and Divine Intervention

Chapter Four: Genesis – Setting the Tropic Pattern

Chapter Four provides primary expositional research by delving into Genesis: the creational liturgy, the fall of man and the beginning of identity inversion, creational corruption, and divine intervention. In light of the book's foundational theological importance, the chapter provides literary, expressional, and expositional prooftexts through inner-biblical, text critical examination. The inner-biblical study of Chapter Four examines relationships and intertextuality in Genesis connections, references, and thematic developments.[117]

The first two subsections offer a general overview of identity and water imagery as related to the creational liturgy. The sections that follow explore the expositional foundation of Genesis selections and demonstrate how the texts set the precedent for the identity-inversion-reclamation and creation-rescue-recreation tropes that pattern throughout the biblical canon to the ultimate redemption of humanity's *imago Dei* identity.

Genesis 1-2: Thematic Inquiry

Genesis sets the precedent for God's ever-unfolding redemptive plan. In the book, God establishes separate and supreme sovereignty through *ex nihilo* creation and by imbuing individual, personal identity for humanity through creation. From the vantage point of Genesis, everything that exists besides God is dependent upon him for significance, including human identity and the individual search for purpose. God's supernatural plan is set in motion from the origin of primordial existence; each action and word unravel into the ultimate plan for redemption and humanity's end-state, perfect *imago Dei* reconciliation, all of which is

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[117] The terms "inner-biblical" and "intra-biblical" are often used interchangeably, but they can carry slightly nuanced meanings depending on the context. For the purposes of this dissertation, "inner-biblical" refers to the examination of relationships and intertextuality within the same biblical book or section. Intra-biblical study, as used herein, focuses on how themes, ideas, tropes, and phrases are interconnected across different books in the Bible.

communicated through the created-natural, often times through water imagery, a language that speaks across time, space, and geographic disparity. Nicoll, et. al. write, "The book of Genesis is the book of origins. There is nothing final in this book. The Divine plan of redemption is not fully unfolded, but the first movements in history towards its outworking are clearly revealed."[118] The foundation for macro universe cosmology and micro individual identity is set upon a primordial background and the remarkable conviction of the prologue to the biblical canon. Upon the set of prehistoric imagery, God has chosen each act of the continuous redemptive play to be reflected in that which was created, thereby granting divine meaning and value to the created natural, the pinnacle of which is his transcendent reflection in each human. As Lints writes, "Whatever else the *imago Dei* might mean, there can be little doubt that it stands as paradigmatic of all creation in its calling to reflect or mirror God." [119]

Genesis 1:1-13 – Identity through Creation

In Gen. 1:1-13, the focus is primarily on the creation of the natural world and the establishment of various forms of life. While the text does not explicitly discuss human identity in these verses, there are insights to be derived about human uniqueness and individual identity as an aspect of creation. As Johnson writes, "Quite simply, the two most striking features of Gen. 1 are the role of God in creation and the climax of creation in humanity's relation to the rest of creation."[120] The role of God in creation is that of the "other," and in this way differentiates the

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[118] William Robertson Nicoll, Jane T Stoddard, and James Moffat, eds., *The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts: Containing Outlines, Expositions and Illustrations of Bible Texts,* with Full References to the Best Homiletic Literature (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 1.

[119] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry,* 32.

[120] Dru Johnson, *The Universal Story: Genesis 1-11*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and Beldman David J H. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 18.

Hebrew creation account from ANE societies existing alongside Israel and is often referred to as the "Creator-creation distinction."[121]

According to the Genesis creation narrative, God creates the entire universe, including the Earth and all living beings. The text describes the formation of light, the separation of the waters, the emergence of dry land, and the growth of vegetation. This demonstrates a divine creativity and intentionality in bringing forth a diverse and orderly cosmos. Indeed, Nicoll et. al. write:

> Genesis emphasizes the Divine sovereignty and supremacy. Its opening words are as emphatic a testimony to this as can be found in the whole Bible. The Bible makes no attempt to prove the existence of God, nor does it strive to prove the supremacy of God. But look on the book before us. In it everything is traced up to God. God is sovereign, God is supreme, God is first. Therefore Genesis evidences itself to be a true revelation from God. But what is true of the book is true also of life. Our lives are meant to be revelations of God. This cannot be until by utter consecration of ourselves to Him we have in our lives made God first.[122]

Human identity, within the context of creation, is understood to be distinct and unique. This distinction is made evident in Gen. 1:26-27, where God says, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This passage suggests that humans are set apart from the rest of creation, made in the image of God.[123]

Being made in the image of God implies that humans possess certain qualities and attributes that reflect the divine nature. While the exact nature of the "image of God" is a topic of

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[121] Johnson, The Universal Story: Genesis 1-11, 18.

[122] William Robertson Nicoll, Jane T Stoddard, and James Moffat, eds., *The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts, 2.*

[123] This passage is further elaborated and exposited in the following subsections of this chapter.

theological debate, it generally refers to aspects such as rationality, morality, creativity, relationality, and the capacity for self-awareness. These characteristics contribute to human identity and distinguish humans from other living creatures.

The uniqueness of human identity is further emphasized by the responsibility given to humans in Gen. 1:28-30. God blesses humanity and grants humans dominion over the Earth and its creatures, instructing them to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." This divine mandate implies that humans have a special role in stewarding and caring for the Earth and its inhabitants.

In summary, while Gen. 1:1-13 does not explicitly discuss human identity, it lays the foundation for understanding the uniqueness of human beings as part of God's creation. The declaration that humans are made in the image of God and the responsibility given to humanity reflect the special place held within the natural order. Human identity, therefore, encompasses qualities and attributes that reflect the divine nature and involves a unique role in caring for and governing the Earth.

Genesis 1:1-13 – The Importance of Water Imagery

Like individual identity, water imagery plays a compelling role in Gen. 1:1-13, highlighting its symbolic and functional significance in the OT creation narrative. There are five key motifs that speak to the importance of water imagery in Gen. 1:1-13. These motifs are as follows: 1) Symbol of chaos and formlessness, 2) Source of life and fertility, 3) Symbol of Cleansing and renewal, 4) Boundary and order, and 5) Symbol of God's sovereignty.

In verse 2, the depiction of the earth as "formless and empty" symbolizes chaos and formlessness, portrayed through water-related imagery. The Hebrew term תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ conveys the

idea of chaos, confusion, and desolation often associated with unbounded water, representing the absence of order, structure, and purpose.

Water holds significance as a source of life and fertility, as indicated in Genesis 1:2, where its presence is linked to the concept of creation and the potential for life to emerge. God's subsequent creative acts, such as separating the waters and forming dry land, underscore the transformative power of water and its role in facilitating life.

Additionally, water is commonly associated with cleansing and renewal. The presence of God's Spirit hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2 implies divine involvement in the process of renewal and transformation. The separation of the waters signifies purification, clearing the stage for ordered creation to unfold.

The separation of the waters, described in Genesis 1:6-7, establishes boundaries between the waters above and below the expanse, contributing to the organization and structure of the created world. Water functions as a natural boundary, delineating different realms and maintaining the order of creation.

Lastly, the act of God separating the waters and setting boundaries demonstrates His creative power and sovereignty over the natural world. It illustrates God's ultimate control over elements like water, establishing order and purpose within His creation, affirming His sovereignty.

Overall, water imagery in Gen. 1:1-13 emphasizes key themes of creation and God's redemptive plan: including the transformation from chaos-to-order, the life-sustaining and renewing properties of water, and God's sovereignty and power in establishing boundaries and structure. It showcases the significance of water as a symbol and functional element within the broader narrative of creation and God's ultimate redemptive plan for humanity.

Genesis 1 and 2 – Expositional Inquiry

Genesis 1

In examining Genesis 1, foundational support for the thesis regarding the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption is found. The narrative begins with the declaration that humanity is created in the image of God, imbuing them with inherent dignity and worth. This concept of *imago Dei* underscores the significance of humanity's identity and its potential distortion through sin, suggesting its restoration as integral to redemption.

Moreover, water imagery permeates the creation narrative, serving as a symbol of both chaos and renewal. Initially depicted as part of the primordial state, water represents formlessness and the potential for transformation. As God brings order to the chaos, separating the waters to form the seas and land, the narrative highlights the role of water in the creative process. Throughout Genesis 1, water is associated with fertility and life-giving properties, essential for sustaining the newly formed world.

In this light, the use of water imagery in Genesis 1 aligns with themes of renewal and purification, suggesting a redemptive undertone to the narrative. The act of creation itself can be interpreted as a process of redemption, wherein God brings order out of chaos and establishes the foundation for life. Thus, Genesis 1 provides theological groundwork for understanding humanity's creation in the image of God and the significance of water imagery in conveying themes of renewal and transformation, central to the concept of redemption.

Genesis 1:1

The Genesis account of creation opens with a clear concise statement about the Creator and creation. The surface simplicity veils the immense depth of the content therein. Sailhamer

writes, "These seven Hebrew words are the foundation of all that is to follow in the Bible. The purpose of the statement is threefold: to identify the Creator, to explain the origin of the world, and to tie the work of God in the past to the work of God in the future."[124] Right away, the Hebrew text implies that the work of humanity's redemption begins even before the first human was formed. As such, this first verse is exposited more thoroughly here than the verses that follow in order to reveal the layers of complexity found in the foundational pretext.

The Creator is identified as אֱלֹהִים. Though אֱלֹהִים is a plural noun, the word is paired with a clearly singular masculine verb בָּרָא. Identifying the context of the passage is key to understanding the depth of the meaning. Sailhamer writes, "Although God is not further identified in v.1 (cf. 15:7; Ex. 20:2), the author appears confident that there will be no mistaking God with any other than the God of the patriarchs and the God of the covenant at Sinai."[125] Thus, if the proper context of the verse is understood as the preamble of the Pentateuch and even more broadly as the foundation of the entire biblical canon, then God's redemptive plan for restoring humanity's identity to *imago Dei* perfection begins before the beginning and is communicated through the created natural and specifically water imagery in this opening story.

In the beginning (1:1). The Hebrew word בְּרֵאשִׁית means "in the beginning," signifying the starting point of creation. Of this, Walton queries, "Whereas we may be inclined to ask, "The beginning of what?" information from the Bible and the ancient Near East leads us in another direction. [126] "An Egyptian creation text from Thebes speaks of the god Amun who evolved in

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124 John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), "Commentary: 1."

125 Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* "The God of Creation (1:1)."

126 John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 10.

the beginning, or 'on the first occasion.'"[127] Egyptologists interpret this as concrete, rather than

abstract, meaning a reference to a first-time event. Likewise, the Hebrew word translated

"beginning" refers to an initial period, suggesting that the beginning is the seven days of Gen. 1.

Bereshit carries with it a connotation of primacy and importance. Of this primacy, and the

use of the word in Gen. 1:1, Procksch writes, "Already in Gen. 1:1 the concept of 'the last of

days' fills the mind of the reader.[128] "The growing focus within the biblical canon on the "last

days" is an appropriate extension of the 'end' already anticipated in the 'beginning of Gen. 1:1.

The fundamental principle reflected in 1:1 and the prophetic vision of the future times of the

'end' in the rest of Scripture is that the 'last things will be like the first things.'"[129] Sailhamer

juxtaposes Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1 to further solidify the point that, "The allusions to

Genesis 1 and 2 in Revelation 22 illustrate the role these early chapters of Genesis played in

shaping the form and content of the scriptural vision of the future (אחרית הימים)."[130] In the

opening scene, God is already planting seeds in the mind of the reader for future consummation

of the overall redemptive plan for humanity.

God (1:1). The word אֱלֹהִים is used in the opening of the Bible to introduce God. Though

other names are applied to the Creator in the *Pentateuch*, the appellation here expresses the

unique strength and power of God displayed throughout the work of creation.[131] In fact, "The

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[127] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

[128] Otto Procksch, *Die Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), 425.

[129] Ernst Böklen, *Die Verwandtschaft Der Jüdisch-Christlichen Mit Der Parsischen Eschatologie*, Reprint ed., (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 136.

[130] Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* "The God of Creation (1:1)."

[131] The meaning of the word אֱלֹהִים and its use in Gen. 1:1 is further exemplified through the word's inner-biblical use, particularly in Pro. 8:27; Job 28:13; Eph. 3:9, John 1:3-10, and Heb. 1:2. The doctrine is revealed in

Hebrew vocabulary is richer and more copious in names for the Deity than any other cultivated language, whether in ancient or modern times."[132] Given the richness of Hebrew names for God used in the OT, Jamieson, *et al* assert that, "The choice of [אֱלֹהִים] *Elohim*… in preference to all other names for the Divine Being, must have been dictated by some special reason of great utility and importance."[133]

אֱלֹהִים is a term with roots in the broader linguistic and religious context of the ANE. The word's use in Hebrew and other Semitic languages reflects shared religious and cultural elements in the region, contributing to the broader understanding of the religious milieu in which ancient Israelite beliefs developed. Outside of Hebrew uses, words related to *Elohim* are used in Ugaritic, Canaanite, and Mesopotamian texts to refer to deity. In Ugaritic texts, which come from the ancient city of Ugarit (modern-day Ras Shamra, Syria), a similar term "*il*" is used to refer to the high god or chief deity. *Elohim* and similar terms are also found in the Canaanite religious contexts, reflecting the religious milieu of the ANE. In Canaanite mythology, *El* was a chief god, often considered the father of other gods. In ancient Mesopotamia, the broader concept of a chief deity surrounded by a divine council is present. In Mesopotamian religion, the chief god (such as *Anu* in the Sumerian tradition) presided over an assembly of lesser deities. Understanding the ANE background uses of the term allow for a broader understanding of the purpose of *Elohim*'s use in the opening text of the Hebrew Bible.

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later portions of the biblical texts that though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, who were engaged in the creative work.

[132] Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. I (London, Glasglow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 1.

[133] Ibid.

Indeed, the use of אֱלֹהִים:

1) introduces the divine entity responsible for all of creation, the designer of humanity's redemptive plan,
2) establishes the universality of the Creator's control over creation,
3) lays out the foundation for discussions about God's attributes, and
4) implies sovereign deific unity while establishing a polemic against ANE polytheism and subsequent idolatry that carries throughout the entire biblical narrative.

אֱלֹהִים introduces the concept of a supreme and powerful deity, establishing the monotheistic foundation of the Abrahamic faith. As previously noted, the use of אֱלֹהִים comes with a peculiarity because the term is in plural form yet is only biblically followed with singular verbs and adjectives. This is the case with Gen. 1:1 where the singular verb for "created" is used. Johnson puts the usage of the word in this way, "When we say that God is the Creator, we are reinforcing both the description of a God who has no origin story, a God who is somehow a community and an individual, and a God who creates. These three distinctives display God's one-of-a-kind attributes if we considered nothing else outside of Gen. 1."[134] Also, by using אֱלֹהִים, the text presents God as the universal Creator, not tied to one specific culture, people, or context, emphasizing that God's authority extends beyond borders, regions, and people groups.

The use of אֱלֹהִים also sets the stage for the rest of the creation narrative. Throughout Genesis אֱלֹהִים is specifically used to describe God's creative activity, and the repeated appearance serves as a consistent reminder of the divine agency behind all of creation. While the use of אֱלֹהִים has theological significance in these ways, perhaps the most relevant reasons for the use of the term to this discussion are the implications of trinitarian, communal doctrine and the establishment of a polemic against polytheism that carries throughout the biblical narrative.

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[134] Johnson, *The Universal Story: Genesis 1–11*, 21.

While the use of אֱלֹהִים does not explicitly imply the trinitarian doctrine as understood in Christian theology, the terms use could be understood as a foreshadowing for Trinitarian understanding. The plural form of אֱלֹהִים has led some to propose that it could hint at the divine plurality found in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the unity of the Godhead. As far as humanity's redemption through original identity restoration, consider the concept of Trinitarian "community." "At the very opening of this story of stories, [there exists] a singular god referred to as 'gods' who then goes on to talk to himself in the plural— 'Let *us* create humanity in *our* image.' If God is fundamentally community, as the doctrine of the Trinity later asserts, then the image of God might also reflect that community."[135] While these seven Hebrew words alone cannot justify a trinitarian doctrinal teaching, one can realize that "God speaks to himself in the plural, both before and after the failure of humanity (Gen 1:26-27; 3:22)."[136] Thus, the Creator in Genesis is not reliant upon the created for existence, and God's character persists beyond that of abject human failure or nefarious interference by adverse spiritual forces, gods, angels, etc. Asserting that God is both community and Creator is a robust claim in ANE cultural context. "In this lineage of the universe found in Gen. 1 there are basically two types of things: creators and created things. God is the only thing that is Creator and everything else is created. This fact alone makes Gen. 1 unlike all other ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation, where those portrayals focus on the genealogy of the gods themselves.[137]

In fact, the use of אֱלֹהִים can be interpreted as a counter to polytheism. In the cultural context in which the Gen. narrative was written, many societies believed in multiple gods with

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[135] Johnson, *The Universal Story: Genesis 1-11*, 20–21.

[136] Ibid, 21.

[137] Johnson, *The Universal Story: Genesis 1-11*, 23.

various roles and attributes. The use of אֱלֹהִים challenges this polytheistic worldview by presenting a single, all-encompassing deity as the originator of the cosmos. '*Elohim* was commonly applied to ANE false deities, and liable, from that constant and familiar use, suggested and fostered polytheistic ideas.'[138] The introduction of the term as applied to the one true Creator establishes a polemic against polytheism. This plurality establishes a polemic against polytheism and idolatry, all the while describing attributes of the Creator that are reflected in *imago Dei* creation of humanity. These reflected attributes were tarnished at the introduction of sin and are to be redeemed upon Christ's return. The concept is set forth in a few simple words at the beginning of the biblical text and are carried through the entire narrative. In the Hebrew text of Gen. 1:1, בְּרֵאשִׁית אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא translates to "In the beginning, God created." This construct emphasizes that the creative act is initiated by God and is the foundation of all that follows. The phrase lays the foundation for discussions about God's attributes, including God's sovereignty, creativity, transcendence, and community; thus, the text sets the tone for understanding the rest of the creation account and beyond.

Created 1:1. The use of the word *bara* in the opening statement of the Hebrew Bible holds significant theological and linguistic importance by highlighting the transcendent nature of God's creative power and setting the foundation for the entirety of the biblical narrative and ultimately God's redemptive plan for humanity.

First, בָּרָא describes God's act of creation, emphasizing the Creator's role as the ultimate source and originator of all things. אֶת (*et*) is a grammatical particle indicating the direct object, pointing to the specific objects of God's creative action, namely, the heavens and the earth in 1:1.

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[138] Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. I, 1.

According to Walton, "It has commonly been observed that the verb only appears with deity as its subject (or as an implicit agent when the verb occurs in the *niphal*) in the approximately 50 times it occurs in the Hebrew Bible."[139] This is an important observation implying a common conclusion that the activity denoted by בָּרָא is a prerogative only of the Creator and not an activity that other "deities" or humans can undertake. The word בָּרָא points to the unambiguous divine origin of creation, setting God apart as the sole source of the cosmos.

In ANE accounts, deities simply manipulate that which already exists, whereas, in Genesis the use of the word בָּרָא infers the sense of bringing something new into existence. [140] The use of בָּרָא emphasizes God's unique and divine creative power. The first five instances of the use of *bara* can be found in the creation narrative when new things are brought into being from non-existence: The heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1), animate life that is endowed with the breath of life (Gen. 1:21, 30), and human beings bearing the image of God (Gen. 1:27). With reference to the creation of humans in verse 27, *bara* is used three times. *Bara* is used "is in contrast to the Hebrew word for 'do' or 'make,' which is used throughout this account for making and forming things from already created items or as a general word for God's work."[141] Thus, the term is distinct from other words that could imply formation or organization using pre-existing materials; understanding the translation of the word in this way, forces Hebrew readers

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[139] John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2016), 127-128.

[140] Cross-reference to Num. 16:30, Isa. 43:19, 65:17, and Jer. 31:22, where the use of *bara* constitutes the creation of something "new" rather than denoting re-constitution or arrangement. Furthermore, בָּרָא differs from two other synonymous words, עָשָׂה and יָצַר, which also occur in this narrative, (1:26; 2:7, 19); while the latter are frequently used with reference to the labors of men, the former is exclusively applied to the works of God.

[141] Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), Gen. 1:1.

to depart from present day ontology and to reach back into the ANE context relevant to the exposition of Gen. 1.

Presently, when people think of what constitutes existence is material or experiential. From the material perspective, matter exists as having molecules and taking up space. Concepts like love, time, or grace are more abstract, where human experience constitutes the existence of such things. In the ancient world, "existence" occurred when given a role to play, when relative function was assigned. When examining Genesis, or any ancient text for that matter, one must take great care to avoid imposing a modern ontology onto ancient mental constructs. With this in mind, the use of בָּרָא becomes an interesting study, because the use of the word implies two meanings: 1) inner-biblical deific-only usage suggests that only God can create something from nothing, 2) a functional etymology reveals creation as an act of "separating" (e.g., heavens and earth or dry land and water) and giving order and purpose to that which was created consistent with ANE understandings of "existence."[142] An understanding of Egyptian views of origin and the concept of the non-existence provides insight into the meaning imparted in the Genesis text. "It is viewed as that which has not yet been differentiated and assigned function. No boundaries or definitions have been established. The Egyptian concept, however, also carries with it the idea of potentiality and a quality of being absolute."[143]

In Gen. 1:1, the object of בָּרָא is specifically "the heavens and earth." In ancient context, the separation of heavens and earth takes on a functional imperative in that the Hebrew usage represents the functional categories of the cosmos; "Heavens" denote the celestial realm, and

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[142] Implied when the understanding the ANE concept of "existence" required the assignment of a role.

[143] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Gen. 1:2.

"earth" represents the terrestrial realm. In this way, the use of בָּרָא in the opening statement of

Genesis sets the foundation of God's redemptive narrative and carries theological significance.

בָּרָא underscores that the universe is not a product of chance or random processes but is

intentionally brought into being by a purposeful Creator. The choice of this word in the opening

verse of the Bible shapes the understanding of the rest of the creation narrative and underscores

the importance of acknowledging God's role as the Creator and sole proprietor of the redemptive

plan for humanity with every creative element and action having been assigned cosmological

function and purpose.

Genesis 1:2

The earth. The וְהָאָרֶץ "places the narrative in a geocentric stance. Everything in the

narrative from this point forward will be told from this point of view."[144]

Formless void. תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ recalls the ANE understanding of existence versus non-existent;

thus, the use of the term describes the earth's initial condition. Inner-biblically, *tōhû* is used for

emptiness as in Job 26:7, Is. 40:17, 23, 41:29, and 44:9. The word is also used as a description of

the wilderness or of a city in utter ruin.[145] *Bōhû* is only used in conjunction with *tōhû*; the usage

here forms a hendiadys. The use of literary hendiadys in Gen. 1:2 can be viewed as a re-

enforcement of a concept; therefore, amplifying the earth's primordial condition as amorphous

awaiting the "filling" or "furnishing" of the earth by God's creative activity.

Still other scholars attest that the words are used to imply a 'former scene of beauty and

order' that was "by some great convulsion plunged into a state of chaos or widespread disorder

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[144] Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), Gen. 1:2.

[145] For a description of the wilderness, see Deut. 32:10; Job 6:18; 12:24; Ps. 107:40; Isa. 45:19. The term is used to describe a ruined city in Isa. 24:10; 34:11.

and desolation."[146] This theory is supported in that the verb for "was" (הָיְתָה) is used twenty

places in the first chapter of Genesis as an equivalent for "became." Dake argues that the Hebrew

waw use in Gen. 1:2 is disjunctive and implies a narrative interruption from what is reported in

the first verse.[147] Like Dake, Missler argues that the verb used for "became" should be

considered in the pluperfect form to mean "had become" in the same way Lot's wife "became" a

pillar of salt.[148] "Elsewhere it has the same signification without a following ל (Isa. 64:5, 9). That

the earth was not originally desolate seems also to be implied in Isa. 45:18 - "He created not the

earth in vain"—Hebrew, 'a desolation.'"[149] This interpretation suggests a change of state from

original perfect creation to a chaotic condition inferred in 1:2.

Darkness. The explanation for חֹשֶׁךְ can be understood as a creation of God (Isa. 45:7),

rather than simply the absence of light. Though God judges light as good (Gen. 1:4, 18), *Elohim*

does not declare darkness as bad; rather, God assigns function, consistent with Egyptian views of

existence as occurring when differentiated. This functional ontology is witnessed in Gen. 1:4

where God calls the light "day" and the darkness "night." Thus, "darkness" can be "either a state

of natural darkness or merely temporary privation of light."[150] What is intriguing is how *ḥōšeḵ* is

used in Ex. 10:21-22 to describe a "judicial darkness that was brought upon the land of

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[146] Brown, Fausset, Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1, 3.

[147] Finis Dake, *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments of the New King James Version* (Lawrenceville, GA: Dake Publishing, Inc., 2013).

[148] Chuck Missler, *Supplemental Notes: The Book of Ezekiel* (Coeur d'Alene: Koinonia House, 2008), 203.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Brown, Fausset, Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1, 3.

Egypt."[151] Likewise, at the time of the parting of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:20), readers find ḥōšeḵ

present in a cloud as divinely protecting the Israelites from the army of Egypt. While the cloud

"gave light to the Israelites; and, as in both these instances there was light previous to the

"darkness," which was superinduced from special causes, analogy would lead us to infer that this

was the case also in the demiurgic darkness (cf. Job 38:9)."[152] In this way, "darkness" like water

imagery can be understood as both a method of judgment and divine redemptive effort.

The deep. תְהוֹם signifies the primeval ocean that covered the earth. "The word frequently

occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures bearing this signification; and it evidently refers here to the

waters which are said to have been afterwards divided (vv. 6, 7), and gathered into one place (v.

9)."[153] Curiously, the Hebrew word for "deep" (*tᵊhôm*) shares a common Semitic root with the

word *Tiamat*. *Tiamat* is the name of the primordial goddess in the Assyrian creation myths, who

was the personification of the salt sea and the mother of the "gods." The correlation between

tᵊhôm and *Tiamat* lies both in lies in linguistic similarity, common Semitic roots, and thematic

parallels between the Hebrew creation story and in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*. Both

Tiamat and תְהוֹם represent chaotic, primordial waters that are integral to the creation stories of

the respective cultures. Further, "…the *Tiamat* myth is one of the earliest recorded versions of

the *Chaoskampf*, the battle between a culture hero and achthonic or aquatic monster."[154]

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[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Brown, Fausset, Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1, 3.

[154] Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 1 (1968): 104-108.

The concept is interesting to note here because the use of the term as familiar to early Near East cultures can be understood as a polemic against the chaos of polytheism. [155]The Hebrew God has autonomous control over the deep, while other gods and goddesses of the ANE are bound by the forces of chaos. The "deep" in Gen. 1:2 sets up readers to understand that water is a part of God's created earth, which will be sovereignly shaped into the inhabited world for the benefit of humanity. At the very beginning of creation, water symbology is used to represent a counter-narrative to polytheism and later serves as an element of both judgment and redemption in the biblical arc. *Elohim* not only controls the waters of the deep and all the creatures therein, but he also uses these elements as a tool for redemption. The use of תְהוֹם in later biblical texts provides evidence this concept most notably when one considers Gen. 7:11 and the description of the Noahic flood, in Ex. 15:5, 8 of the Red Sea, metaphorical use in Ps. 42:7, poetically in Ps. 77:17, in Pro. 8:24-28, and throughout many OT texts.

The Spirit of God. Some scholars have translated ורוח אלהים as a "supernatural or mighty wind (the Hebrew word translated 'Spirit' is sometimes translated "wind" in other passages, which has a parallel in the *Enuma Elish.*)"[156] In the Babylonian creation story, the sky god creates the four winds that stir up the goddess of the deep, *Tiamat.* Matthews *et al* hold that:

> The same phenomena can be seen in Daniel's vision of the four beasts where "the four winds of heaven were churning up the great sea" (7:2), a situation that disturbs the beasts there. If this is correct, then the wind would be part of the negative description of verse 2, paralleled by the darkness. [157]

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[155] Comparisons between Tiamat and tᵊhôm are discussed further in this dissertation in Chapter 6.

[156] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen. 1:2.

[157] Ibid.

Considering the linguistic and thematic parallels of *Tiamat* with *tᵊhôm,* the correlation in Gen. 1:2 seems to reinforce the idea of Pantheistic refutation. "Throughout the whole of the Old Testament 'the Spirit of God' is represented as the great agent in imparting vital energy and action (cf. Ps. 104:3) both to animals and plants; and thus, as He is represented to have brought His immediate influences to bear upon 'the void and formless' world, by working on the dead or discordant elements."[158] These creation works are not accomplished by the polytheistic deities of the ANE because each god/goddess is bound to that which pre-existed. The creation account begins at the end of Gen. 1:2, and the details that follow in 1:3-31 describe the sequential processes in terms that would be naturally employed by a narrative spectator. For the purposes of this writing, a more complex understanding of Gen. 1:26-31 is required next in correlation to the identity-inversion-reclamation trope.

Genesis 1:26

In our image, according to our likeness. The use of the plural in the phrase בצלמנו כדמותנו has been one of much debate, perhaps unnecessarily so. When readers recall Gen. 1:1, the use of *Elohim* implies plural expression. Likewise, "the text clearly depicts God as an inward plurality and outwardly singular – our image…his image (vv. 26– 27), and the mention of God's Spirit at verse 2 supports this."[159]

בּצלמנו is a unique distinction, and its significance is underscored by its repetition through different yet synonymous expressions in Gen. 1. So, what constitutes this image of God? Does the concept refer to physical form or features of humankind, certainly not in intellectual

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[158] D Brown, Fausset, Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1, 4.

[159] Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 72.

capacities — for even the devil and his angels surpass humans in this regard — and not in immortality, as humans lack the past eternity that God possesses. Rather, it resides in the moral inclinations of the soul, commonly referred to as original righteousness (Eccl. 7:29). Since "new creation" is essentially a restoration of this image, understanding one sheds light on the other. Readers learn that the renewed image involves knowledge, righteousness, and restoration of true holiness (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). "God's image in humans is further defined as likeness (cf. Gen. 5:1) indicating that in some respects humans are to be like God are not defined, but later Adam having a son in his likeness and image (5:3) implies that the image of God was marred by sin but in some sense remains a part of every human (9:6; Jas. 3:9)."[160] Hamilton summarizes this concept, "God creates humankind in his image, his likeness. Man is animal, but he is more than animal. Man is godlike, but he is less than God. 'Image' emphasizes man's close similarity to God, while 'likeness' stresses that this similarity is not exact."[161]

Theological discussions about *imago Dei* have often focused on human nature rather than human identity, leading to an undue conceptual weight on the *imago Dei* construct. The primary occurrences of *imago Dei* in Genesis suggest that the concept should not be treated as a grand metaphysical notion but rather approached with theological humility. In this context, the 'image' language is part of a broader covenantal argument about Israel's relationship with *Elohim* as Creator. Therefore, understanding *imago Dei* should not be generalized to encompass generic human attributes; instead, the notion should be considered within the specific context of Israel's existence, security, and the relationship between the created to the creator. The emphasis is on

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[160] Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 73.

[161] Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 12.

matters of concrete human identity rather than more abstract notions.[162] The theological implications of the claim of *imago Dei* in Gen. 1:26 extend beyond its immediate context in Gen. 1. The claims encompass the broader perspective of the *Pentateuch* and the entirety of the biblical canon. These interpretative horizons propose that the importance of the 'image of God' should be understood in relation to the creation narrative, in connection with the prohibition of crafting graven images, and ultimately in the context of the new creation in Christ, who embodies the perfect Image. Recognizing the expansive scope of this theological framework throughout the canon is essential for grasping its profound relevance in contemporary discussions about human identity.

Evidence of *imago Dei* identity is realized through humanity's reflection of the divine image in relationship and worship. "It is a relational dynamic that connects image (person) to original (God) but it is also centrally a relationship of worship or honour that depicts this connection. From the beginning to the end of redemptive history the image is called to honour God. The image (humankind) finds its *telos* in the honouring relationship to the original (God the Creator)."[163] The pattern is evident in canonical examples such as God's unique connection with Israel, Jesus's relationship with the Father, and the Christian church's directive to engage with the world in connection to the Trinitarian Redeemer. The interpretative lens from Augustine onward, incorporating participatory ontology, also underscores this theological framework. Image theology, characterized by an "*exitus-reditus* framework," signifies an expression and reflection

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[162] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, ed. D.A. Carson, vol. 36, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35.

[163] Ibid, 61.

of the divine, originating from the divine and aspiring to return to the divine. Lints offers the

following explanation:

> the relationship between God and humans is manifest in the reflection.
> The substance of the reflection is the nature of the relation, and the
> evidence of the relation is the character of the reflection. The reflection
> draws attention to the reality that there is a unique relationship of
> humankind to their Creator, and further, this relationship is a defining
> relationship—it defines humankind in relationship to God. [164]

Conversely, the distortion of identity occurs when there is a departure from God and created

nature, leading to the projection of personal power over creation and the intentional crafting of

one's identity.[165]

    Image. The Hebrew word צֶלֶם is significant in understanding the concept of humans as

imago Dei in contrast to idols as false representations of the divine image. The root of the word

is צלם which carries the basic meaning of "to carve" or "to sculpt." *Selem* is used most

prominently in Gen. 1:26-27, emphasizing the special status of humanity as bearing a

resemblance of the Creator, signifying qualities such as rationality, morality, and dominion over

creation. Elsewhere in the OT, *selem* is used contrastingly to in reference to idol, physical

representations of gods or divine beings in many ANE cultures. However, these idols are mere

creations of human hands, often made of wood, stone, or metal. Unlike humans, who bear the

divine image innately, idols are lifeless and devoid of any intrinsic divine essence.

    The contrast between humans as *imago Dei* and idols as false representations underscores

theological truths about the nature of God and humanity. Humans, as bearers of the divine image,

have inherent worth and dignity bestowed upon them by their Creator. Humanity is called to

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[164] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 36, New Studies in Biblical Theology (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 60.

[165] See Chapter One of this dissertation, subsection titled Augustine's Theology of Image.

reflect God's character and fulfill His purposes in the world. Idols, on the other hand, are considered abominations in the eyes of the Hebrew God (Is. 44:9-20), representing a distortion of true worship and a rejection of the transcendent God in favor of man-made constructs. The recognition of humans as *imago Dei* carries ethical and moral implications, as it emphasizes the sacredness of human life and the importance of treating others with dignity, respect, and compassion. Conversely, the worship of idols leads to moral degradation and spiritual emptiness, as it replaces the worship of the true God with the worship of false gods.[166]

Overall, the contrast between humans as *imago Dei* and idols as false representations highlights the fundamental difference between genuine worship of the Creator and the misguided worship of created things. The contrast serves as a theological foundation for understanding human identity, dignity, and purpose in relation to God and underscores the importance of authentic worship and ethical living in accordance with divine principles.

and let them have dominion. וְיִרְדּוּ implies "delegated supremacy over all the creatures in this world was bestowed upon the human race in consequence of their being made in the image of God."[167] Similarly, Gen. 1:28-30 denotes the twofold blessing from God to humanity by way of fertility and a reiteration of dominion over the animals of creation. All creatures were placed in subjection to mankind because humanity is the climax of God's creation having been made in the image of *Elohim*.

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[166] Ez. 7:20 is an example usage for the concept. In the passage, *selem* is translated as "ornament" or "idol." It describes the Israelites' sinful practice of making idols, suggesting a connection between physical representations and spiritual devotion. Another example is Amos 5:26, where the word is used to refer to a star deity, an idol representing a pagan god. This usage reflects the association of physical images with divine worship in ANE cultures.

[167] Brown, Fausset, and Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy,* vol. I, 8.

Genesis 1:27

The triple utilization of the term וַיִּבְרָא underscores the elevated status for which humans were brought into existence by God. On two occasions, it is stated that humans were created in the image of God, and once that they were created as male and female, highlighting that both men and women equally bear the divine image; while verses 28-30 recall the common ANE functional ontology by applying the purpose of "multiplication" between male and female and the "care of creation" to the image bearers.

The narrative of the canon, from the liturgy of creation to its conclusion, highlights the central theme that defines the creatures' relationship with their Creator: worship and honor. Conversely, the distortion of this relationship implies perversion, corruption, consumption, and self-worship. Humans are inherently designed to crave something beyond themselves that provides significance, particularly the God who created them in His image. God establishes humankind in His earthly sanctuary, where every aspect of life is considered sacred, fundamentally connected to God.

Genesis 2

A thematic inquiry of Gen. 2 contributes to the support of the thesis concerning the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate goal of God's plan for humanity's redemption, particularly through the lens of water imagery. In this chapter, after the broader creation account in Chapter 1, a more detailed narrative unfolds, focusing specifically on the creation of humanity. Chapter 2 of Genesis is sometimes labeled as a second creation account associated with the Documentary Hypothesis, which attributes the prior section of Genesis to a distinct source.[168] Instead, this account should not be considered an independent creation narrative.

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[168] The Documentary Hypothesis, also known as the JEDP theory, suggests that the *Pentateuch* is a compilation of multiple source documents. One notable work in support of the Documentary Hypothesis is: Richard

Rather, the text provides additional insights into the events of the sixth day of creation (1:24–31). Genesis 2 specifically delves into the creation of humans, intended purpose, and the dynamics of the shared relationship as man and woman. The author's central theological focus on humanity's creation in the "image of God" in Chapter 1 is anticipated to continue in Chapter 2. The reader's expectation is that Chapter 2 will further explore the theme of the "likeness" between humankind and the Creator.[169]

Gen. 2 describes the formation of Adam from the dust of the ground and God breathing life into him, signifying the intimate involvement of God in human creation. While water is not explicitly mentioned, the idea of life being imparted through God's breath suggests a connection to the life-giving properties often associated with water symbolism.

Additionally, the author accentuates humanity's creatureliness, contrasting it with the divine origin portrayed in Chapter 1. This emphasis on human origins from the "dust of the ground" foreshadows the narrative's exploration of human destiny in the Fall and illuminates theological concepts such as idolatry, where humans may stray from their imago Dei identity by prioritizing superficial ends over divine purpose. This vividly illustrates the author's teaching on the contrast between that which is created by God and that which is crafted by humans, a foreshadowing of idolatry or God's use of the created-natural for divine purpose and man's use of the superficial to achieve one's own ends. "Paradoxically, the idol-maker is the theological opposite of the image bearer."[170]

Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2019). In refutation of the Documentary Hypothesis see: John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

[169] Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, Gen. 2.

[170] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 36, New Studies in Biblical Theology (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35.

The narrative also introduces the Garden of Eden, watered by a river that flows from Eden and divides into four streams. Water plays a central role in sustaining the garden's lush vegetation, symbolizing life, fertility, and abundance. This portrayal reinforces water's significance as a symbol of God's provision and blessing.

Moreover, when Eve is formed from Adam's rib, the imagery suggests a deep connection between them, akin to the unity often symbolized by water. Although water isn't explicitly mentioned here, the concept of unity and connection is implied, underscoring the interconnectedness of humanity's relationship with God and with one another.

Later biblical narratives, such as Rev. 22, echo the imagery of the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Life and the River of Life flowing from God's throne. These images symbolize life, renewal, and abundance, aligning with the broader motif of water symbolism found throughout scripture. Moreover, the text delves into the depiction of the state of the land before humanity's creation, linking it to the consequences of the Fall. This prelude hints at the impending corruption of creation and identity inversion due to the Fall, underscoring the ongoing narrative of redemption and humanity's ultimate reclamation of *imago Dei* identity.

Genesis 3: Creation Corruption, Identity Inversion, and Divine Intervention

An examination of Gen. 3 significantly bolsters the thesis regarding the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate goal of God's plan for humanity's redemption, particularly concerning the universal expression of this plan through water imagery in the OT and ANE context.

In Gen. 3, readers encounter the narrative of the Fall, where humanity's disobedience leads to a rupture in their relationship with God and a distortion of *imago Dei* identity. While water imagery is not directly mentioned in this account, the consequences of the Fall highlight

humanity's need for redemption and restoration, themes often associated with water symbolism throughout the OT and ANE cultural context.

Despite the gravity of the Fall, Gen. 3:15 offers a promise of redemption through the seed of the woman, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This promise anticipates the restoration of humanity's relationship with God and the reclaiming of the imago Dei identity. Water imagery becomes intertwined with this promise, symbolizing the cleansing and renewal brought about by redemption.

Moreover, the use of water imagery in the OT and ANE is not limited to specific narratives but is a recurring motif that spans various genres and cultural contexts. This universal expression underscores the thesis that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is central to God's plan for humanity's redemption and is communicated universally through water symbolism.

In essence, Gen. 3 reinforces the significance of reclaiming the *imago Dei* identity amidst humanity's fallen state and highlights the universal expression of God's redemptive plan through water imagery, as seen throughout the OT and ANE cultural context.

Genesis 3 – Identity Inversion

"There are only four chapters in the Bible where Satan is not present, the first two and the last two. The Bible begins and ends with him out of existence. But between Gen. 3 and Revelation 20 he is a factor to be reckoned with."[171] Genesis 1-2 chronicles the goodness of creation as directed by the word of God, yet Gen. 3 begins Lucifer's attempts to corrupt all the created-natural with specific emphasis on humankind's *imago Dei* identity. Canonically, the tropes of identity-inversion-reclamation and creation-rescue-re-creation begin to unfold revealing

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[171] Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 13.

God's overall redemptive plan for humanity. The purpose of this subsection is to provide expositional notes on Gen. 3 and Gen. 6, emphasizing where creation corruption and identity inversion begin through malfeasant temptation manifesting in human rebellion against the image of God and the goodness of creation, itself.

Whereas Gen. 1-2 focuses on humanity's unique and privileged status among God's creations as *imago Dei,* Gen. 3 introduces the narrative of identity inversion. Adam and Eve's disobedience leads to a rupture in the personal relationship with God. The inversion begins as the first humans seek autonomy and equality with God, desiring to define good and evil in human constructions. Harmony is disrupted as a consequence of sin, and shame enters the human experience. The image of God is tarnished by disobedience, self-centeredness, and relational closeness with *Elohim* and is instead replaced by fear and hiding. Instead of finding identity in the image of God, humanity seeks self-determination and self-will. The identity inversion involves turning away from worshiping the Creator to worshiping the created self. The pursuit of one's desires, apart from God's guidance, becomes a form of self-worship, and the corruption manifests as humans seek fulfillment apart from original purpose. Identity inversion occurs because of the "serpent's" intent to undermine *Elohim*'s sovereign authority by corrupting creation. By succumbing to the temptation of self-worship, "Consequently, Adam and Eve…could no longer reflect God's living image as they were designed to do, and would experience death (Gen 3:19)."[172] "That death, according to Paul, is not simply physical but also spiritual, since those who live according to the world's ways and seek to satisfy their inborn

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[172] G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 132-133.

desires are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1– 3)."[173] "Whereas everything was very good when God

created it (1:31), now sin's effects can be felt in the botanical realm through man's cultivation of

plants (v. 18), in the animal kingdom (v. 14) and even in the birth of humans (v. 16). In fact, all

of creation was and continues to be affected by human sin (Rom. 8:20– 22)."[174] Even still, the

story of Gen. 3 is not one of abject identity inversion and creation corruption, because God

divinely intervenes, makes promises to humankind, and sets in motion the plan to restore

humanity's identity in ultimate redemption.

Genesis 3 – Corruption of Creation

In Gen. 3, the serpent falsely assures Eve that eating the forbidden fruit will not lead to

death but rather result in gaining knowledge and becoming like God.; the deceitful promise preys

on human desires for wisdom and autonomy and sets in motion a plan for the corruption of

God's "good" creation that exists unto the second coming of Christ. The serpent engages in the

act of corrupting creation in many ways including deceptive tactics, false promises, temptation,

disobedience and consequences, and the introduction of sin; all of which result in God's

confrontation and intervention, a continual impact on creation, and humanity's expulsion from

Eden. Even still, God's divine intervention promises reconciliation to created order and the

ultimate restoration of *imago Dei* identity. The process of identity inversion begins with the

serpent's maleficent techniques and ends with God's plan for redemption, summary: 1)

Deceptive tactics, 2) False promises, 3) Eve's temptation, 4) Disobedience and consequences, 5)

Introduction of sin, 6) God's confrontation, 7) Impact on creation, 8) Expulsion from Eden, 9)

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[173] Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary,* Gen. 3.

[174] Ibid.

Promise of Redemption, and 10) Continued impact. These identity inversion tactics are interconnected events and are summarized in the paragraphs that follow.

Identity inversion begins with the serpent's deceptive tactics, as the malevolent force engages Eve in a conversation questioning God's command regarding the forbidden tree. Through cunning dialogue, doubt is cast upon God's intentions, fostering a distorted view of the Creator's character.

Subsequently, false promises are made by the serpent, assuring Eve that consuming the forbidden fruit will not lead to death but rather grant knowledge and divine likeness. This manipulation preys on human desires for wisdom and autonomy.

Eve, influenced by the serpent's deceit and enticed by the allure of wisdom, succumbs to temptation, leading to disobedience. As a consequence, Adam and Eve become immediately aware of their nakedness, experiencing shame and attempting to cover themselves. This marks a significant shift in their self-perception and relationship with God, altering their identity.

The act of disobedience introduces sin into the world, disrupting the harmonious state of creation and predisposing humanity to fallenness, a distortion of human identity. God confronts Adam and Eve, cursing the serpent and foretelling enmity between it and humanity.

The corruption initiated by the serpent extends beyond Adam and Eve, affecting the broader creation. The expulsion from Eden symbolizes the loss of an ideal dwelling place and intimate communion with God. Yet, amidst the curses pronounced, there is a promise of redemption. The seed of the woman is prophesied to ultimately triumph over the serpent, foreshadowing Christ's victory over sin.

The serpent's deception leaves a lasting impact, shaping the ongoing struggle of humanity with sin and highlighting the necessity of redemption and restoration. Thus, the events in Genesis

3 demonstrate the far-reaching consequences of disobedience and the hope of eventual identity restoration through God's redemptive plan.

Genesis 3 – Water Imagery

In Gen. 3, water imagery is not explicitly present in the narrative of the Fall. The focus of this chapter is on the temptation, disobedience, and the consequences faced by Adam and Eve. The predominant symbols are the serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the Garden of Eden. Water imagery, per se, does not play a direct role in this specific narrative. However, in a broader biblical and symbolic context, water is often associated with purification, cleansing, and renewal. While Gen. 3 does not explicitly use water imagery, the consequences of the Fall introduce a need for spiritual restoration, and water symbolism is often employed in later biblical narratives signify God's rescue and renewal.

Genesis 3 – Expositional Inquiry

An exegesis of Gen. 3:1 contributes to supporting the thesis by offering insights into the narrative of the Fall and its implications for humanity's redemption, including the reclaiming of the *imago Dei* identity and the use of water imagery to express God's plan for redemption.

Genesis 3:1

The third chapter of Genesis begins abruptly with a new character *nâchâsh*. There is no indication as to the origin of the "serpent" or how the character became an antagonist, but the first verse of the chapter clarifies three major points: 1) the nature of the serpent, 2) the origin of the serpent, and 3) the motive of the serpent.

The serpent's cunning deception leads to the temptation and subsequent disobedience of Adam and Eve, resulting in the Fall and the distortion of humanity's relationship with God. This

narrative sets the stage for understanding humanity's need for redemption and restoration of the *imago Dei* identity, which is central to God's plan.

The Nature of the Serpent

Though the NT identifies the *nâchâsh* with Satan (Rom. 16:20, Rev. 12:9), the original readers of the Genesis narrative did not have the clarity of the NT. Instead, the Israelites would have relied on understandings of serpent symbology in the ANE in the same milieu. Many ANE cultures portrayed serpents as chaotic and destructive force, and this theme would have colored the original reading of the Gen. 3 text.

The description of the serpent in Gen. 3:1 as עָרוּם brings to mind a negative sense of shrewdness and deception.[175] The serpent's deception and humanity's disobedience initiate a rupture in their relationship with God, symbolizing a departure from the purity and harmony of creation. Water imagery frequently symbolizes purification, renewal, and restoration in biblical and ANE contexts, suggesting its relevance to the process of redemption.

The motif that is found of the serpent in Gen. 3 as associated with temptation is similarly found in other ANE cultures, where serpents are linked to trickery and the disruption of divine plans. For example, in Mesopotamian mythology, there are tales of gods overcoming serpent-like creatures as part of divine struggles for supremacy; this fact, may amplify the assertion that the Genesis narrative is built on a polemic foundation against ANE polytheism.

As mentioned previously, *Tiamat* is described in the *Enuma Elish* as a serpent or dragon. *Apep*, also known as *Apophis,* in Egyptian culture was a serpent-like creature associated with

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[175] Both used as a predicate of the serpent in Gen. 3:1 and plural as substantive in Job 5:12, 15:5. The term is not always used with negative connotation. In Proverbs, the term is attributive, as in 12:26 or substantive in 12:16, 13:8, and 13.16. However, the positive connotations of Proverbs can be dismissed in the case of Gen. 3 because of ANE serpent imagery and the negative consequences that befall humanity in the chapter.

chaos and opposed to *Ma'at,* the order of the cosmos. Finally, *Ningishzida* is a Sumerian-Babylonian deity that was depicted with a serpent's body and associated with the underworld. In the ANE, 'even when not related to a god, the serpent represented wisdom (occult), fertility, health, chaos and immortality, and was often worshiped.'[176] Walton contends:

> We cannot recover what Adam and Eve would have thought about the serpent, but the ancient Near Eastern literature gives us an idea of some of the images that came to mind for the Israelites living in their time and culture. Foremost is the association of the serpent with life and death. Likewise the serpent is wise, is connected with disorder, and can be the enemy of God—perspectives that are meaningful in this context.[177]

As such, the understanding of ancient serpent symbology would have imparted a negative reading of the passage to original Genesis readers even without NT clarity.

The Origin of the Serpent

The second assertion is that the serpent was made by God. The pronouncement makes it clear that the serpent was not co-equal with the Creator.

The Motive of the Serpent

True to form, the serpent begins the interrogation of Eve. The serpent's first tactic is to suggest by inquiry that God's motives are sinister. Brown *et al* imply that the cleverness was intentional:

> The first tempter, like all who have practiced the insidious arts of seduction since, was too knowing and wary to open his battery all at once. He began by talking, it is probable, about the beauty, fertility, and various productions of the garden, till he gradually directed the course of conversation to the trees and their pleasant fruit, and then, in the most

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[176] Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gem. 3:1.

[177] John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 34.

> adroit and crafty manner, without creating any suspicion of his base
> design, he fixed her attention upon that subject.[178]

Indeed, the serpent's first act is to question what the Creator actually said, planting seeds of doubt about God's character in Eve's mind. The force of the question, "Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' was meant to raise Eve's level of desire to corrupt the pre-fall perfected image of God. The motive is made more evident in Eve's response and as the narrative continues.

Genesis 3:2-3

The exchange between Even and the serpent highlights humanity's choice to disobey God's instructions, leading to the Fall and the subsequent distortion of the *imago Dei* identity. By disobeying God's command, Adam and Eve sever their relationship with Him and introduce sin into the world, necessitating redemption and restoration.

Eve answers the serpent in hyperbole. One could conjecture that the answer was in fervent defense of God's character and motives. However, there are added facts. By introducing the phrase, "nor shall you touch it, or you shall die," Eve added words are not found in the authentic form of the Divine command, and apparently mistaking the real ground on which the interdict had been given.[179] The serpent realized this as a logical fallacy and interdicted upon this weakness with the first voice of open contradiction to God. This exchange sets the stage for

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[178] David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, vol. I (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 50.

[179] Ibid.

exploring the universal expression of God's plan for redemption through water imagery in subsequent passages and throughout the OT and ANE cultural context.

Genesis 3:4-5

Gen. 3:4-5 is essential in understanding humanity's departure from God's intended design and the subsequent need for redemption. In Gen. 3:4 the serpent reports to Eve, "You will not die" and proceeds to claim to have knowledge of God's thoughts, and he portrays those thoughts as selfish: God wants no-one to be like God knowing good and evil. The logical doubt may call into question, "Why would God keep knowledge from humans?" The most plausible interpretation of the act of eating from the forbidden tree is the assertion of moral autonomy. In essence, by consuming the fruit, the human couple is claiming the ability to determine right and wrong independently of God. The Hebrew word for "knowledge" implies experiential understanding, suggesting that, through this act, humans now personally experience evil, thereby separating individual moral judgment from God's authority. Although the act of eating the fruit might seem minor, the passage argues that the act is profound; for the act establishes a significant barrier between the human couple and God, signifying a rebellion against divine authority.[180] The human acts resulted in the Fall and the distortion of humanity's relationship with God. By succumbing to the serpent's temptation, Adam and Eve forfeit imago *Dei* identity, seeking to attain divinity on their own terms. The consequences of the Fall emphasize humanity's separation from God and the need for restoration, ultimately fulfilled through redemption and the reclaiming of the *imago Dei* identity.

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[180] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 111.

Genesis 3:5-6

The narrative of Adam and Eve's disobedience emphasizes the universal expression of God's plan for redemption, which is communicated through various means, including water imagery, in both the OT and ANE cultural context. The consequences of the Fall underscore humanity's separation from God and the need for restoration, ultimately fulfilled through redemption and the reclaiming of the *imago Dei* identity.

The humans' decision to eat from the forbidden tree appears to involve an aspect of self-worship. In this choice, the first couple essentially asserts that personal judgment is superior to God's, demonstrating a desire for individual advancement at any expense. By placing trust in themselves, created beings, over the Creator, the couple was influenced by the serpent's tempting words, which promised that eating the forbidden fruit would open their eyes and make them like God, with knowledge of good and evil. The Godlikeness proposed by the serpent represents the first of many plots for the enemy to mar the image of God through humanity. Humanity is not left blameless in succumbing to temptation, but God responds mercifully from the very beginning of the epic with divine provision, foreshadowing the trope of identity-inversion-reclamation that colors the entirety of the biblical canon.

Genesis 3:7

Then their eyes were opened. The phrase marks a significant moment in the narrative of the Fall. In terms of human identity inversion, the moment represents a profound shift in how Adam and Eve perceive themselves and the personal relationship with *Elohim*. The verb וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה is derived from the root פקח which means "to open." The plural form indicates that the opening of the eyes is a shared experience by both Adam and Eve. Brown *et al* summarize the first human identity inversion:

> The words have a far deeper significance, as they intimate that amid the raptures of enjoyment, reflection was drowned, and Adam and his wife were lulled into dreamy oblivion of all but the present moment; but when that delirium had subsided, the time for reflection came, and then a train of new and painful feelings and emotions, to which they had hitherto been entire strangers, rushed like a torrent into their minds—a sense of their helplessness, grief, shame, remorse, and all the concomitants of guilt, distracted and agonized their bosoms. [181]

Before eating the fruit, the couple lived in innocence, unaware of their nakedness and unburdened by the knowledge of good and evil. The act of disobedience, prompted by the serpent's deception and leads to a fundamental change in self-understanding and self-awareness. Identity inversion occurs as Adam and Eve transition from a state of childlike trust and obedience to a state of self-awareness and, in this case, shame. The first couple's perspective shifts from dependence on God to a sense of autonomy and self-consciousness.

and they knew that they were naked. The immediate consequence of the awareness of guilt is evident in human consciousness.[182] Now acutely aware of guilt, the couple perceives themselves as exposed, recoiling from the gaze of any condemning eye. Adam and Eve envision every creature, every part of creation, as a witness to the wrongdoing, anticipating the repulsion their act might evoke in any observer. In a naive response, they try to conceal their beings, sensing a pervasive blush of shame suffusing the couple's entire selves rooted in the marring of perfect identity.

and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. The phrase is the first attempt at human provision in place of God's perfect provision. The "sewed fig leaves" are

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[181] David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, vol. I (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 53–54.

[182] Cross-reference Titus 1:15.

a symbol of the contrived conveniences of "civilized living;" "fig leaves are the largest found in Canaan and could provide limited covering for the shamed couple. [183] The couple's decision to choose fig leaves in preference to all other trees, is doubtful. 'The leaf of the common fig tree,' says Dr. Royle, 'is not well adapted, from its lobed nature for this purpose; but the practice of sewing or pinning leaves together is very common in the East even in the present day; and baskets, dishes, and umbrellas are made of leaves so pinned together.' [184] Instead, "from the prickliness of the upper side of the leave, it would be a natural sackcloth," which can be understood as emblematic of the couple's contrition. [185] Murphy and Barnes confirm this idea by citing Job, "These leaves were intended to conceal their whole persons from observation. Job describes himself sewing sackcloth on his skin (Job 16:15) and girding on sackcloth (1 Kings 20:32; Lam. 2:10; Joel 1:8) is a familiar phrase in Scripture. [186]

Genesis 3:8

The presence of *Elohim* in the Garden is associated with a breeze as he walks in the garden in the cool of the day. This association suggests an intimate and personal interaction between God and humanity. While this passage does not directly mention water imagery, the verse exemplifies God's use of elements in nature to communicate with His people.

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[183] Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen. 3:7.

[184] David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, vol. I (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 54.

[185] Ibid.

[186] James Gracey Murphy and Albert Barnes, *A Commentary on The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 115.

Throughout the OT and ANE context, God often uses elements of nature to communicate messages, convey his presence, and express his will to humanity. Water, in particular, is a significant element used symbolically to represent purification, renewal, and divine intervention.

Similarly, the association of God with a breeze in Gen. 3:8 underscores his immanence and intimate presence among creation. Just as a gentle breeze can be felt and experienced, God's presence is tangible and accessible to humanity. This intimate connection between God and his people highlights the Creator's desire for relationship and communication.

In the broader context of the thesis, which emphasizes the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate goal of God's plan for humanity's redemption, the association of God with the breeze in Genesis 3:8 reinforces the idea of God's ongoing communication and interaction with his people. Just as God communicates with Adam and Eve in the garden, the Creator continues to communicate hisredemptive plan to humanity throughout the OT and ANE context, often through symbolic elements such as water imagery. Thus, while not explicitly related to water imagery, the association of God with the breeze in Gen. 3:8 aligns with the broader theme of God's communication with his people through elements of nature.

Within Gen. 3:8, there also exists aninner-biblical irony. "The expression "the sound of the Lord God" is common in the Pentateuch, especially in Deuteronomy,187 where along with the verb שׁמע (hear/obey) and the preposition ב, it is the common form of expression for the Lord's call to obedience."188 Just as Adam and Eve fled at the sound of the Lord in the garden, so the Israelites fled when the Lord came to Mt. Sinai (Dt. 5:25; 18:16; cf. Ex. 20:18-21), and

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187 Deut. 5:25; 8:20; 13:19; 15:5; 18:16; 26:14; 27:10; 28:1, 2, 15, 45, 62; 30:8, 10

188 John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 105.

relayed to Moses, "'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die (Ex. 20:18-19)." The familiarity of the phrase echoes that of Gen. 3:8, even more so than appears on a surface level. This parallel underscores a cyclical pattern within the biblical narrative, particularly concerning the theme of identity inversion and reclamation, which is central to the thesis. Both Adam and Eve in the garden and the Israelites at Mount Sinai succumbed to forms of idolatry—Adam and Eve through self-idolatry, and the Israelites through the worship of false gods. This cyclical pattern suggests a recurring struggle within humanity to maintain its imago Dei identity and resist the temptation of idolatry.

In relation to the thesis, this inner-biblical irony underscores the importance of reclaiming the *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption. The parallels between Adam and Eve's disobedience and the Israelites' idolatry highlight the ongoing need for redemption and restoration throughout the biblical narrative. Moreover, this connection emphasizes the universality of God's message and the timeless relevance of themes such as identity inversion and reclamation, which are often expressed through symbolic elements like water imagery in the OT and in ANE context.

Genesis 3:9-24

What follows the identity inversion, crafted as deception by the serpent and executed by the first humans, is a confrontation with *Elohim* and ultimately Adam and Eve's removal from the Garden. The remainder of the exegetical inquiry into the Fall will focus on how the responses of Adam and Even can be considered idolatry and the first marker of a repetitive sin resulting in *imago Dei* inversion. Passages called out for specific exposition will spotlight how God's judgment can be perceived as a compassionate plan for redemptive atonement, setting the

precedent for the Creator's ultimate plan to restore humanity's perfect identity at the culmination of the redemptive plan.

Idolatry in Human Response

Idolatry, at its core, involves the elevation of something or someone to a position of ultimate significance and authority, often at the expense of God. In the context of Gen. 3, the desire to be like God and make independent decisions reflects a shift in allegiance from God to human autonomy. The forbidden fruit became an idol representing the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and self-determination apart from God's guidance. By succumbing to the temptation, Adam and Eve engaged in an act of idolatry—placing personal desires and aspirations above God's command. The disobedience fractured a relationship with God, introducing sin and the consequences thereof into the world. In this interpretation, the Fall becomes a cautionary tale about the dangers of idolizing human wisdom, autonomy, and desires over faithful obedience to the Creator.

While there is no explicit vocabulary calling out the first sin as idolatry, the answers of Adam and Eve reveal the shift in identity from *imago Dei* to that of the serpent. The image of the serpent in Gen. 3 is that of a liar (Gen. 3:4) and a deceiver (Gen. 3:1, 13). When God confronts the first humans, the questions are rhetorical in contrast to the way the Creator interrogates the serpent. The way the Creator approaches Adam and Even demonstrates a graceful benevolence towards humans implicit to *Elohim'*s character. God asks Adam in v. 11, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Adam's answer in v. 12 demonstrates the shift in identity. "The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.'" "Adam was deceptively blaming Eve for his sin, which shifted accountability from him to his wife, in contrast to the biblical testimony

that Adam was accountable for the "Fall" and not Eve (e.g., see Rom 5:12–19). [189] Adam, like the serpent, is presenting a lack of trust for the Word of God. The Creator's command in Gen. 2:16-17 and 3:6 was blatantly disobeyed by Adam who likely received the command directly.[190] The serpent's distrust of the Word of God is similarly found in Gen. 3:1, 4-5. Similarly, Eve's misquotation of God's commandment in Gen. 2:16–17 mirrored the serpent's intended alteration of the same command in Gen. 3:4, "You surely will not die," which was already suggested by the serpent's question in Gen. 3:1. In both cases, the humans "shift from trusting God to trusting the serpent meant that [they] no longer reflected God's image but must have begun to mirror the serpent's image."[191]

The Creator's confrontation with the serpent is a sharp contrast to that of *Elohim*'s response to the first couple (Gen. 3:14-15). "Whereas once the snake was 'crafty,' now he was 'cursed.' His 'curse' distinguished him 'from all the livestock and wild animals,' that is, he must 'walk upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life.'"[192] The expression God uses in the curse of the serpent is one that imparts intense meaning considering both Hebrew and ANE context. וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל or "eating dust" is a phrase that implies total defeat (cf. Isa. 65:25 and Mic. 7:17). "So strongly was this imagery of the snake's defeat felt by later biblical writers that in their description of the ultimate victory and reign of the righteous 'seed,' when peace and harmony are restored to creation, the serpent remains under the curse: 'dust will [still] be the

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[189] Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, 133.

[190] One could conjecture that Eve received the command through Adam, rather than directly from God.

[191] Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, 133.

[192] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 107.

serpent's food' (Isa. 65:25)."[193] The depiction of dust or dirt as food is typical of descriptions of the underworld in ANE literature. "In the *Gilgamesh Epic,* Enkidu on his deathbed dreams of the netherworld and describes it as a place with no light and where "dust is their food, clay their bread," a description also known from the *Descent of Ishtar*."[194] Just as dust fills the mouth of those buried, dust will continually fill the mouth of the serpent for eternity. The curse of the serpent is vital because the sharpness and duration contrasts the judgment of the humans. Moreover, God's promise of Eve's ultimate victory is tied to the preeminent defeat of the serpent in v. 15.

This analysis of the Gen. 3 text emphasizes the dangers of idolatry and the importance of reclaiming the imago Dei identity as part of God's plan for humanity's redemption. Gen. 3 serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the consequences of idolizing human wisdom, autonomy, and desires over faithful obedience to the Creator. The text also underscores the universality of this theme throughout the biblical narrative and its expression through various elements, including water imagery, in both the OT and in ANE context.

Genesis 3:15

The narrative of Gen. 3:15 significantly contributes to the thesis by illuminating a crucial aspect of God's plan for humanity's redemption and the reclamation of the *imago Dei* identity. In this verse, God addresses the serpent and pronounces a prophecy about the future conflict between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent. This prophecy foreshadows the ultimate victory of humanity over the forces of evil through the Messiah, who is the seed of the woman. Likewise, the imagery of conflict and victory portrayed in Gen. 3:15 resonates with

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[193] Ibid.

[194] Matthews et. al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, Gen. 3:14.

themes of purification, renewal, and restoration—elements commonly associated with water

imagery in the Old Testament and ANE context.

"Genesis 3:15 traditionally has been viewed by Christians as the first word of promise—

in a prophetic sense—of deliverance from sin. The provision of a covering for Adam and Eve is

immediate atonement."[195] In the history of interpretation, the passage is referred to as

protoevangelium, the first instance of good news, and demonstrates the preeminent occurrence of

identity reclamation put in place by the Creator.

Some scholars disagree with the interpretation of Gen. 3:15 in messianic context.[196]

Many do so on the basis that Eve could not have understood the Christological meaning of the

text in ancient times; however, the understanding of Gen. 3:15 as messianic in this writing

simply serves to set the cyclical precedent for the trope of identity-inversion-reclamation

repeated throughout the biblical canon; likewise, the Christological interpretation reveals the

compassionate plan for the omniscient Creator for humanity's ultimate redemption. To wit,

Hamilton points out three phenomena in Gen. 3:15, that the author suggests have been largely

"ignored" by biblical commentators that deny the messianic implications of God's redemptive

promise in the verse.[197] The phenomena are:

1. **Descent Through the Male**: In the Old Testament, descent is typically through the
   male. The term "seed" usually refers to the offspring of the father. While there are

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[195] Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis," *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 44.

[196] Jonathan Cheek provides a contemporary comprehensive analysis of scholarship both for and against Gen. 3:15's Messianic interpretation from the late nineteenth century to present day: Jonathan Cheek, "Recent Developments in the Interpretation of the Seed of the Woman in Genesis 3:15," *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 64, no. 2 (June 2021): 215–236.

[197] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2015), 45.

exceptions (e.g., Hagar's seed, Rebekah's seed), they are contextually individual references. Eve herself later refers to Seth as her "other seed" (Gen. 4:25).

2. **Septuagint Translation**: In the Septuagint translation, the pronoun "he" in "he shall crush/bruise your head" is masculine, while its antecedent, "seed," is neuter in gender.

The verse asserts that the future confrontation is not a random event but is intentionally orchestrated by God: "I will put enmity between you and the woman," indicating a divine foreordination akin to the foreordained incarnation of Jesus. Interestingly, the focus is on the crushing of the serpent's head, not the seed of the serpent.[198] Sailhamer agrees by noting the phrasal combination of "seed" and the treatment of the snake. The author writes, "This identification suggests that the author views the snake in terms that extend beyond this particular snake of the Garden... Consequently, more is at stake in this brief passage than the reader is at first aware. A program is set forth."[199] This program is God's ultimate plan for redemption of humanity by way of *imago Dei* restoration.

The perfect image was reflected in the original humans, who were deceived by the serpent seeking to corrupt creation; by idolizing wisdom and self over God's word, the image was marred. The restoration of identity is promised in the "seed" of the woman and realized in the NT as Jesus Christ, again the perfect image (2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15). "Christ is the perfect image who suffers in our place and for our redemption (Eph. 5:25–26). As a consequence, human identity is most clearly seen in Christ, the one in whom, through whom and for whom

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[198] Ibid.

[199] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 107.

humankind was made (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16).[200] By accepting Jesus Christ, the *imago Dei* will be ultimately restored to humanity upon the Savior's eschatological return. God's promise begins in Gen. 3:15 and the trope unfolds throughout the biblical canon.

There is no doubt that the significance of the Creator's promise of victory was lost on the first humans. Perhaps the couple thought restoration came by way of the Cain as the promised seed in Gen. 4:1 or by Seth in 4:15; that the first couple did not realize the significance of the promise that would take at least four hundred years for implementation and more than two millennia for full realization, does not negate the promise or God's concern for humanity's redemption. "The redemptive line of Eve's seed begins with Seth and climaxes with the Messiah." [201] Gow concurs, noting that "in the light of seed imagery in Genesis as a whole, a case can be made for seeing 3:15 as messianic."[202] Likewise, Alexander observes that Gen. 3:15 "anticipates the creation of a royal line through which the terrible consequences of the disobedience of the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden will be reversed."[203]

Even though the seed imagery may have been lost on Adam and Eve, the NT authors clearly grasped the deeper and ultimate significance of Gen. 3:15. Gen. 3:15 should be read with the full knowledge of the redemptive history that follows, particularly the death and resurrection of Christ. In Lk. 24, Jesus instructed the disciples to read the OT in light of the person and work

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[200] Richard Lints*, Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 36, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 103.

[201] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2015), 46.

[202] M. D. Gow, "Fall," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 289.

[203] T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 31.

of the Savior. As such, the NT authors' use of the Genesis material should shape any modern interpretation. Through this comparison (, "a strong case can be made for the idea that the seed of the woman refers to those human descendants who are on the side of God (cf. the Sethite genealogy of Gen. 5), and the seed of the serpent to those who resist God (cf. the Cainite genealogy of Gen. 4:17–26)."[204] Human sin corrupted the once pristine creation of God. Shame, fear, and the need for self-justification begin to permeate human interactions between others and God. Humanity finds itself enslaved by sin, evident in the violent deeds recounted in Gen. 4–11, such as those of Cain, Lamech, the pre-flood society, and the assault on heaven through the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Still, "…beginning with the protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15), God freely demonstrates mercy by acting in history to promise salvation."[205] Ultimately the flow of redemptive history that begins in Genesis climaxes in Jesus Christ in the first coming and in eschatological future.

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[204] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 167.

[205] Timothy R. Phillips, "Christianity and Religions," ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 175.

Table 4: *Protevangelium* OT Allusions and NT Confirmations

Topic	OT Allusions	NT Confirmation	Notes
Satan as the Serpent	Gen. 3:15	Rom. 16:20	Paul unmistakably equates Satan with the serpent, as Satan will ultimately be crushed underfoot.
	Gen. 3:15	Rev. 12:7-9	Satan is referred to as the "ancient serpent," a clear reference.
Abraham's seed	Gen. 12:2, 5	Gal. 3:15-16; Gal. 3:29	God's promise to Abraham is both land and descendants. Paul leverages the collective singular nature of the term "descendent" or "seed" in Gen. 12. 'Within the broader context of Galatians 3, which argues that faith (the Abrahamic covenant) holds precedence over the law (the Mosaic covenant), Paul affirms that the ultimate realization of the Abrahamic promise is found in Christ.' [206] Christians today are a part of the Abrahamic seed promise according to Gal. 3:29.
Jesus as Davidic King	2 Sam. 7; Pss. 2 and 110	Heb. 7:10	Ps. 110, originally a royal psalm, likely composed for the inauguration of a Davidic king, presents Yahweh appointing the king to sit at His right hand and secure victory over enemies. The psalm is closely related to the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7, with the Davidic king proclaimed as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Over time, these texts came to be associated with a future messianic king. The NT authors recognized Jesus as this awaited Messiah, understanding him as surpassing even the Davidic king. Jesus, often called David's son, fulfills the Davidic covenant, embodying the roles of both priest and warrior king depicted in Ps. 110. This psalm likely served as a coronation hymn, highlighting the enduring connection between David and Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant with David. [207]
Joseph and Jesus	Gen. 50:20	Acts 2:22-24	Joseph played a crucial role as the instrument of God's providence in saving the family of God. Because of Joseph's position, Jacob and his descendants, who were the descendants of Abraham, were able to survive the famine by obtaining grain. Joseph's words are thematically connected to Peter's contemplation on Jesus's death in Acts 2:22-24. Just as God used Joseph's brothers' evil actions to bring about the survival of his people, God also used the actions of those who crucified Jesus to fulfil God's plan of redemption.

God's promise found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who took on human form and brought about

the reality of salvation. Jesus is not merely a symbol of historical events; rather, the Messiah

represents God's unique intervention in human history. Salvation, as established by Jesus, is

exclusive and accessible only through faith in him (Jn. 14:6). Christ serves as the sole mediator

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[206] Summarized from Longman III, *How to Read Genesis*, 170.

[207] Cf. Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 22:43, 45; Rom. 1:3; and 2 Tim. 2:8

between humanity and God, the only avenue through which salvation can be attained (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus's work underscores why salvation is found solely in his name. In a world marked by natural evils, God's mercy towards humanity is revealed through his saving acts in history. Furthermore, Jesus's holy life and sacrificial death provide the promised atonement, enabling sinners to approach the holy God with confidence (Rom. 3:22; Eph. 3:12). As prophesied in Gen. 3:15, Christ's resurrection signifies the fulfillment of God's promise, as it demonstrates the Savior's victory over Satan and transforms the destiny of creation (1 Cor. 15:19; Eph. 1:20–23).

Genesis 3:16-19

While Gen. 3:16-19 could be interpreted as punitive, a redemptive undercurrent lies in the Creator's message. The acknowledgment of labor and mortality sets the stage for a redemptive narrative, where God's plan to redeem humanity will unfold. Moreover, the text provides an indication that perfect creation was corrupted, in accordance with the plan of the serpent. In other words, "things are not as they should be." Indications of include the pain of childbirth. Prior to the Fall, God gave the command to "be fruitful and multiply," (Gen. 1:28) hinting that there was no pain intended to be associated with childbirth prior to Adam and Eve's disobedience.

Adam receives the most instruction in God's speech. Verse 17 indicates that the previously lush ground was now "cursed" and that humans must work to provide sustenance. "The need to work often is looked on as a result of the fall, but such is not the case. Adam was very busy before the fall, fulfilling the responsibility to 'till' and 'care for'"(NEB) the garden."[208] Vos speculates the introduction of plant diseases, drought, floods, hurricanes, and

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[208] Howard F. Vos, *Genesis- Everyday Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 30.

other disasters came about because of the corruption of creation as a result of the Fall.[209] The description of the "land" in v. 18 is a reversal of the state of the land in Gen. 2:5. 'By contrasting the state of the land before and after the Fall, the author illustrates that the current condition of the land deviated from its intended state. Instead, the present state resulted from human rebellion and creation corruption. This sets the stage for a key motif in biblical eschatology—the hope for a "new heaven and a new earth" (cf. Isa 65:17; Ro 8:22-24; Rev 21:1).'[210]

Verse 19 recalls *Elohim*'s command in Gen. 2:17, to refrain from eating of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil…that you eat of it you shall die." Sailhamer summarizes:

> Before the Fall, the man was taken from the ground and given the "breath of life" (2:7). As a result of the Fall, however, the man must return to the ground and to the dust from which he was taken (3:19). The author's point in showing such a reversal is to stress that the verdict of death, of which the man was warned before the Fall (2:17), had now come upon him.[211]

Even still, the narrative in Gen. 3:19 does not distinguish between physical and spiritual death. Of this Goldworthy postures that, "To live is to live in fellowship with God. When that fellowship is broken by rebellion, the sentence of death is executed. Yet it is not immediate destruction. The human race, though dead, continues, multiplies and goes on in some way bearing the image of God."[212]

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[209] Ibid.

[210] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 109.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Nottingham: IVP, 2018), 106-107.

Genesis 3:21

Verse 21 demonstrates God's immediate provision for human physical needs. The inadequate fig leaves symbolic of sackcloth and mourning of the marred image are replaced with עוֹר, a simple gesture with divine purpose. "The author characterizes that work as 'covering the nakedness' of the man and the woman.[213] The mention of the type of clothing which God made — a "skin (עור) tunic" — is perhaps intended to recall the state of the man and the woman before the Fall."[214] Some scholars contend that the author might be anticipating the concept of sacrifice in the killing of the animals for the creation of the skin tunics. [215] Though the writer of Genesis provides no explicit hints in the narrative itself, this act could be seen as foreshadowing. In later parts of the *Pentateuch*, God instructed the people to fashion tunics for the priests entering the tabernacle's presence. These tunics were meant to cover the priests' nakedness (עֶרוָה), preventing them from incurring guilt and death (Ex. 28:42). The author may be foreseeing this "lasting ordinance" (Ex. 28:43), drawing attention to God's covering the nakedness of the man and the woman thereby covering human guilt and shame through divine deliverance. "In this way, the role of the priests, developed later in the Pentateuch, is foreshadowed by God's work in ages past—his work of restoring humanity" to original priestly identity.[216]

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[213] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 110.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Matthews *et al* contend, "God provides them with these garments as the type of gift given by a patron to a client. Gifts of clothing are among the most common presents mentioned in the Bible (see Joseph in Gen 41:42) and other ancient texts. It also prepares them for the rigors of weather and work which await them. In the *Tale of Adapa* (see comment on 3:2–5), after Adapa loses the opportunity to eat from the bread and water of life, he is given clothing by the god Anu before being sent from his presence." Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen. 3:21.

[216] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 110.

Genesis 3:22-24

Another evidence of God's redemptive plan is revealed in humanity's expulsion from the garden, perhaps expressed in irony. Although the human quest to "be like God" (Gen. 3:5-7) was achieved, only that which was undesirable was attained. Human provision and advancement failed, and God intervened. The man and the woman, who were initially created "like God" (Gen. 1:26), found themselves, after the Fall, ironically "like God" but no longer "with God" in the Garden. In this subtle verbal exchange, the author illustrates that human happiness does not come from being "like God" but rather from being "with God" (cf. Ps. 16:11).

To emphasize the identity reversals experienced by the man and the woman due to their rebellion, the author employs a wordplay on two crucial terms from the earlier depiction of humankind's blessing in the Garden. In Gen. 2:15, man was placed in the Garden for עבד and שמר. However, in Gen. 3:23, after the Fall, humans are expelled from the Garden to עבד the ground and are שמר from the way of the "Tree of Life." In describing the Garden and the Tree of Life after the Fall, the author has once again foreshadowed God's plan to restore human blessing and identity through the covenant at Sinai and the *Torah*. The Tree of Life is guarded by the "cherubim" (Gen. 3:24), mirroring the way the Torah is protected in the ark of the covenant by the "cherubim" (Ex.25:10-22; Deut. 31:24-26) in the Sinai covenant. The restoration of human fellowship with God is depicted as achievable only through the covenant. The state enjoyed pre-fall (Gen. 2:15) is at least temporarily enjoyed by the Israelites when their covenantal identity is aligned with the Creator.

The cherubim of v. 24 are mentioned over ninety times in the OT and often function as guardians of God's presence. Described in biblical passages like Ez. 1 and 10 and supported by archaeological findings, cherubim are depicted as composite creatures, akin to griffins or

sphinxes. These cherubim representations, often found flanking the king's throne, symbolize a role as arbiters of divine presence. In 3:24, the cherubim stand as sentinels, preventing access to the Tree of Life—a property now forbidden to humanity.[217] Notice the lack of annihilation doctrine. The Tree of Life still stands, as does humanity with the new human condition complete with marred identity. Yet, even in this early dawn, rays of heavenly hope emerge as the Creator signals grace to the fallen pair. Despite being expelled from the garden, the region of bliss and its tree of life are preserved in the boundless mercy of God who promises to ultimately restore humanity's perfect identity.

<div align="center">Genesis 1-3 – A Tropic Summary</div>

The account of Gen. 1-3 serves as the bedrock upon which the tropic pattern of identity-inversion-reclamation unfolds, reverberating throughout the entirety of the biblical canon until its revelatory culmination. In these foundational chapters, the concept of *imago Dei* emerges as the visible representation of the invisible God, defining the essential relationship between creature and Creator. As humans are endowed with the title of "image of God," they are called to worship and honor the Creator, embodying a profound connection with their divine origin. However, alongside this depiction of divine order, the serpent's presence unveils the insidious threat to this sacred relationship, seeking to corrupt creation and erode human identity. Despite evolving tactics, God's redemptive aim remains constant: to restore humanity to *imago Dei* identity and the harmonious unity experienced with the Creator. Conversely, the antithetical goal persists in perpetuating humanity's corruption toward an irredeemable state. The intersection of 'image' and

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[217] Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen. 3:24.

'idol' underscores a fundamental human longing for significance beyond oneself, either toward the Creator or through self-fashioned substitutes.

The creation liturgy and the fall narrative demonstrate that the primary aspect of the relationship between the image and the original is one of worship, honor, fulfillment, and contentment. Conversely, the distortion of created-Creator relationship is marked by self-seeking ambition, perversion, corruption, consumption, and possession. The intersection of the concepts of 'image' and 'idol' underscores a key belief: humans are inherently designed to yearn for something beyond themselves that provides significance. Humanity's yearning manifests in two distinct directions — a residual desire for their Creator and, conversely, a growing inclination to substitute their Creator with something self-fashioned that can be humanly controlled. The dynamic does not necessarily propose a universal theory of human nature but specifically addresses the relationship among Creator, creature, and creation.

'Scholars have noted that the account of the Fall demonstrates a pattern that is repeated in the four stories that follow in Gen. 4–11 (Cain and Abel, the sons of God and the daughters of men, the flood, the tower of Babel).'[218] The trope narrates 1) identity, followed by 2) inversion (sin), 3) God's judgment/grace/reclamation.[219] In the Genesis stories readers witness covenantal identity ordained by the Creator, the enemy's deception and plot for inversion, how idolatry disrupts the blessing of God on human creatures, and also God's pursuit of humanity in order to restore relationship and reclaim humanity's identity.

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[218] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 114.

[219] The identity trope in Genesis is best illustrated in Table 2 found earlier in this dissertation.

In certain narratives the trope of creation-rescue-re-creation overlap and become more evident.[220] This dynamic, evidenced in subsequent narratives, including those in Genesis 4-11, unveils a recurring pattern of identity, inversion (sin), and God's intervention for reclamation. The focus now turns to a closer examination of the sons of God and the Noahic flood epic in Genesis 6-9, illuminating these tropic patterns through a literary and theological lens.

<p align="center">Genesis 6-9:17 – The Flood Epic</p>

Genesis 6-9:17 – Identity Inversion, Creation Corruption, and Redemption

In the context of the Noahic flood epic, identity inversion and creation corruption refer to the distortion and degradation of God's intended order. A summary of these concepts in relation to the Noahic flood narrative are described in this section.

First, identity inversion occurs in Gen. 6:1-4, the mingling of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men" results in the birth of the Nephilim, a hybrid race. This union is often viewed as an inversion of the divine order, as it deviates from the principle of each being reproducing according to its kind as stated in Gen. 1. Gen. 6:1-8 serves as the prologue to the flood narrative, illustrating the primary reason for the necessity of the flood. It also highlights the theme of corruption, where the enemy seeks to distort creation and undermine humanity's identity as bearers of the divine image. These unnatural unions further distort the image of God in humanity, which encompasses moral and spiritual attributes. Consequently, humans depart from the Creator's intended identity as bearers of the divine image.

The narrative depicts a world engulfed in moral decay, where violence and corruption are rampant, signifying a departure from God's original design for creation. God, witnessing the extent of corruption and violence, experiences profound grief (Genesis 6:6), highlighting the

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[220] The creation trope as presented throughout Genesis is outlined in Table 1 of this dissertation.

severity of the deviation from divine purpose. The pervasive corruption prompts God to bring about a global flood as a form of judgment and a means to reset a creation marred by corruption.

Amidst the corrupted world, Noah emerges as a righteous and blameless figure, contrasting with the prevailing corruption. Noah becomes the chosen instrument for preserving natural life through the construction of the ark. Following the flood, God establishes a covenant with Noah, pledging never again to destroy the earth with a flood. The Noahic Covenant introduces a redemptive element, affirming God's commitment to restoring the corrupted creation and, ultimately, humanity's divine identity.

In summary, identity inversion in the Noahic Flood Epic refers to the distortion of the divine and human order through the unnatural unions described in Gen. 6. Creation corruption, on the other hand, points to the moral decay and violence that pervaded the world, leading to God's decision for a global flood as an act of judgment and a means of restoration through the righteous remnant represented by Noah. The covenant with Noah further emphasizes God's commitment to redeeming and sustaining creation despite its fallen state.

Genesis 6-9:17 – Water Imagery

Water imagery in the Noahic flood epic is highly symbolic and serves various purposes in conveying theological, moral, and redemptive themes. Some key aspects of the importance of water imagery in the narrative are introduced here.

The floodwaters symbolize God's judgment upon a corrupted creation and the inversion of human identity resulting in wickedness. By inundating the earth, God demonstrates a commitment to righteousness and justice, using water as an agent of purification to cleanse the world of moral decay. Furthermore, the floodwaters evoke the watery chaos that existed before

creation, as described in Genesis 1. The reversal of the separation of waters signifies a return to a primordial state, highlighting the severity of God's judgment and marking a symbolic re-creation.

The drowning of sin and corruption under the floodwaters symbolizes the burial of the old, sinful world, while the emergence of dry land represents a new beginning, akin to rebirth or re-creation. As Noah and his family, along with the animals, step onto the renewed earth, it suggests the possibility of a fresh start. The receding waters parallel the separation of waters in the creation narrative, emphasizing God's sovereignty over creation and the emergence of a new creation from the flood. The ark, floating on the waters, serves as a symbol of God's provision for salvation, providing refuge for the righteous and preserving life. The rainbow, appearing after the flood, signifies God's covenant with Noah and all living creatures, representing the establishment of a covenant of grace.

In essence, water imagery in the Noahic flood narrative carries profound symbolic meaning, conveying themes of divine judgment, purification, death and rebirth, and the establishment of a covenant that marks a new beginning for humanity and the created order.

Genesis 6:1-9 – Expositional Inquiry

The narrative of Gen. 4 and 5, following the Fall, underscores God's unwavering commitment to creation despite humanity's descent into corruption. These chapters outline the preservation of mankind and the establishment of a lineage that becomes the object of God's special redeeming love. However, the narrative shifts dramatically in Gen. 6:1-8, setting the stage for the cataclysmic event of the Flood. Here, the focus turns to the growing corruption of humanity, exemplified by the mingling of the "sons of God" with human women, resulting in the birth of the Nephilim. As a prologue to the Genesis flood epic then the passage must reveal then the cause of the effect of the flood.

Gen. 6:1-8 is critical to the Noahic flood narrative as it sets the stage for the cataclysmic event. In the verses, the focus shifts to the growing corruption of humanity, describing how the "sons of God" (often interpreted as angelic beings or those with divine lineage) took human wives, leading to the birth of the Nephilim; the mingling of divine and human resulted in a significant departure from God's original intent for creation. Is it possible that the enemy's plan for the marring of humanity's *imago Dei* identity has taken a new form? If humanity's DNA is co-mingled with that of the "divine," are the resulting offspring redeemable? Or did the co-mingling of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" simply cause a severe moral decline outside of biology?[221] While these questions cannot be answered out of hand, the examination of the prologue to the flood narrative may provide some context clues, particularly as related to identity inversion and creation corruption.

Beyond biology, the passage highlights the worsening state of humanity's moral and spiritual condition, emphasizing their rebellion and departure from God's plan. The text introduces a critical aspect of the narrative by presenting a situation where the very fabric of creation, the distinction between divine and human, becomes blurred and corrupted. The Nephilim, described as mighty men of old, contribute to the increasing wickedness on the earth.

God's response the corruption of creation is the decision to bring a flood to cleanse the earth. In Noah, who finds favor in God's eyes, there is a remnant that preserves the potential for redemption. Given the time and energy the author of Genesis dedicates to the ten-generation genealogy discussed at length in Gen. 4-5, the idea that Noah and family were the only

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[221] Davidson offers a case for tracing the genetic markers of modern humans to the first couple and provides a model that plausibly resolves the unique characteristics of the Nephilim and the "enigmatic identity of the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6." The author offers scientific evidence that illustrates how the biblical and genetic records can be accounted for by interbreeding between hominids and the offspring of the first human couple (cf. Gensis 6:1-4). See 1. Gregg Davidson, "Genetics, the Nephilim, and the Historicity of Adam," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 67, no. 1 (March 2015): 24–34.

uncorrupted biologic humans is speculative but worthy consideration, particularly when Gen. 6 opens with the blurring of divine and human lines. Biology or moral decline, either being the case, clearly the enemy adjusted tactics from the fall to invert human identity and corrupt creation, demonstrating both tropes highlighted in this dissertation. Regardless, God found Noah "righteous" and "blameless in his generation" (Gen. 6:9) and through the flood, God once again reclaims creation and humanity as "good." Thus, the short prologue text serves as a pivotal moment in the Genesis flood narrative, marking the height of humanity's deviation from God's design, setting the context for the flood that follows, and marking the covenant of grace offered through the Noahic covenant.

The passage also takes on an eschatological meaning when viewed through the eyes of the NT. In Mat. 24:37, Jesus prophesied, "For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." "Far more than simply a historical issue, the unique events leading to the Flood are a prerequisite to understanding the prophetic implications of our Lord's predictions regarding His Second Coming."[222] The understanding of Gen. 6 is so essential because the passage is a prerequisite to understanding (and anticipating) Satan's creation-corrupting devices (2 Cor. 2:11) and, in particular, the specific delusions to come upon the whole earth as a major feature eschatological prophecy.[223]

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[222] Chuck Missler, "Mischievous Angels or Sethites?: Textual Controversy: – Chuck Missler," *Koinonia House*, accessed December 2, 2023, https://www.khouse.org/articles/1997/110/#articles.

[223] Cf. Lk. 21:26, 2 Thes. 2:9,11, *et al.*

Genesis 6:1-4 – Text Critical Analysis

The exploration of the "sons of God" passage in Gen. 6:1-4 significantly contributes to

the thesis by delving into the complexities of identity and corruption within the biblical narrative.

This passage has long been regarded as one of the most challenging in the OT, presenting

various interpretive difficulties. Central to the enigma is the definition of "sons of God" and their

interaction with the "daughters of men." The enigma of the passage comes by way of the

definition of "sons of God" versus "daughters of men." "Daughters of men" has been generally

interpreted as the created-natural, biological Adamic, female offspring. Whereas the "sons of

God" renders three possible interpretive inquiries. The three lines of inquiry are outlined as

follows:

1. **Sethite View:** "a number of both modern and ancient exegetes see in the 'sons of God' a reference to the descendants of Seth, and in the 'daughters of men' a reference to the descendants of Cain. The particular sin is an unfortunate intermingling in marriage between the godly Sethite line and the ungodly Cainite line."[224]
2. **Royal Line View:** The Royal Line interpretive view of the "sons of God" in Gen. 6 suggests that these beings were ancient rulers or kings who took women as part of their royal harems.[225]

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[224] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 61–62. Notes: The Sethite view of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 proposes that these beings were righteous descendants of Seth who intermarried with ungodly women, leading to a decline in moral standards. However, there are several challenges and criticisms associated with this interpretation:1) Textual Ambiguity: The term "sons of God" (*bene elohim*) is used elsewhere in the OT to refer to angelic beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). The Sethite view is criticized for not addressing why this term, which typically denotes angelic beings, would suddenly refer to human beings in this specific context. 2) Inconsistent Interpretation: Critics argue that the Sethite view can be inconsistent in how it interprets the term "sons of God" in different biblical passages. In other contexts, these terms are often seen as angelic or supernatural beings.3) Lack of Parallelism in the Text: Some scholars argue that the parallelism in the passage supports the view that "sons of God" were angelic beings, not humans. The description of the "sons of God" taking wives from the "daughters of men" seems more in line with a supernatural interpretation. 4) Angelic Descent Tradition: The interpretation of the "sons of God" as angels aligns with Jewish traditions, including those found in 1 Enoch. This suggests that early Jewish readers understood these beings to be supernatural. 5) Contextual Considerations: The context of the Flood narrative, where divine judgment is enacted for the corruption of the earth, might be seen as more fitting with a supernatural interpretation of the "sons of God." 6) Historical Considerations: Some scholars argue that the Sethite interpretation emerged relatively late in the history of interpretation and may be influenced by an attempt to reconcile the biblical text with extra-biblical ideas.

[225] While this interpretation offers an alternative perspective, it also faces some challenges and criticisms: 1) Semantic Inconsistency: Critics argue that the term "sons of God" (*bene elohim*) is used elsewhere in the OT to refer to angelic beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). The shift in meaning to human rulers in this specific context might be seen as inconsistent with the broader biblical usage.2) Angelic Descent Tradition: Similar to the Sethite view, the

3. **Angels/Divine Beings View:** A third interpretation suggests that the sons of God are angels. The expression "sons of God" is indeed a name for the angelic host in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:6. The sin then is cohabitation between supernatural and natural beings.[226]

A rich history of scholarship lies behind each view; all of which have some basis of merit.[227] Based on the analysis of historical scholarship, the present author subscribes to the angels/divine beings view as the most plausible explanation. Through a text-critical analysis, this interpretation demonstrates the repetition of these tropes from Genesis to Revelation, highlighting the pervasive nature of these themes in God's plan for humanity's redemption. Thus, the exploration of Gen. 6:1-4 provides valuable insights into the biblical narrative's exploration

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"sons of God" as ancient rulers interpretation may struggle to account for the Jewish traditions and early interpretations that saw these beings as angelic. The angelic interpretation has deep roots in some Jewish traditions, including 1 Enoch. 3) Lack of Clear Parallelism: The argument that the "sons of God" were rulers who took women as wives might be challenged by the lack of clear parallelism with other biblical texts or historical records where kings are referred to as the "sons of God" in such a context. 4) Divine Punishment Context: The context of the Flood narrative involves divine judgment due to the corruption of creation. Critics argue that interpreting the "sons of God" as rulers might not adequately explain why this specific sin would lead to such severe divine punishment.5) Absence of Supportive Context: Unlike other passages in the Bible where rulers or kings are explicitly called the "sons of God" or have relationships with women, the Genesis 6 narrative lacks a clear contextual background that supports the idea of human rulers being referred to in this way.6) Historical Considerations: Scholars have questioned the historical basis for assuming that ancient rulers were specifically referred to as "sons of God" in the biblical context, given the absence of this terminology in other ANE texts.

[226] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 62–63.

[227] A thorough examination of "sons of god" through exegetical inquiry is well-documented by: Jaap Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: Analysis and History of Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). Marlow provides a modern literary analysis of the text: W. Creighton Marlowe, "Genesis 6,1-4 as a Chiasm," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 30, no. 1 (2016): 129–144. A contextual analysis: Sven Fockner, "Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 4 (2008): 435–456. While not exclusively focused on the Sethite view, Whitcomb and Morris present a creationist viewpoint that closely aligns: John C. Whitcomb and Henry Madison Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011). Kline presents a twentieth century argument for the royal line view: Meredith G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Gen. 6:1-4," *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (1962): 187–204. Diverse theological perspectives on the topic can be found as follows: Walter C. Kaiser et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010). John H. Walton, *NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995). Clifford John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006).

of identity, corruption, and redemption, aligning with the overarching thesis of the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity through God's redemptive plan.

Genesis 6:1-2

An exegesis of Gen. 6:1-2 contributes to the thesis by shedding light on the narrative's exploration of identity, corruption, and redemption within the biblical context. In these verses, the focus is on the "sons of God" and their interaction with the "daughters of men." The precise identity of the "sons of God" has been subject to various interpretations, including descendants of Seth, ancient rulers, or angels. Regardless of the interpretation, the passage highlights a significant departure from God's original design for humanity, marked by the corruption of creation and the blurring of divine and human boundaries.

Genesis 6:1 begins with, "how mankind began to fill the earth, as was already preordained in the blessing of Gen 1:28 and mentioned in the narrative of Gen 5." [228] The narrative opens in the past tense with the conjunction כי, indicating the initiation of a temporal clause. This is marked by the *Hiphil* perfect verb החל, akin to "when." The collective subject of החל is "humankind," as implied by the masculine plural pronoun הם at the verse's end, referring back to האדם. The infinitive לרב complements החל, and the preposition על likely signifies the spatial location "over" the face of the earth. [229] Following the strong disjunctive accent is the clause להם ילדו ובנות. The issue lies in how to connect this clause with the one preceding. Many commentators regard the clause as an extension of the preceding temporal sequence, particularly given the logical correlation between the birth of daughters and the increase in humankind ("and

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[228] Jaap Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: Analysis and History of Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 64.

[229] On functionality, see: Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 120.

daughters were born to them").[230] More precisely, the *waw* at the beginning of the clause likely signifies the circumstances surrounding humanity's multiplication ("with daughters being born to them"). The grammatical and syntactical analysis reveals a lexicographical antithesis establishing a contrast between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of humans" that is best explained by angelic origin (sons of God) and human origin (daughters of humans).

The temporal clauses in the first verse lack completeness until the independent clausal opening of verse 2. In other words, the sons of God observed the daughters of humankind (independent) when humankind began to multiply and have daughters born to them (dependent). Verbs of perception, exemplified by the past narrative ראה in this context, often involve two objects, with the second one presented in a distinct clause. This pattern is evident in verse 2, where the "sons of God" observed the daughters of humankind and noticed their beauty (or goodness). The past narrative form ויקחו signifies the logical consequence of the "sons of God" perceiving the attractiveness of the human daughters ("so/thus they took"). Herein lies a clear correspondence to the act of Eve in Gen. 3:6 where the first woman "takes" from the tree of the knowledge of good an evil. "Taking" that follows 'seeing' in the primeval history (Gen 1–11) evokes the idea of temptation and is clearly viewed" as a negative pattern. [231] Doedens concludes that it is appropriate to interpret that the use of לקח implies "gaining the possession of something without the permission of the owner."[232] Thus, in the case of Gen. 3, the owner of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is God, "but in Gen 6 the 'owner'(i.e., the realm

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[230] See Robert Crumb and Robert Alter, *The Book of Genesis* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 26.

[231] Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: Analysis and History of Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 174.

[232] Ibid.

in which the human daughters belonged within the narrative) is humankind (האדם). Thus, the 'sons of God' had no "rights" to the daughters of humanity; a boundary ("forbidden-ness") existed between them and had been crossed."[233] According to Westerman, "the [Genesis] narrator wants to introduce a class that is utterly superior; persons who are so powerful that, when they desire a woman because of her beauty, they are not confined by the limits that restrain ordinary mortals."[234] The phrasing alludes to the forceful rape of human women or a deceptive seducing, not unlike how the serpent seduced Eve in Gen. 3.

בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים. *B'nai HaElohim* is a term consistently used in the OT for angels rather than human believers in the OT. [235] Ancient rabbinical sources, including 1 Enoch, Septuagint translators, and early church fathers translated the term as fallen angels or divine beings.[236] בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים is used to refer to the angelic host in Scriptures such as Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:6.[237] As such, the transgression in Gen. 6:1-4 is perceived as the interaction or cohabitation between supernatural and natural beings. Support for this interpretation is found in the NT

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[233] Ibid.

[234] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11,* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016), 367.

[235] Cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 (where the "sons of God" are in existence before the creation of the earth). Jesus also implies the same term in Luke 20:36.

[236] The sons of *Elohim* are also contrasted with the sons of Adam in Psalm 82:1, 6 and warned that if evil persists in verse 2, the "sons" would die like Adam (man). When Jesus quoted this verse (John 10:34), there was no mention of what order of beings God addressed in this Psalm but that the Word of God was inviolate whether the beings in question were angels or men.

[237] One could also note a NT confirmation in that in Luke's genealogy of Jesus, only Adam is called a "son of God." Missler summarizes this occasion, "The entire Biblical drama deals with the tragedy that humankind is a fallen race, with Adam's initial immortality forfeited. Christ uniquely gives them that receive Him the power to become the sons of God. Being born again of the Spirit of God, as an entirely new creation, at their resurrection they alone will be clothed with a building of God10 and in every respect equal to the angels. The very term *oiketerion,* alluding to the heavenly body with which the believer longs to be clothed, is the precise term used for the heavenly bodies from which the fallen angels had disrobed." Chuck Missler, "Mischievous Angels or Sethites?: Textual Controversy: – Chuck Missler," *Koinonia House,* accessed December 2, 2023, https://www.khouse.org/articles/1997/110/#articles.

comparison of Jude 6 and 7, and potentially in 1 Peter 3:19–20 and 2 Peter 2:4. If readers

consider the purpose of Jude 7 as drawing a parallel between the immoral conduct of Sodom and

Gomorrah and the similar behavior of the angels mentioned in Jude 6, the understanding lends

credibility to this view. Perhaps, the most informative aspect to the interpretation to the "sons of

God" is the outcome of the comingling of the created-angelic and created-natural found in verse

4, which leads the research into a short foray into a literary view of Gen. 6:1-4.

Only verses 2 and 4 of Chapter 6 mention the *B'nai HaElohim*, demonstrating a literary

bracketing of verse 3. The fulcrum or climax of the textual unit points directly to the actions of

יְהוָה in response to the characters mentioned. If verse 2 demonstrates a forceful or deceptive

"taking" of Adamic daughters, then verse 4 delivers the outcome of the "taking," and verse 3

illuminates the Lord's response to said "taking."[238] Marlowe contends that the passage exists as a

lexical chiasm:[239]

A			Numerous (great; רבב) humans, birthed(ילד) daughters	1
	B		"Sons of God" lust after ("see") daughters	2ai
			and take *nāšiym*	2aii
		C	*Yahweh*'s actions (grace to humans)	3
	B		*nᵉpiliᵛmin* the land	4ai
			"Sons of God" impregnate ("came into") daughters	4aii
A			Birthed (ילד) males	4aiii
			= Notable (great name; םש) males, heroes (*gibbōriᵛm*) [born]	4b

The term ילי, meaning "to give birth," is specifically used in verses 1 and 4 of Gen. 6. In verse 1,

daughters were born יֻלְּדוּ (*yulledū*) to men, and in verse 4, these women had children born

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[238] Marlowe points out: "Translations say they 'married' any they desired, but the text (while marriage could be assumed) only says these women were taken, any and all these "sons of God" wanted, due to their beauty. The implication is that only the most attractive were taken by force, suggesting a lustful motive, so some were likely wives (in a polygamist setting) and most or all became pregnant." W. Creighton Marlowe, "Genesis 6,1-4 as a Chiasm," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 30, no. 1 (2016): 129–144, 134.

[239] Modifications have been made to Marlowe's chiastic structure informed by the resesearch of this dissertation. To see the original: Marlowe, "Genesis 6,1-4 as a Chiasm," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 30, no. 1 (2016): 129–144, 135.

וְיָלְדוּ (*weyāledū*) to them after being impregnated by certain men. Verse 2 mentions men taking any woman they desired, and in verse 4, the same men went after these women. Interestingly, only in verses 2 and 4 are these men identified as the בניהאלהים. While the union or violation discussed in verse 2 implies the birth of children, verse 4 uniquely names and describes these offspring as הנפלים and distinguished warriors (הגברים). The chiastic center of the passage whispers of God's grace and humanity's redemption, for the response is for the part humans had to play in the endeavor, though the interpretation of verse 3 is anything but unanimous among scholars.

Regardless of interpretation, the departure from God's intended order clearly reflects the theme of identity inversion, where humanity strays from its *imago Dei* identity and succumbs to corruption. The mingling of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men" represents a fundamental disruption of the natural order and a deviation from God's plan for creation. This corruption is further compounded by the resulting offspring, the Nephilim, whose existence symbolizes the consequences of this mingling and its impact on humanity's spiritual and moral condition.

Moreover, the passage underscores the universality of sin and the need for redemption, echoing the broader narrative arc of the Bible. The verses serve as a precursor to the Flood narrative, where God's judgment is ultimately enacted to cleanse the earth of its corruption and restore humanity to its original state. In this sense, Gen. 6:1-2 contributes to the thesis by highlighting the pervasive nature of corruption and the necessity of redemption in God's plan for humanity. It emphasizes the ongoing struggle between the forces of good and evil, ultimately leading to the reclamation of the *imago Dei* identity through God's redemptive work.

Genesis 6:3

An exegesis of Gen. 6:3 provides further support for the thesis by revealing God's response to the corruption and deviation from His intended design seen in the preceding verses. In the passage, God declares, "My spirit shall not abide in mortals for ever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred and twenty years." This statement reflects God's recognition of the extent of humanity's corruption and His decision to limit the duration of human life.

abide in mortals for ever. The Hebrew word "to abide" used here is דּין and has been interpreted to mean to judge, subdue, or subjugate. From this passage, readers can understand that the Lord, through His Spirit, engages with humanity up to a specific limit. In this concise, seemingly negative statement, the beacon of God's compassionate mercy toward the fallen human race is illuminated. God dispatches His Spirit to enlighten obscured minds, reason with consciences, support virtuous determination, and guide hearts, to restore human identity to original intention - fellowship, confidence, and affection towards the Creator. The phrasing also implies that, unlike the compulsory "taking" of human daughters by the "sons of God," the Creator will not force or manipulate the free agency of rational creatures. "An involuntary or compulsory faith, hope, love, obedience, is a contradiction in terms; and anything that could bear the name can have no moral validity whatsoever."[240]

This phrase also underscores the consequences of humanity's departure from its *imago Dei* identity and the pervasive nature of corruption within creation. God's acknowledgment that humanity is "indeed flesh" highlights the physical and spiritual limitations imposed by sin,

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[240] James Gracey Murphy and Albert Barnes, *A Commentary on The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 179.

further emphasizing the theme of identity inversion. Instead of reflecting the image of God, humanity is now characterized by its fleshly nature, prone to sin and corruption.

their days shall be one hundred and twenty years. The limitation of the human lifespan or a period of grace serves as a precursor to the impending Flood and signifies God's determination to intervene in order to restore his creation.

Two possibilities exist for the interpretation of the phrase in Gen. 6:3. "The 120 years refers either to the diminished life span that God will now impose on humankind or to a period of grace (preceding the flood) in which God's hand of judgment will be restrained."[241] According to Matthews *et al*:

> The limitation of 120 years most likely refers to a reduction of the life
> span of humans, since it is in the context of a statement about mortality.
> While the verse is notoriously difficult to translate, modern consensus is
> moving toward translating it "My spirit will not remain in man forever,"
> thus affirming mortality[242]

Some ANE texts support this translation; the statement could allude to the ceaseless pursuit of immortality—a quest central to the *Gilgamesh Epic*. Even though Gilgamesh's era postdates the flood, the aspects of the narrative resonate with the shared human experience. "The Sumerian folktale Enlil and Namzitarra, found in a bilingual version at Emar, [also] speaks of 120 years as an ideal human lifespan.[243] If the Gen. 6:3 passage, indeed, refers to mortality, then God's enforcement of the penalty is a gradual one. "Noah, introduced before this episode, lives for 950 years. Abraham's father, Terah, lives for 205 years, and Abraham himself lives for 175 years. In

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[241] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 63.

[242] Matthews *et al, The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, Gen. 6:3.

[243] John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 44.

the Book of Genesis only Joseph fails to surpass the 120-year maximum."[244] However, in the twenty-first century, the average lifespan is approximated at 80 years, with some humans living beyond 80 but still below the 120-year standard set forth in the Genesis passage. Delayed consequences are not new in Genesis; readers will recall the command for Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit or "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Gen. 2:17) While the first couple ate the fruit, Adam and Eve were not immediately annihilated; God's grace was preeminent, and the penalty of death was delayed.

Alternatively, if the allusion is to a period during which God voluntarily holds back, a viewpoint that can be doubly plausible, then once again, grace becomes evident. A comparable instance of this exercise of divine self-restraint is seen in Jonah's proclamation to Nineveh: "And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'" (Jon. 3:4). Likewise, A striking parallel can be found in the NT specifically in 2 Thess. 2. Prior to the arrival of Jesus Christ, there will be the advent of "the man of lawlessness." The loosening of the restraint on this "son of perdition" will set him free from this confinement. However, until that moment, the enemy is being held in check. Hence, the window of opportunity to receive and extend grace remains open.

Gen. 6:3 serves as a pivotal moment in the narrative, setting the stage for the subsequent events leading to the Flood and ultimately emphasizing God's commitment to reclaiming His creation and restoring humanity to its intended state.

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[244] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 63.

Genesis 6:4

Introduction. An exegesis of Gen. 6:4 contributes to the thesis by further illustrating the extent of corruption and deviation from God's intended design within the biblical narrative. This verse describes the Nephilim, who were on the earth in those days, as well as afterward when the "sons of God" intermingled with the "daughters of men" and bore children to them. The mention of the Nephilim, often understood as giants or powerful beings, underscores the consequences of the mingling between divine and human beings.

The presence of the Nephilim represents a distortion of the natural order and a departure from humanity's *imago Dei* identity. These beings, born from the union of divine and human, symbolize the corruption and perversion that had infiltrated creation. Their existence serves as a manifestation of the ongoing struggle between good and evil, highlighting the pervasive nature of sin and corruption within the world.

Furthermore, the mention of the Nephilim underscores the necessity of redemption and restoration within the biblical narrative. Their presence signals the urgency of God's intervention to cleanse the earth and restore His creation to its original state. The narrative surrounding the Nephilim serves as a warning against the consequences of straying from God's design and emphasizes the need for reconciliation and redemption.

Overall, an exegesis of the passage contributes to the thesis by highlighting the consequences of corruption and deviation from God's intended design within the biblical narrative. It underscores the pervasive nature of sin and the urgency of redemption in restoring humanity to its *imago Dei* identity. This verse serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle between good and evil and emphasizes God's commitment to reclaiming his creation and reconciling humanity to himself.

Exegesis. הַנְּפִלִים is only mentioned twice in the OT text, first in Gen. 6:4 and again in

Num. 13:33. Num. 13:33 documents the Israeli spy reports of the inhabitants of Canaan: "There

we saw the Nephilim (the *Anakites* come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like

grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.'" Clearly, references to the Nephilim are not an ethnic

designation because of post-flood persisted existence but a description of a particular type of

individual.[245] "The latter part of the verse indicates that they are heroic figures, perhaps of the

sort exemplified by Gilgamesh, who is described as possessing heroism (1.30) and as being tall,

magnificent, and terrible (1.37). He has a six-cubit stride (1.57) and is eleven cubits tall (Hittite

version, 1.8)."[246] In light of ANE historical records, a more specific interpretation has been

suggested by Kilmer, who proposes that the Nephilim should be identified as the ancient sages

(the *apkallu*). The *apkallu*, considered semidivine (with A*dapa*, one of their members, referred to

as the "son of [the god] *Ea*"), also engage in comingling with human women, resulting in mixed

classes.[247] Post-flood, these sages are regarded as of human descent and are termed the *ummianu*.

Unlike predecessors, the individuals are more infamous than famous, albeit in general terms

(e.g., "angered *Adad*").[248]

Some exegetical scholars have separated the Nephilim from any connection to the "sons

of God" and "daughters of men;" most do so by referring to the Nephilim phrasing as a

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[245] See: Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 45. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen. 6:4.

[246] John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 45.

[247] Anne Kilmer, "The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical Nephilim," in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday, July 28, 1985*, ed. Francis I. Andersen, Edgar W. Conrad, and Edward G. Newing (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987).

[248] Ibid.

parenthetical remark.[249] "In other words, [the Nephilim] have no connection to the previous

material or to the subsequent discussion of the mighty men (הגברים) who resulted from the union

between humanity's daughters and the sons of God."[250] This is not the most plausible

explanation considering the literary argument.

The literary argument was previously discussed as the passage should be considered as a

chiastic whole. Additional support for the literary unity of Gen. 6:1-4 includes an authorship

presumption. Interpreters either need to assert literary perfection for the original author (or later

editor) or abjectly assign a negative review to the work as a narrative. Aich concurs noting that

the "[author] may just have been a 'bad' writer intending a connection in the narrative without

manifesting one through a conjunction. Alternatively, he was a 'good' writer implying a link

(since asyndeton does not automatically preclude one)."[251] The Septuagint easily recognizes the

attachment between the Nephilim, the sons of God, and the daughters of humans.[252] Therefore,

this writing follows the Septuagint and allows for the connection between the Nephilim and the

other characters of the literary whole, Gen. 6:1-4.

Grammatically, what does seems to function as a parenthetical statement is the

disjunctive expression אחרי־כן וגם, providing additional clarification regarding when the

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[249] Fockner makes this case by syntactical double disconnection. See: Sven Fockner, "Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 4 (2008): 435–456, 453.

[250] Benjamin J. Aich, "Genesis 6:1–4: A Theological Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 16, no. 2 (2022): 168–186, https://doi.org/10.5325/jtheointe.16.2.0168, 177. Also see: Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 270.

[251] Aich, "Genesis 6:1–4: A Theological Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 16, no. 2 (2022): 168–186, 177.

[252] See: John William Wevers, "Notes on The Greek Text of Genesis," in *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, ed. Leonard J. Greenspoon, Septuagint and Cognate Studies (Atlanta, GA: Society of Bible Literature, 1993), 77.

Nephilim were present on the earth (as seen in NASB, NET; compare Num 13:33). The term

אשר, following the phrase בימים ההם and the construct form אחרי, probably signifies "when."

Thus, the Nephilim inhabited the earth during and after the period when the sons of God were

engaged in questionable activities. Moreover, the use of the imperfect verb יבאו, coupled with the

prepositional phrase אל־בנות האדם, conveys a vivid and continuous action, encapsulating a

Hebrew idiom as aptly summarized by Alter:

> The Hebrew idiom . . . involves a more direct reference to the mechanics
> of the sexual act than "to know" and thus has a more carnal coloration,
> but at the same time it seems to be perfectly decorous . . . [it] refers to the
> whole act of intercourse, not merely to penetration . . . [it] is reserved for
> sexual intimacy with a woman with whom the man has not previously
> had carnal relations, whether or not she is his legitimate wife. The spatial
> imagery of the idiom of "coming into" appears to envisage entering
> concentric circles—the woman's private sphere, her bed, her body.[253]

"The resulting children of these sexual unions were 'the mighty men' (הגברים) who were 'from

the dim past' (מעולם),[254] as if to refer to the 'days of the Nephilim from earlier in the verse

(another indicator of these being one and the same thing)."[255] These beings are further described

in the passage as having a legendary and renowned status (אנשי השם, an appositional phrase),

likely due to their unique and semi-human nature, as indicated by the phrase "men of the name."

The reference to their physical enormity and fame aligns with the account in Num. 13:33.

Verse 4 also carries a strange and ominous phrase וְגַם אַחֲרֵי־, rendered as "and also

afterwards" in the NRSV. The text clearly delineates that the Nephilim were in the land in the

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[253] Robert Alter, *The Book of Genesis*, ed. Robert Crumb (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 26.

[254] William L. Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 267.

[255] Aich, "Genesis 6:1–4: A Theological Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 16, no. 2 (2022): 168–186, 177.

days of Noah and in subsequent periods throughout the OT narrative. A representation of those

occurrences is provided as follows:

Rephaim, the Emim, the Horim, and Zamsummim	Gn14:5; 15:20; Deut.2:10-12, 22.
Og, the King of Bashan	Deut. 3:11, 13; Josh.12:4;13:12
Arba	Josh.14:15; 15:13; 21:11
Anak and seven sons, including Goliath and four brothers	1 Sam. 17:4ff; 2 Sam.21:16-22

Likewise, upon entering the land of Canaan, Joshua and the Israelites received

instructions to eliminate every individual—men, women, and children—from specific tribes.[256]

Understanding the Lord's character toward humans, the command is irreconcilable with the

character of the Creator. Note that the penalty for the first couple was one of grace as previously

noted and the age limitation imposed in Gen. 6:3 is also an act of mercy towards humans rather

than annihilationism. One way to reconcile the command and God's character is to take the

interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 as written in this dissertation. That is, the enemy adjusted tactics

from the seduction of Eve to mar humanity's *imago Dei* image to Gen. 6:1-4 and create one of

two possible stratagems: 1) to modify the genetics of the human race in order to eliminate the

imago Dei completely from generational Adamic offspring, or 2) to infect the populace with a

group of creatures so morally destitute and violent, that human culture would acclimate - become

more and more insensitive to worshipping other gods, inclusive of human sacrifice and sexual

sin, that the behavior became normalized and all human consciousness was affected by the abject

moral bankruptcy, no longer recognizing right from wrong.[257] Either way, the corruption of

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[256] Josh.6:21; 9:24; 10:28, 39; 11:24; Deut .2:34; 7:2, 3; 20:16-17; et al. Cf. 1 Sam. 15:3, 8, 18, 19; Ps. 137:8, 9.

[257] The level of moral depravity and abject bloodshed that characterizes the "sons of God," Nephilim, and subsequent ANE worship of polytheistic gods and goddesses in Canaan is well documented by Hamilton; see: Catherine Sider Hamilton, "1 Enoch and the Cosmic Sweep of Innocent Blood: From Cain and Blood to Flood and Judgment," in *He Death of Jesus in Matthew: Innocent Blood and the End of Exile*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47–70.

creation and the marring of human identity are the definitive strategies of Satan, and the Lord's response to humanity is tempered with grace, while the response to the enemy is much more severe. Since Gen. 6:1-4 is the prologue to the flood narrative, the text demonstrates the "why" behind the flood, either to eradicate the corrupted non-human gene pool or to exterminate the wanton violence that persisted among the offspring of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" affecting human consciousness, thereby further distorting humanity's *imago Dei* identity and the original intent of the Creator-created relationship.[258] All in all, an analysis of Gen. 6:4 showcases the ongoing struggle between good and evil and emphasizing God's commitment to reclaiming His creation and reconciling humanity to Himself.

Genesis 6:5-9 – Text Critical Analysis

Gen. 6:5-9 provides a detailed portrayal of the state of humanity and God's response. In these verses, the narrative presents the pervasive wickedness of mankind, stating that "every

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[258] The narrative of the Nephilim is more extensively detailed in the Book of Enoch. Manuscripts in Greek, Aramaic, and primary Ge'ez, link the emergence of the Nephilim to the fallen angels, specifically the *egrḗgoroi* (watchers). According to the text, Samyaza, an angel of elevated status, is depicted as heading a dissident group of angels that descends to the earth with the intention of engaging in sexual relations with human females. In this lore, the offspring of the Nephilim are referred to as the *Elioud*, identified as a distinct race from the Nephilim, yet sharing a common fate. According to some interpretations, the fallen angels responsible for the Nephilim were cast into Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6) (Greek Enoch 20:2), described as a realm of "total darkness." (see: 1. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh, Gran Bretaña: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 239). One viewpoint suggests that, following the flood, God allowed ten percent of the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim to persist as demons, aiming to lead humanity astray until the final Judgment. Alongside Enoch, the Book of Jubilees (7:21–25) also asserts that purging the Earth of these Nephilim was one of God's reasons for the flood in Noah's time. (see: Jacobus Theodorus Antonius Gerardus Maria van Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the "Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). These texts depict the Nephilim as malevolent giants. The NT Epistle of Jude (14–15) quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9, a passage many scholars believe is influenced by Deuteronomy 33:2. While most interpreters see this as an endorsement of the Enochic understanding of Genesis 6 by the author of Jude, some scholars have raised questions about this interpretation. [For Enochic understanding see: R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch: Together with a Reprint of the Greek Fragments* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010); Richard J. Bauckham, *The Jewish World around the New Testament: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 296; Michael Edward Stone, *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha: With Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1991)]. [An opposing viewpoint is offered by: Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994)].

intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The statement emphasizes the extent of corruption and deviation from God's intended design, aligning with the thesis's exploration of identity inversion.God's response to corruption is twofold: judgment and redemption. On one hand, God brings judgment upon the earth through the Flood. This judgment underscores the consequences of humanity's departure from *imago Dei* identity and serves as a warning against the pervasive nature of sin.

On the other hand, amidst the prevailing wickedness, God finds favor in Noah and chooses him to be the vessel of redemption. Noah is described as a righteous man who walked with God, highlighting his adherence to God's design and his commitment to righteousness. In choosing Noah, God demonstrates His commitment to reclaiming His creation and restoring humanity to its intended state.

Moreover, an exegesis of Gen. 3:5-9 reveals the consequences of corruption and deviation from God's design, as well as God's response to it. The verses emphasize the pervasive nature of sin and the necessity of redemption in restoring humanity to its imago Dei identity. These verses serve as a pivotal moment in the narrative, highlighting the ongoing struggle between good and evil and emphasizing God's commitment to reclaiming his creation and reconciling humanity to himself.

Genesis 6:5

יְהוָה. In verse 5, *et al*. the identification of the Lord (*Jehovah*) with God (*Elohim*) is evident, emphasizing the divine entity responsible for the creation of humanity. Throughout the subsequent flood narrative, there is a noteworthy interchange of divine names. This seems deliberate, drawing attention to the idea that the same God oversees both the acts of creation, the events of the flood, and re-creation.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind. The term used for "saw" in the Hebrew is רָאָה and can be directly paralleled with the usage in Gen. 1:31, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." The verb "רָאָה" implies not just visual perception but a deep understanding and discernment of the state of humanity. In both instances, the verb conveys carries the sense of God comprehending or evaluating the nature and quality of creation. The parallel emphasizes God's evaluative role, highlighting the awareness of the conditions of His creation—be it the goodness of the original creation in Gen. 1:31 or the abject corruption of creation and "wickedness" of humanity in Gen. 6:5.

רַע. The word used for both "wickedness" and "evil" in verse 5 is the same in Hebrew. The double usage draws emphasis, and interestingly, the same word is used in Gen. 1-2 when discussing the tree of knowledge of good and רַע. The "connection between wicked conduct, the immediate reason for the verdict, and the innate tendency to evil from which the conduct springs" is revealed through studies of the apocrypha and ANE context.[259] After a discussion of the "Watchers" and human women in 1 Enoch 6-11 (paralleling Gen. 6:1-4), the text describes an archangel view of the depravity of humankind (paralleling Gen. 6:5):[260]

> Then Michael and Sariel and Raphael and Gabriel looked down from the sanctuary of heaven upon the earth and saw much *blood being poured out upon the earth* ... [T]hey said to one another, "The earth, devoid [of

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[259] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 136.

[260] On the validity of using 1 Enoch: "1 Enoch 6–11 begins from Genesis 6.5 The story of the Watchers and the women opens, as scholars note, with a near-quotation of Gen 6:1–2: "*And it happened when* the sons of *men* had *multiplied*, in those days, *beautiful* and comely *daughters were born to them*. And the angels (or 'watchers'), the *sons of heaven, saw* them and desired them. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us *choose for ourselves wives*.'" The verbal dependence on Genesis is high, as the italicized words indicate." Catherine Sider Hamilton, "1 Enoch and the Cosmic Sweep of Innocent Blood: From Cain and Blood to Flood and Judgment," in *The Death of Jesus in Matthew: Innocent Blood and the End of Exile*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47–70, 49-50.

inhabitants], raises the voice of their cries to the gates of heaven. (1 En. 9:1-2)[261]

The theme of bloodshed and violence is also repeated in the OT through prophetic preaching. Blenkinsopp notes an "Emphasis on moral corruption and violence leading to a final judgement on society reflects prophetic preaching, especially that of prophets active on the eve of the final destruction of the Judaean state.[262] The shedding of blood, in the biblical worldview, "involved an actual pollution of the land."[263] Hamilton writes:

> *Hāmās*, a term that encompasses almost the entire spectrum of evil," "has
> a very close connection to *damim*, 'bloodshed'." "It is the filling of the
> earth with *hāmās* and its resultant pollution that prompts God to bring a
> flood to physically erase everything from the earth and start anew. The
> flood in Genesis, that is, is the necessary response to an earth corrupted
> by bloodshed. [264]

The thrust of Gen. 6:5 is the complete moral corruption of that generation; only utter moral depravity could justify the comprehensive nature of the destruction. The assumption is made that the entire lineage from Adam and Seth had perished before the deluge, possibly including Methuselah, who, according to biblical chronology, died in the year the deluge commenced. This scenario would leave only the descendants of Cain, whose moral degeneracy

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[261] Translation by George W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on The Book of 1 Enoch*, ed. Klaus Baltzer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 202. The translations of 1 Enoch in this dissertation are taken from Nickelsburg, unless otherwise stated. Based on the Greek text, "bloodshed" has been replaced with "blood being poured out."

[262] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 136. Cf. Jer. 5:1; Ez. 7:11, 23; 8:17; Am. 8:2.

[263] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 40, no. 4 (1977): 147–155, 154.

[264] Catherine Sider Hamilton, "1 Enoch and the Cosmic Sweep of Innocent Blood: From Cain and Blood to Flood and Judgment," in *The Death of Jesus in Matthew: Innocent Blood and the End of Exile*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47–70, 55-56. Also see: Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9," 153.

was previously established, and the giants, offspring of the fallen angels, resembling the prehistoric *Anakim* (giants) eradicated by the Israelites or the ancient Pelasgians who incurred the wrath of Zeus.[265] The apocrypha widely acknowledges that the giants had perished in the flood, as mentioned in Sirach 16:7, 1 Maccabees 2:4, and Wisdom 14:6. The Enoch cycle provides a detailed, and perhaps at times exaggerated, account of their transgressions, which encompassed cannibalism, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, and the consumption of blood.[266] Occam's razor suggests that 1 Enoch interprets Genesis, making the problem of bloodshed explicit and, indeed, expanding upon the narrative.[267] Likewise, the giants' teachings to humanity included weaponry, the art of warfare, cosmetics, adornment, and astrology, as documented in 1 Enoch 7:1-6, 8:1-4, and 86:1-6, along with Jubilees 5:1. The cautionary introduction to the Damascus Covenant document presents a more restrained assessment of the guilt of the descendants of the Watchers, describing them as having vanished from existence because the antagonists acted according to selfish whims and disregarded the Creators commandments (CD 2:20-21). "For Josephus, who compared the progeny of the fallen angels to the Greek Giants, the transgressors compounded their guilt by their rejection of Noah's preaching of repentance, a point on which the biblical text is silent (Jewish Antiquities I 72–75)."

Genesis 6:7

For believers the nature of God's character and the totality of the deluge destruction are difficult to reconcile. However, believers must also contend that *imago Dei,* reflective worship

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[265] Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation,* 136.

[266] There is an element of idotrolic worship with bloodshed and sexual depravity being a part of ritualistic ANE worship, consistent with the identity-inversion-redemption trope; this is discussed further in this dissertation in the chapter on ANE comparative literature.

[267] See footnote 299 on the validity of using 1 Enoch as a comparative text.

and morality, was possible in the person and family of Noah.[268] When the flood narrative is viewed as an element of re-creation and grace for humanity, the issue of God's character as wholly sovereign and merciful is resolved. "The narrative itself appears to acknowledge the problem by speaking of the irruption of evil into human history from sources beyond humanity."[269] The harshest judgment is reserved for the fallen angels, just as in Gen. 1-2, the harshest judgment is reserved for the serpent.

In the apocryphal book of Jasher, Gen. 6:7 is seemingly repeated in 4:19. The verse is translated, "And the Lord said, I will blot out man that I created from the face of the earth, yea from man to the birds of the air, together with cattle and beasts that are in the field for I repent that I made them." An interesting correlation to the corruption of creation itself, though, is mentioned in the previous verse. Jasher 4:18 reads:

> And their judges and rulers went to the daughters of men and took their wives by force from their husbands according to their choice, *and the sons of men in those days took from the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the othe*r, in order therewith to provoke the Lord; and God saw the whole earth and it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon earth, all men and all animals.

An apparent derivative of Gen. 6:1-4, the text of Jasher adds new information. Taken in context with the teachings of the giants in 1 Enoch 7:1-6, 8:1-4, and 86:1-6, along with Jubilees 5:1, the new information in Jasher speaks to the corruption of creation for Adamic humanity was taught to inter-breed species. Though Jasher is a later work and the additional information is speculative, there exists an affirmation in the teachings to the Israelites later in the Torah that prohibits the "mixture of animals of one species with the other" in Lev. 19:19 and Deut. 22:9-11;

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[268] Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 136-137.

[269] Ibid, 137.

likewise, the Halakha (הֲלָכָה) classifies the same prohibitions. Whether Jash. 4:18 is taken as literal or otherwise, the corruption of creation by malevolent entities is evident. Jash. 4:18 could help illuminate why "people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air" were required to be eliminated before Jehovah re-created the earth.

Genesis 6:8-9

Genesis 6:8-9 asserts five distinct statements about Noah: 1) Noah found favor, 2) "These are the descendants," 3) Noah as a righteous man, 4) Noah as "blameless in his generation," and 5) "Noah walked with God." Each unique assertation carries meaning and purpose. First, the narrator uses חֵן to describe the favor the Lord found in Noah. Second, Noah's righteousness is mentioned in conjunction with God's grace, without specifying whether Noah's "justness" is the reason for or the result of God's favorable disposition toward the protagonist. Since the fall in Gen. 3, no human lives a "perfect" life, but the phrase in verse 8 implies a sincere desire to affect God's will. Thus, grace is portrayed as God's benevolent attitude toward humans who do not merit such goodness.

The third phrase is, "These are the descendants." תּוֹלְדֹת is the word used for generations in the first part of the verse inferring "descent, figurative family, and birth according to generation."[270] The purpose of 6: 9-12 is not to show why God sent the flood, but why Jehovah saved Noah; the ark, not the flood is the focus of the author's attention. The third idea communicates that Noah is both a human man and "righteous."[271] Noah's righteousness is contrasted with the "violence" of the rest of humanity, the "sons of God," and the hybrid beings

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[270] As in Gen. 5:1, Gen. 10:1, Gen. 11:10, 27, Gen. 25:12, 19, Gen. 36:1, 9, Gen. 37:2, Num. 3:1, Ruth 4:18, and 1 Chr. 1:29.

[271] The adjective צַדִּיק is an absolute occurrent, the plural of which is found of the Davidic king in 2 Samuel 23:3 and often used for God as being a just judge (cf. Deu. 32:4; Job 34:17; Jer. 12:1; Ps. 11:7, 119:137, *et al.*)

on the earth at the time; "the contrast harkens back to the seed of the woman versus the seed of the serpent."[272] Noah is the first man to be described as צַדִּיק in the Bible.[273] Subsequently in 15:6, readers find that righteousness is not a merit earned by sinful humans but is imputed through faith. The fundamental concept aligns with Paul's gospel understanding of faith in Rom. 4:1 – 5:1 and Gal. 3:6– 9) and is illustrated in how Noah attained righteousness (Heb. 11:6– 7). Importantly, the manifestation of faith that receives God's righteousness is observable in a person's way of life (Jas. 2:21– 24).

The fourth assertion, is "Noah is blameless in his generation." Consider the previous affirmation that Noah is righteous; the combining of צַדִּיק (*saddîyq*) and תָּמִים (*tāmîm*) invoke the importance of the description; again, this is the first time these words are used together in the Bible. While Daniel and Job (Ez. 14:14, 20) and Abraham (Gen. 15:6) are all later described as צַדִּיק, it is Satan who is described as תָּמִים before the fall of the angels (Ez. 23:15). "Blameless" literally means wholeness and completeness, without blemish. Certainly, Noah as a human post-fall was not perfect, though the heavenly being of Lucifer could have been, so, to what is the text referring? בְּדֹרֹתָיו is the prepositional phrase suggesting the "how" behind Noah's "blamelessness. The occurrence בְּדֹרֹתָיו is interpreted as "his generation" in the NRSV like many other English translations.[274] The interpretation implies a comparison to Noah's Adamic contemporaries, but the comparison seems to have already been made in the verse; could the text be leading readers to another type of truth? Out of the 168 uses in Hebrew, 133 times the word is translated "generations." Considering the interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 provided in this dissertation and

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[272] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 133.

[273]

[274] Notably: ASV, CEB, ESV, KJV, NIV, and RSV.

understanding the purpose behind the deluge, it is possible that Noah's מִים is describing a

"wholeness and completeness" of the Adamic human condition or "no defect" Noah's

genealogy.[275] While this interpretation is not definitive, it is certainly worth considering in

context and as compared to ANE texts discussed later herein.

Finally, "Noah walked with God." The author of Genesis is intentionally aligning Noah

with the godly line of Seth and most specifically with Enoch (5:22, 24). The word הִתְהַלֶּךְ־ in its

verb stem, communicates a communion and closeness with *Elohim* and calls to mind covenantal

theology. *Hālaḵ* is used of the first couple's initial intimacy with the Creator (cf. Gen. 3:8).

Likewise, the Abrahamic narrative has similar language where God exhorts Abraham to godly

faithfulness (17:1; 24:20; cf. 48:15). In later Israel, the nuance of divine presence describes

God's covenantal intimacy with Israel where God "walks" in the camp (e.g., Lev. 26:12; Deut.

23:14,15), and for the psalmist to "walk before God" means life and prosperity (Ps. 56:13,14;

116:9). Enoch was saved from death, and Noah was delivered from the flood. Whereas Adam is

precluded from the garden and Cain is driven from the presence of God, Enoch escapes the

sentence of his predecessors. "The finality of death caused by sin, and so powerfully

demonstrated in the genealogy of Genesis, is in fact not so final. Man was not born to die; he was

born to live, and that life comes by 'walking with God.' …Walking with God is key to the chains

of the curse."[276] Enoch's salvation from death and Noah's deliverance from the flood illustrate

God's broader salvific plan, to restore humanity to the original *imago Dei* through intimacy with

the Creator. The importance of this association cannot be overstated; for the most important

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[275] Compared to modified genetics as occurred through the procreation between "sons of God" and "daughters of men" and to the teachings of the giants in the land, as previously discussed. Prior support provided through citations of Jude, 2 Peter 2, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and Josephus.

[276] Timothy J. Cole, "Enoch, a Man Who Walked with God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:597 (1991): 288–297, 294.

words to consider when examining the flood narrative are grace and covenant. 'In telling Noah how to escape the flood God says, 'I will establish my בְּרִיתִי with you, and you will enter the ark' (Gen 6:18). This is the first reference to covenant, a word that will become a key biblical word used to express the relationship between God and his people.'[277] While Noah's deliverance does not guarantee eternal life, the transition from OT concepts of salvation linked to historical events find fulfillment in the Messiah in the NT, and ultimately eschatological redemption of the *imago Dei* eternally. Thus, readers are justified in labeling the initial covenant statement to Noah as a covenant of salvation, despite the complete significance of salvation being undisclosed at that point.

Noah and family, through obedience, demonstrate an immutable trust in God's word. The Creator assures that, despite human inclinations to evil or the nefarious actions of fallen angels, the flood will never occur again (Gen 8:28-17, 21). Noah is then instructed to fill the earth and exercise dominion, echoing God's command to Adam (Gen 9:1–3). In both covenant statements, God takes the initiative to establish a relationship for the benefit of creation; the reference in both cases is possessive, "my covenant".[278] The covenant is an extension of the relationship inherent in the creation of all things by God. *Elohim*, despite the enemy's devices or human rebellion, remains committed to restoring the perfect image unto humanity. "God's commitment to creation is shown in the covenant with Noah. The restoration of the human race is foreshadowed in the rescue of Noah and his family. This leads to the promise that the earth will also be preserved."[279]

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[277] Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 114.

[278] Despite differing details, the expressions are seen as variations of the same covenant.

[279] Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 115.

Genesis 6:1-9 – Tropic Summary

Table 5 provides a summary of the identity-inversion-reclamation trope thus far in

Genesis 6:1-10 and an overview of the themes that proceed.

Table 5: Genesis 6:1-10 Identity-Inversion-Reclamation Trope

Identity (established)	1-2	*Imago Dei*		
Inversion	3	First attempt *Corruption of created-natural divine identity through deception*	Malfeasant created-divine intervention and human acquiescence 143esulting in identity-inversion	
Crisis	6:1-4	Second attempt Nephilim intervention in created-natural human generational succession *Biological and/or consciousness/behavioral modification*		
Recognition	6:5-6	"The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. **6** And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."		Divine recognition of human identity-inversion and creation corruption
Judgment	6:7	"So the LORD said, 'I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"		
	6:7-8:19	Flood → Estrangement from deity / Death of all corrupted identity except Noah's progeny		
Reclamation	4-6:1	Generational Identity Succession → Noah's progeny + When people began to multiply on the face of the ground		Reclamation of identity through divine intervention and generational succession
	6:8	"But Noah found favour in the sight of the LORD."		
	6:9-10	These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.		
	7	Protection of the created natural (Noah's family, natural animal pairs and plants for generational succession)		
	8:20-11	Noahic Covenant →Created-Natural Generational Succession		
	7	Protection of the created natural (Noah's family, natural animal pairs and plants for generational succession)		

The Noahic flood narrative of Gen. 6:11-9 demonstrates the creation-rescue-recreation

trope aligning with identity. Due to the length of the periscope, this dissertation takes a thematic

approach to the text and drawing out text criticism when necessary.

Genesis 6:11-9:24 – Thematic Expositional Inquiry

To begin the thematic expositional inquiry, the logical first step is to define an outline of the remaining periscope of the flood narrative analyzed in this dissertation. Like Gen. 6:1-4, the prologue to the deluge, the remaining flood epic, from v.9, can be viewed by considering an intentional chiastic literary structure:[280]

					Gen.
A				Transitional Introduction	6:9a
	B			Noah and the world at the time of the flood	6:9b-12
		C		Provision for the flood with a divine monologue establishing God's covenant to redeem Noah, preceded by reflections on the state of human behavior	6:13-22[281]
			D	Ark Embarkation	7:1-5
			E	Beginning of the cleansing flood: Noah and the animals as main characters	7:6-16
			F	The triumphant flood (rising water)	7:17-24
			X	God remembers Noah (waters abate)	8:1a
			F	The waning flood (falling water)	8:1b-5
			E	The ending of the flood: Noah and birds as main characters	8:6-14
			D	Ark Disembarkation	8:15-19
		C		Provision for the post-flood world with divine monologue for new creation preservation, with reflections on human behavior affecting creation	8:20-22
	B			Noah and the world after the flood	9:1-17
A				Transitional introduction	9:18-19

"The chiastic arrangement helps form the bridge between the antediluvian and postdiluvian worlds."[282] Given the intentional structure of the periscope, the trope of creation-

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[280] The chiastic structure and details regarding academic support are provided in: Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 125. Waltke's pattern is based from both Anderson's and Longacre's findings: Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Beginning of History: Genesis* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963). Robert E. Longacre, "The Discourse of the Flood Narrative," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLVII, no. 1 (1979): 133–133.

[281] Gen. 6:13 uses שָׁחַת that is sometimes interpreted in English translations of the Bible as "destroy." However, in the previous verse the same word is translated as corrupt. Understanding the original language lends credibility to a sort of poetic justice creation was corrupted echoing the undoing of creation through שָׁחַת.

[282] Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 125.

rescue-re-creation becomes quite evident. The flood serves as a form of re-creation. Just as in the initial stages when the earth was enveloped in water (Gen. 1:2), a similar submersion occurs. From the first creation emerged life, experiencing God's blessings, and fulfilling the divine command to multiply and populate the earth (Gen. 1:22, 28). In response to the judgment on corrupted life, there arises a restoration of the earth. This renewal affirms the natural cycles of years and days (Gen. 8:22), reinstates the blessing of fertility (Gen. 9:1), and establishes God's covenant, assuring that never again will all life be destroyed by a flood (Gen. 9:9–11). Likewise, God establishes parameters for human behavior to guard against idolatry, violence, and abject bloodshed post-flood.

The chiastic structure also emphasizes the thematic elements of rising and falling water. Just before God "remembers" Noah, the floodwaters reach a zenith, while the waning flood in 8:1b-5 triggers a decisive turn of events. Linguistic analysis provides a solid foundation for understanding the rhetorical purposes of duplications within the narrative, while 9:1-17 illuminates the renewal of the divine blessing on the re-created world. As such, the subsections that follow compare the creation text to the flood text and demonstrate the trope of creation-rescue-re-creation as a foundation that is repeated throughout the Bible and in eschatological texts.

Parallels between Original Creation and Re-Creation

Adam and Noah Comparisons

The flood erases initial creation overseen by Adam and purifies the earth for its renewal under Noah's leadership. Striking parallels exist between the pre-flood and post-flood worlds, positioning Adam as the father of humanity and Noah as its post-flood patriarch. To demonstrate these parallels, see Table 6 on the following page.

Table 6: Original Creation and Re-Creation Parallels (Adam and Noah)

Gen.	Adam	Noah	Gen.
	Prediluvian world created from watery chaos	Postdiluvian world created from watery chaos	
1:27	Uniquely associated with *imago Dei* on the basis of identity	Uniquely associated with *imago Dei* on the basis of humanity's protection	5:1
3:8	Walks with God	Walks with God	6:9
2:19	Rules animals through naming	Rules animals through preservation	7:15
1:28-30	Receives divine command to be fruitful, multiply, and care for creation	Receives divine command to be fruitful, multiply, and care for creation	9:1-7
3:17-19	Works "the ground"	Works "the ground"	9:20
3:6	Pattern of sinning (eating)	Pattern of sinning (drinking)	9:21
3:7	Immediate consequence of sin is nakedness	Immediate consequence of sin is nakedness	9:21
3:5	Connected with "knowing"	Connected with "knowing"	9:24
3:21	Being clothed by another (God)	Being clothed by another (Noah's sons)	9:23
4:1-2, 25	Three named sons	Three named sons	6:10
	Long-term result of sin, judgment falls on all of humanity	Long-term result of sin, a curse on Canaan	

Moreover, both Adam and Noah's sons are divided in Genesis between judgment/hope and elect/non-elect. The struggle between the descendants of the Serpent's seed (Cainites under a curse) and the offspring of the woman (Sethites worshiping *Yahweh*) is continued in the postdiluvian creation between the accursed lineage of Canaan and the descendants of Shem, whose deity is Jehovah. In both segments of prehistory (Gen. 1-3 and 4-6), human disobedience has repercussions in the divine realm, eliciting a response from God using the first-person plural ("like one of us," "let us," 3:22; 11:7). Alienation is also a part of the judicial sentences for both Adam and Noah (expulsion from the Garden of Eden and departure from Shinar; 3:24; 11:9; cf. 4:12). With these thematic parallels between Adam and Noah in mind, there are also Hebrew words and linguistic phrases that further relate original creation and post-flood re-creation demonstrating the foundation for the repetitive trope, while highlighting the importance of water imagery in both narratives.[283]

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[283] Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012). Also see: Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996).

Creation and Re-Creation Textual Comparisons

The flood narrative employs language of destruction, such as the bursting forth of the "great deep" and the "floodgates of the heavens" (7:11), indicating a reversal of the creative acts from days one through three (1:1–13). The occurrence can be seen as the undoing of Adam's former world leading to identity redemption. Likewise, the continual classification of animals according to the categories of creation (e.g., animal, bird, crawlers) and divine provision harks back to the creatures formed on days five and six (1:20–30). The reemergence of the land and the instructions to Noah upon disembarkation parallel the directives given to Adam; the divine exhortation given to both Adam and Noah is to "multiply," and "the special *provisos* for the *imago Dei* rehearse the world of Adam (9:1-7)"[284]

There are seven distinct verses that can be compared to reveal the creation-rescue-recreation trope foundation for the rest of the biblical record.[285] The verses and phrasing correlate to the first six days of creation, then the re-creation of the family highlighting humanity's identity, and, finally, the restoration of creation; the concept is demonstrated in the table that follows:

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[284] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:9-9:29.

[285] Inner-biblical comparisons in this dissertation will also correlate both tropes of identity-inversion-reclamation and creation-rescue-recreation the foundation for which is formed in the Genesis narrative as demonstrated.

Table 7: Creation/Re-Creation Textual Comparison

Day One		
Gen.		
1:2	earth, deep, Spirit, waters	Just as *Elohim*'s רוּחַ "covered the face" of the
8:1b-2a	wind, earth, waters, deep	deep, God sends a "wind" (רוּחַ) over the waters of the deluge for renewal of earth.
Day Two		
Gen.		
1:7-8	waters, sky	The division of the waters (מַעְיָן)in creation is
8:2b	sky	paralleled to the regathering of the waters post-flood to re-establish order and boundaries between sky and earth.[286]
Day Three		
Gen.		
1:9	water, dry ground, appear	Just how God distinguished the dry, cultivable
8:3-5	water, tops of mountains, appear	land from the water to support plant life at creation, once more, the dry ground becomes visible in gradual phases.
Day Four		
Gen.		
	luminaries unaffected in flood – no need for re-creation[287]	
Day Five		
Gen.		
1:20	birds, above the earth, across the expanse	Both accounts take note of the birds, in
8:7-8	raven, from the earth, from the surface of the ground	creation *'al* the ground, in re-creation, in recreation *mē'al* the ground.
Day Six		
Gen.		
1:24	creatures, livestock, creatures that move along the ground, wild animals	The voice of God initiates the living creatures' disembarkation of the ark into new creation,
8:17	creature, birds, animals, creatures that move along the ground	just as the voice of God commences existence in creation.
Image Restoration		
Gen.		
1:26-28	man, image of God	Noah and his wife function (8:16, 18) as
9:6	Image of God, man	reprise of the creation of "male and female" in God's image
Redemption and Divine Exhortation		
Gen.		
1:28	Blessed, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, rule…every living creature	God redeems humanity, blesses the progenitors, and restores creation.
9:1-2	Blessed, be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth, fear…of you… upon every creature	

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[286] Additionally, where Gen. 1:2 cites the "deep" as תְּהֹום, Gen. 8:b repeats the same, plausibly inferring a polemic against polytheism and demonstrating *Elohim*'s divine sovereignty over all.

[287] Meredith Kline suggests the possibility that the ark is a microcosm of the cosmos, at least symbolically. The author contends that the removal of the ark's canopy corresponds to the creation of the luminaries. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 139.

The Ark as a Means of Rescue

In Gen. 6:14, "the Lord specifies the construction of the ark, just as he specified the construction of his tabernacle."[288] According to Waltke and Fredericks, "He does not entrust the means of salvation to human imagination."[289] Likewise, the term תֵּבַת is key, because the word is used seven times in divine instructions to build the ark and again seven times in the report of the abating/falling waters. *Tēḇâ* is only used once more again in the Hebrew Scripture to refer to the rescue of baby Moses in Ex. 2:3-5.[290] There are striking resemblances between Noah's rescue and that of Moses, as narrated in Ex. 1–2. The descriptions of constructing the ark/basket are notably similar. Additionally, both accounts depict the removal of people through water (cf. Ex.1:22). Noah and Moses are saved from the waters by God's grace, marking the commencement of a new era in the Lord's work among his people. This connection is also implied by the Red Sea's floodwaters, which engulf the Egyptians, leading to the preservation of Moses's people (Ex.14–15). According to Mathews, "Moses, then, is another Noah whose career inaugurates a new epoch."[291]

In contrast to Utnapishtim's vessel depicted in the Epic of *Gilgamesh*, the Noahic ark is constructed with dimensions that render the design seaworthy. Utnapishtim, the Babylonian equivalent of "Noah," is directed by the deity *Ea* to build a vessel with a quadrangular shape to escape the flood orchestrated by the angered god *Enlil.* The vessel, thought to be an idealized

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[288] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 135.

[289] Ibid.

[290] "If Moses was indeed the author of Genesis and Exodus, these striking similarities between the story of his own deliverance and that of Noah must have impressed him deeply." Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 89.

[291] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:14.

cube similar to a ziggurat, is 120 cubits in dimension—symbolic of religious significance. Unlike its cubical and centrally constructed counterpart, which is believed to hold the residence of the gods and is discussed in religious contexts (Gn11:1–9), the proposed geometrical shape of the ship in *Gilgamesh* would likely lead to inevitable sinking. As a means of rescue, only *Yahweh*'s design demonstrates a salvific redemption for the ark occupiers.

The Mesopotamian story also engages a boatsman for navigation; "Noah's ark was not designed to be navigated—no rudder or sail is mentioned. Thus the fate of the company aboard was left in the hands of God.[292] "While the Mesopotamian vessel has points of contact with Noah's, the latter's only religious significance lies in how Noah foreshadows Moses and his faithful carrying out of the Lord's tabernacle plans (Ex. 26:30; 40:16)."[293] The interpretation, then, holds that the ark was both a means of rescue and a sanctuary, much like the Garden of Eden was Adam's sanctuary and the building of Moses's tabernacle was a sanctuary directed by divine will. Expressions of the building material in the construction of the ark also point to the same conclusion.

גֹפֶר is an obscure term only used in Gen. 6:14 in the Bible. גֹפֶר is describing the type of wood from which the ark is constructed. Mathews contends that the *gōper* wood "probably means pine or cypress wood."[294] What is interesting is the "pitch" parallel between the construction of the ark and the infant Moses's salvific basket. In both accounts זֶפֶת is used to make the vessels watertight. Moreover, the ark contains a number of קִנִּים. Though the term is

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[292] Matthews, *et al*, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, Gen. 6:15–16.

[293] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:14. Waltke and Fredericks believe that the wood is cypress for two reasons: 1) the Hebrew consonants are similar and 2) "because the ancients used it in their shipbuilding due to its resistance to rot." Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 135.

[294] Ibid.

most regularly interpreted as rooms or compartments, some scholars have taken the Hebrew

pronunciation, *qinnîm*, to imply the use of *qānîm* or reeds as an additional building material.[295]

Both Moses's basket of safety and Utnapishtim's hut is made of reeds.[296] "If 'reed' is correct, it

may be an allusion to the tabernacle menorah since *qānîm* is used of the shaft and branches (Ex.

25:31-32; 37:17-18)."[297] The possibility that the tabernacle menorah is alluded to points to the

idea that the ark is a means of rescue, a sanctuary for the worship of *Yahweh*,[298] and part of

God's redemptive plan for humanity. The purpose of the Creator's divine instruction is

juxtaposed with Noah's attentive obedience (Gen. 6:22; cf. 7:5, 9, 16). The same type of detail is

given for the construction of the Mosaic tabernacle and prescriptions for worship. Noah's

compliance is matched by the Pentateuch's praise for Moses and Israel's obedience to the Lord's

directions (e.g. Ex. 39:42– 43; Lev. 8:36; Num. 27:22; Deut. 34:9)."[299] The worship of *Elohim*

and communion with the Creator demonstrate the type of dedication God expected of the first

couple, and, the morally wholesome worship practices can be held in sharp contrast to human

sacrifice and sexual perversion that colored much of the ANE polytheistic cultic worship rituals.

Gen. 7:16 uses the phrase וַיִּסְגֹּר יְהוָה בַּעֲדוֹ, rendered "the Lord shut him in," demonstrates

Yahweh's divine providence.[300] The act of the Lord closing the door marks the initiation of His

protective care for the vessel, concluding the tense moment in the narrative as the occupants

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[295] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:14.

[296] There is also a reference to a boat made of reeds in Job 9:26.

[297] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:14.

[298] That Noah "walked with God" indicates a communion with the Creator.

[299] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 6:14.

[300] The Creator's divine providence can also be compared with the lack of care for humanity as exhibited by ANE polytheistic gods and goddesses.

swiftly seek refuge within the secure walls. The shutting of the ark's door serves as a divine safeguard against the tumultuous seas. Noah and family fulfill their part of the command, aligning with God's instructions. Now, the covenant *Yahweh* fulfills his role by sealing the door, a pivotal action with the potential for either doom or salvation. God, in His faithfulness, will 'remember' (8:1a) Noah's righteousness, mirroring the wisdom expressed later in Prov. 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe."

Water – Rising, Abating, Falling

As revealed by the literary chiasm of Gen. 6:11-9:24, the climax of the narrative is juxtaposed by rising water, abating water, and falling water symbolizing the unfolding narrative of divine redemption. "The narrator underscores his theme of the flood as re-creation by selecting remarkable parallels between Adam and Noah and between God's creative and re-creative acts;"[301] in each case water imagery takes a primary role as is the case in later OT texts. The following section provides thematic explanation and text critical analysis to demonstrate the role of water imagery in the flood narrative corresponding to the trope creation-rescue-recreation and point to God's redemptive plan to restore humanity's *imago Dei*.

Water

The Hebrew word preferred for the flood or deluge in Genesis is מַבּוּל. *Mabûl* is used thirteen times in the OT, all of which specifically refer to the Genesis flood except for in Ps. 29:10.[302] Interpreters have suggested that the Psalter's usage infers a "more primitive and basic meaning. This is one of those psalms which praises *Yahweh* as the lord of creation and victor

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[301] Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 127.

[302] Each use is listed, including duplications in the same verse: Gen. 6:17; 7:6; 7:6; 7:7; 7:10; 9:11; 9:11; 9:11; 9:15; 9:15; 9:28; 10:1; 10:32; 11:10; 17:7; and Is. 54:9 (referring to the Noahic flood).

over the forces of chaos and disorder:"[303] consistent with an interpretation of polemicy of *Elohim* sovereign over creation while ANE gods/goddesses, like *Tehom/Tiamat* are bound by chaos and created elements. In initial creation, God separated the upper and lower waters to establish a space for dry land, setting the stage for human history (Gen. 1:6-10). In contrast, as the deluge commences, this creative act is reversed. Water surges from both above and below, with the sky's windows opened and the great abyss's springs bursting forth, eliminating distinctions and erasing everything in between. The deluge undoes the prior creation, reverting to chaos and wiping away the fragile space for organized human life—an act of un-creation. This interpretation is reinforced by how the deluge concludes: the abyss's springs and the sky's windows are closed, and God causes a wind to blow over the earth—the same wind that initially swept over the water's surface (Gen. 1:2). Furthermore, readers observe the new creation Noah encounters after being able to survey from the ark emerged from the watery chaos (Gen. 8:13).

Rising Water

The narrative in Genesis unfolds with the imagery of creation's second day, where the waters, previously separated for sustaining life, are now depicted as rejoining for the purpose of destruction. This mirrors the original act of dividing the waters to unveil the dry ground conducive to vegetation (Gen. 1:6-10; 11-13). The Lord initiates the un-creation of the world by unleashing created-natural forces capable of overwhelming the earth. The scope of creation disruption seems all-encompassing; waters from the "great deep" (*tᵊhôm*) surge forth in a merism, indicating a complete transformation of terrestrial structures. [304] Creation inundation

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[303] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 140.

[304] *Tehom* is another word for the Babylonian goddess *Tiamat* who intermingles with the culture's creation myth in syncretic manner.

involves the convergence of waters from below and above in accordance with the cosmologies of the intended original audience.

Genesis 7:10-11. The comprehensive reversal of creation's order is a theme echoed in prophetic literature, particularly in depictions of the day of the Lord's judgment (e.g., Is. 24:18b; Jer. 4:23–26; Am.7:4). The use of *tᵊhôm* comes with an added description of רַבָּה.in 7:10, matching the level of creation's corruption and the wickedness pervading the earth at the time. Though the same language is used in Ps. 36:5-7, where the "great deep" describes the Creator's salvific power and desire to redeem humanity. Likewise, the language of subterranean waters נִבְקְעוּ and the "floodgates of the sky" (7:11) were opened, also triggers the ancient cosmological consciousness to the depth and breadth of the nature of the cataclysmic event of the flood.

In the same way and in the same verse, "Windows of heaven" is used as a poetic expression to depict the openings from which the rain descended. Rather than conveying scientific precision, this language reflects the subjective perspective of the observer, similar to the modern colloquial expression of the sun "setting." A parallel in ANE literature is found in the Canaanite myth of Baal constructing his house, where the "window" of the house is portrayed as a rift in the clouds, although not explicitly associated with rain. In Mesopotamian texts, an alternative terminology refers to gates of heaven in the east and west, facilitating the sun's movement during its rising and setting. These gates also serve as entry points for clouds and winds.[305] Matthews summarizes well the later prophetic and eschatological implications:

> Isaiah alludes to our verse (and 8:2) as he likens the universal and
> cataclysmic events of the flood to the great day of the Lord's
> eschatological appearance when the nations of the earth are overturned at
> the coming of God's kingdom (Isa 24:18– 20). Noah's waters are not just

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[305] Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 7:11.

a memorable rain but an unparalleled event in human memory that is brought about by the unique work of God.[306]

The concise account of the deluge in 7:17-24 vividly portrays, in a dramatic ebb and flow, the unstoppable rise of floodwaters and eventual recession.

Gen. 7:17-20, 23. Structural overlay and numerous repetitions offer a literary effect eliciting the grandiosity of the ever-rising water. *Hammayim* is repeated in the small periscope five times, and *rabah* is used twice. Both, *rum* and *me'od* are used three times. The litany of the occurrences call attention to the accelerating, deepening waters and contribute to the intensity of the idea with a sense of grandeur. Correspondingly, the *gavar* as expressed with "rose" and "flooded," means to prevail, have strength, to be powerful, and most convincingly to "triumph [in battle]."[307] The chaotic waters, which originally covered the earth, are implicitly likened to adversarial combatants, in this case the "sons of god" and progeny, attacking and attempting to un-do creation. "The rhythmic repetition of [גָּבַר] which with the crescendo of the waters and the repetition of 'every living thing' mimics the rising of the waters and the pitching of the ark."[308]

Hammayim in context of *shamayim* and *eretz* in v. 19, again calls to mind the ancient cosmological consciousness and is reminiscent of original creation. Once restrained (1:6-9), the waters are now divinely released. "The waters ascend, covering the mountains תַּחַת כָּל־הַשָּׁמָיִם; "whereas, at creation the same waters are gathered into seas 'under the heavens/sky' so as to uncover the 'dry ground' (Gen. 1:9)."[309] The divine means of rescue is highlighted as the only

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[306] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 7:11.

[307] See description by Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

[308] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

[309] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 7:19.

thing to appear in the deepening waters as the ark "rose high above the earth" (Gen. 7:17).[310] The

turning point of the narrative occurs at this juncture, precisely when the floodwater reaches its

peak, almost seven meters above the highest mountain.

In verse 23, the phrase *vayishar akh-noach* is used indicating the totality of divine

cleansing of creation and the preservation of the humanity through Noah as patriarch. At this

point in the epic, water has served symbolically as: *chaoskampf,* an ANE comparative polemic, a

method of judgment/cleansing through the un-doing of creation, and as a means of renewal,

preserving humanity's *imago Dei* through Noah and family. Noah, as the sole patriarch left,

embodies the theological concept of a *sha'ar* or "remnant." The idea of *sha'ar* depicts a future

hope for God's people, regathered in communion with the Creator.[311] The Jewish text makes an

association between the theological idea of a "remnant," the reclamation of identity, and Noah in

Sir. 44:17, "Noah, found just and perfect, renewed the race in the time of devastation. Because of

his worth there were survivors, and with a sign to him the deluge ended."

Earlier, this writing established a connection between the flood narrative and the

subsequent events involving Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. The connection is

underscored by the use of the term *charavah* in the Genesis passage (7:22), deviating from the

more common יַבָּשָׁה. חָרְבָה, as the less frequent term appears only eight times, and elsewhere in

the Pentateuch, the term aligns itself with Noah and the remarkable deeds of God. An additional

parallel with the Ex. is found in 8:1b, where the text mentions God sending a "wind" upon the

waters, akin to the divine intervention that transformed the sea into "dry land" through a "strong

east wind" during Israel's escape from adversaries. The narrative resonance further emphasizes

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[310] Also "floated on the face of the waters" in Gen. 7:18.

[311] See Jer. 23:3; Isa. 4:3; 10:20– 23; Rom. 9:27– 28

the connection between the survival of Noah and family and the deliverance of Israel through the awe-inspiring acts of God. In both cases, *Elohim* uses the created-natural, specifically water (and wind), as symbology and a tool of communication and redemption for his people.

Abating Water

The narrative tension eases with the recession of the waters. In English, the word "remembered" refers to a mental recall, inferring that something has been forgotten. However, in Hebrew, the term זָכַר, especially in the context of God expresses covenant fidelity.[312] The Creator is fulfilling an earlier promise to Noah (6:18). Waltke and Fredericks hold that, "This crucial expression shows that the subsiding waters of the flood are subject to God's undisputed will."[313] On the other hand, Sarna describes that in the Babylonian narratives "the gods were terror-struck at the forces they themselves had unleashed. They were appalled at the consequences of their own actions over which they no longer had control."[314] The Creator's sovereignty is demonstrated in the comparison. Solely through God's remembrance creation is restored, human identity is redeemed, and the possibility of new life emerges.

Falling Water

The narrative of the deluge's reversal is characterized by the blowing wind, receding waters, and the appearance of dry land.[315] The term רוּחַ resonates with the description of "waters" from the creation account (Gen. 1:2c). *Elohim*, as in Gen. 1, brings the occurrence about, with the

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[312] Cf. Gen. 9:14-15; 19:29; 30:22; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; 1 Sam. 1:19; Judg. 16:28; Job 14:13; Ps. 8:4; 9:12; 74:1-3; 98:3; 105:8; 106:45; 111:5; and Jer. 15:15.

[313] Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

[314] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 56-57.

[315] Language parallels are previously illustrated herein: Table 5: Creation/Re-Creation Textual Comparison

"Spirit" (רוּחַ) signifying the renewed work of the Creator. The mention of וַיִּזְכֹּר in the 8:1a reflects the covenant name *Yahweh*, indicating faithfulness to the promise. Additionally, by invoking *Elohim,* readers recognize the divine power of creation being unleashed once again to fulfill covenant commitment. Just as God supervised the conditions of the earth during original creation, the divine mind executes the destiny of creation restoration – a second beginning for earth and human identity.

In each case, God uses the created-natural to affect the plan for redemption. Moses later experienced the power of God's רוּחַ in the desert, witnessing its ability to induce the locust plague and chase away the Egyptian armies.[316] The same divine force was utilized to provide quail for Israel, described poetically as God delivering quail "on the wings of the wind" and making the birds "his messengers" (Ps. 104:3-4). Throughout biblical accounts, the Lord demonstrated sovereign and omnipotent control over the elements, using the water and wind as a powerful force to deliver and sustain his people.[317] The divine ability to "ride on the wings of the wind" was celebrated, highlighting God's mastery over nature in working for the benefit of his people. "Using the same imagery, v. 2 describes the reversal of 7:11– 12, which told of the earth's bursting 'springs of the great deep,' the opened 'floodgates of the heavens,' and the falling 'rain.' Now the deep is no longer 'great'; it and the floodgates are 'closed,' and the rain was 'stopped' (i.e. restrained)."[318]

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[316] Ex.10:13, 19; 14:21; 15:10.

[317] For wind, cf. Josh. 10:11; Pss. 18:7–19; 148:8.

[318] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 8:1b-2.

While it took merely forty days for the rains to inundate creation, a protracted five months passed before the waters receded.[319] Gen. 8:9-10 share the verb וַיַּרְא and the יַבָּשָׁה from creation is later echoed in the narrative through verbal forms in v. 7 יָבֵשׁ and v. 14, יָבְשָׁה. The emerging "earth" would once again cradle life, reminiscent of the state at original creation. With each phase of falling water, God's promise of deliverance and restoration became clearer to the inhabitants of the ark. Re-creation had occurred and humanity's identity was restored through the second patriarch. The remaining chapters in Genesis lay out Noah's genealogy to Jacob's proving restoration, and from the same lines, the Messiah is born in the NT, ultimately redeeming humanity's *imago Dei* on final eschatological return.[320]

Conclusion

Chapter Four has demonstrated that the tropes of identity-inversion-reclamation and creation-rescue-re-creation were put in place, by the Creator, as a template since the very beginning of primordial history. Genesis establishes the foundational pattern for God's unfolding plan of redemption. The book portrays God's unique and supreme authority by creating everything out of nothing and by endowing each individual with distinct identity through the act of creation. From a Genesis perspective, everything, including human identity and the quest for purpose, derives significance from the Creator. The supernatural plan initiated at the dawn of existence unfolds with each action and word, ultimately leading to the redemption of humanity and the restoration of the perfect *imago Dei*. This intricate plan is communicated through the

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[319] Gen. 8:3, 5, 10, 12.

[320] Waltke and Fredricks provide detailed explanations of the accounts of Noah's decedents by book: "Book 4: The Account of Shem, Ham, Japheth and Their Descendants (10:1-11:9); Book 5: The Account of Shem's Descendants (11:10-26); Book 6: The Account of Terah's Descendants (11:27-25:11); Book 7: The Account of Ishmael's Descendants (25:12-18); Book 9: The Account of Esau's Descendants (25:19-35:29); Book 10: The Account of Jacob's Descendants (37:2-50:26)." Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*. The Messiah is born through the line of Jacob (Mt. 1:2:2).

natural world, often symbolized by water imagery, serving as a universal language that transcends time, space, and geographical boundaries.

Chapter Four has demonstrated key themes of creation and God's redemptive plan expressed through water imagery: including the transformation from chaos-to-order, the life-sustaining and renewing properties of water, and the Creator's sovereignty and power over the created-natural. Through thematic, inner-biblical exposition, the chapter showcased the significance of water as a symbol and functional element within the trope creation-rescue-re-creation and as a communicative element in God's ultimate redemptive plan for humanity through identity-inversion-reclamation. Contrastingly, through the prooftexts of the Fall and the prologue of the Noahic flood, Chapter Four has demonstrated the enemy's attempts to corrupt creation and invert humanity's *imago Dei*.

Chapter Five delves into an intra-biblical comparative analysis that authenticates the existence of the tropes in the OT. The repetition of the tropes supports the unveiling of God's supernatural intent through the created-natural and establishes an OT basis that the restoration of *imago Dei* identity represents the conclusive fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

`Chapter Five: Intra-Biblical Comparative Analysis

Chapter Five offers an explanation of the existence of *imago Dei* post-creation and explores the theological dynamics thereof and also offers intra-biblical comparative analysis by considering the Exodus, the Psalter, and a thematic exploration on the book of Jonah. The exploration on Exodus helps to reaffirm the theological tropic unity pre-discussed. The discussion on the Psalter argues that water imagery takes a primary role in the way *Yahweh* communicates and prescribes worship. Finally, the examination of Jonah provides the necessary bridge between intra-biblical analysis and ANE contextual research.

Each case posits that supernatural intent is unveiled by God through natural processes, culminating in the restoration of the *imago Dei* identity as the ultimate fulfillment of His redemptive plan for humanity. By scrutinizing the use of water imagery, readers can grasp that God employs the created-natural realm to disclose the profound aspects of his character and redemptive plan. Through water imagery, there exists a unity between OT passages, a way forward through worship, and an ultimate eschatological realization of restoration of the *imago Dei* that is accessible to all of humanity.

Imago Dei Post-Creation

Many biblical scholars find it intriguing that the concept of the *imago Dei* holds significant theological weight despite the relatively sparse linguistic usage in the biblical canon. In *lieu*, Berkhouwer offers:

> It is indeed rather striking that the term is not used often at all, and that it is far less 'central' in the Bible than it has been in the history of Christian thought. This apparent discrepancy vanishes, however, when we note that Scripture's references to the image of God, whenever there are such, have a special urgency and importance. Furthermore, there is the possibility that Scripture often deals with the concept of the image of God without using those exact words, so that we surely should not *a priori* limit our

investigation of the concept to considering only places where the term itself is used.[321]

The point is significant, although the concept might require additional qualifications. Theological discourse has often overlooked the nuances of biblical language. Simultaneously, various terms in the biblical text convey similar concepts. While there could be an overemphasis in theology on the image of God as the definitive essence of humanity, the language of the image of God does offer valuable insights into the overarching narrative of humanity throughout the biblical canon. The absence of the image-of-God language post-Gen. 9 may, in fact, be a crucial part of the narrative, even if the concept does not serve as a primary philosophical construct from which a comprehensive theory of human nature emerges.

In theological terms, the concept of the image of God is dynamically expressed throughout the biblical canon, even as the terminology evolves. The shift in language across the canon holds theological significance in two main ways: firstly, the decline of the image language coincides with the prominence of idolatry language; secondly, the resurgence of the language of imaging is closely tied to the arrival of Jesus Christ, who serves as the restorer of the image of God and the one who triumphs over the influence of idols by resisting the temptations of the evil one.

The narrative structure of the canon suggests that the primary dimension of the image in relation to the original is that of worship, honor, completion, and satisfaction. Conversely, the subversion of this relationship is associated with perversion, corruption, consumption, and possession. The overlap between the concepts of image and idol highlights a central Christian tenet— humans are created with a natural yearning for something beyond themselves that grants

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[321] Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 67.

significance. The human yearning leads in two directions: a remnant desire for communion with Creator and, conversely, a new desire to replace the Creator with something in the created order.

Examining the semantic similarity between the two theological constructs, image and idol, reveals insights into the dynamics of worship. Both terms convey connotations of reflection, suggesting mirroring or reflecting, and they share the substantive denotation of making visible that which is not readily seen. The prohibition of idolatry involves a ban on the worship of other gods, while the *imago Dei* signifies humans as creatures called to worship their Creator. Despite the largely positive use of the term image in the primeval history of Israel, the subsequent pejorative usage outside that context underscores an association with representing foreign gods.

Understanding the dynamic of "being made by" and "being made into" is crucial to differentiating between the two constructs of image and idol. The Bible often portrays the connection between the sacred artist and the work of art created. Humans are made by the divine artist as reflections, while idols are made by human artists, leading to an ironic twist where the human artist becomes a reflection of the idol. The idols subverted Israel's security by offering promises they could not fulfill, contrasting with the protection and significance assured by *Yahweh*. The danger of idolatry for Israel lay in attempting to compromise between God's exclusive commands and the promises of the idols, resulting in a distorted identity and a precarious quest for security and significance.

In summary, the OT canonical witness regarding the *imago Dei* emphasizes the contrast between the true worship of the Creator and the false worship of created idols, highlighting the profound impact on human identity and the quest for security and significance.

Exploring the Theological Dynamics of *Imago Dei* and Idolatry in the OT

In the narrative of Israel's canon, identity as the people of *Yahweh* was grounded in the call to image the Creator. The concept of "imaging" entailed an intimate relationship - people-to-Creator, reflected in every interaction. However, the original theological mandate to image God was inverted through idolatrous pursuits, seeking meaning or purpose apart from *Elohim*; despite this, the Creator remained covenantally faithful.

The emergence of idolatry language after Gen. 9 coincided with a shift in the focus of covenant history towards *Yahweh* 's actions in redeeming or renewing Israel. The OT narrative, particularly from Gen. 12 onwards, was animated by the dialectic of God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness. The promise of enduring divine presence amid human unfaithfulness became a central aspect of the new covenant promised to Abraham and his descendants.

The exodus from Egypt served as a pivotal redemptive event, proving God's promises of enduring presence to be trustworthy. The memory of the exodus defined the Creator's fidelity for generations, interpreting Israel's challenges throughout history. Despite God's continuous provision in the Sinai wilderness, Israel's uncertainty led to constant grumblings revealing the people's struggle to trust in God's ongoing provision.

The covenant established at Sinai emphasized worship as the primary purpose. The awe-inspiring theophany at Mount Sinai, shrouded in clouds and fire, invoked fear. The Israelites instinctive response reflected a paradox of God's presence: a desire to be near, yet a fear of being too close due to *Elohim*'s overwhelming holiness. God's presence, visually an absence, became a theological mystery.

Moses, as the mediator, met the Creator face-to-face on behalf of the people. God's recall of the historic act of Israel's creation emphasized the deliverance from Egypt as a re-enactment

of the creation story. God's gracious act and the promise of his ongoing presence formed the

theological foundation linked to the NT witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, where the divine

comes to earth, delivering people from bondage, and promising God's enduring presence to the

end of the age.

<div align="center">The Exodus: Creation, Rescue, Re-Creation and Idolatry</div>

In this subsection, the narrative of Exodus unfolds as a dynamic interplay between the

creation-rescue-re-creation trope and the contrasting theme of idolatry. The story weaves

together God's redemptive plan, emphasizing the restoration of the *imago Dei* through key

events like creation, the Noahic flood, and the Red Sea rescue. The Israelites, in their idolatrous

tendencies, are depicted as becoming the image they most revere. Throughout, water imagery

emerges as a powerful communicative element, symbolizing themes such as the tension between

creation and chaos, salvation and deliverance, purification and rebirth, divine presence, thematic

unity, and judgment and redemption. The drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea

becomes a significant judgment on oppression and a symbol of God's redemption. Water

imagery not only unifies the narrative thematically but also connects Exodus to broader

theological concepts, setting the groundwork for eschatological redemption under God's promise

for all people.

In fact, Exodus transcends a mere narrative of divine intervention for an oppressed

people; the book is a testament to the Creator's continuous endeavor to rescue creation from the

chaos of non-existence. When considered in the context of God's redemptive mission to restore

the *imago Dei* in humanity, Exodus becomes intricately woven into the fabric of the Creator's

transformative and re-creative enterprise.[322] The rupture caused by sin in the relationship

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[322] This writing views Exodus as a literary narrative with an awareness of the larger framework of a 'story' about the Creator the Israelite people. Placing the book in the 'story' genre does not deny historicity. While

between God and humanity is persistently healed, with *Yahweh* expending extraordinary efforts to renew the bond with the created human race. Exodus stands as a microcosm, reflecting the profound cosmic accomplishment of Jesus Christ in the NT, and the eschatological macrocosm of God's ultimate redemptive plan.

Moses, having been saved by God through water as an infant, is charged with leading the Israelite's out of captivity through the Red Sea. 'The struggle of the Israelites in the exodus story is, arguably, best embodied in the character of Moses.'[323] Before readers can understand the Red Sea episode as a creation story, a survey should be conducted on how the human protagonist was initially delivered and the impact of water imagery in the story's telling.

Moses's Deliverance

In Chapter four, allusions to the parallels between Noah and Moses have already been discussed. The construction of the ark and the basket as vessels of redemption have been noted. Likewise, both characters are saved from the waters by God's grace, marking the commencement of a new era in the Lord's work among his people. At the point of Moses's birth, there exists two counterclaims of ownership over the Israelites: *Yahweh* and Egypt, for markedly different purposes. Exodus opened with the blessing of the Creator through the Abrahamic covenant, specifically through Jacob's line.[324] The blessing of population growth through God's hand

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historiography is concerned with the data and connective links between persons and events, a 'story' presents a plot with a predicament and a quest to resolve. A story, then, is a consciously selective crafting of scenes that involve the development of characters and move the reader's response. This note is a summarized derivative of Athas explanation of the story genre: George Athas, "The Creation of Israel: The Cosmic Proportions of the Exodus Event," in *Exploring Exodus: Literary, Theological and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner and Paul R. Williamson (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 31–59, 32.

[323] Ibid, 37.

[324] Ex. 1:7; one evidence of the Creator's hand in the population growth is found in Ex. 1:20-21 where *Yahweh* gives Shiphrah and Puah (Hebrew midwives) families of their own.

spurns the Egyptians and, through a series of growingly more stringent measures, Egypt subdues

the Israelites unto slavery. While the Creator is motivated by love and covenantal commitment,

Egypt, through the person of the Pharoah, is driven by death, subjugation, and control. The

cosmic struggle can be symbolically witnessed through the story of Moses. Because Moses was

born an Israelite (Ex. 2:1-2), God's claim of the Israelite's as his covenant people is personified.

The progressive measures of the Pharoah to control the Israelite populace had reached a pinnacle

moment, and Hebrew male infants were thrown into the Nile in a murderous purge and

counterclaim (Ex. 1:22).

The original audience would have understood the Nile as a metaphor for both abundant

life and a source of death and chaos.[325] While Egypt's fertility is dependent on the Nile, the river

was teaming with deadly creatures (e.g. crocodiles, snakes, and hippopotamus). "The western

bank of the Nile was also the location of the great necropolises, such as the Valley of the Kings.

Many a deceased Pharoah was ferried across the river to be forever interred in a concealed tomb

– a crossing over from life to death."[326] Already, readers can see the ANE motif reversed in the

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[325] The Carnegie Museum of Natural History reports, "Ancient Egypt was located in Northeastern Africa and had four clear geographic zones: the Delta, the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert, and the Nile Valley. Each of these zones had its own natural environment and its own role within the Egyptian State. Cities could only flourish in the Nile Delta, the Nile Valley, or desert oases, where people had access to water, land, and key resources. The ancient Egyptians, who were always keen observers of nature, often associated the Nile Valley with life and abundance and the neighboring deserts with death and chaos." Lisa Saladino Haney, "Egypt and the Nile," *Carnegie Museum of Natural History*, accessed December 11, 2023, https://carnegiemnh.org/egypt-and-the-nile/.

[326] George Athas, "The Creation of Israel: The Cosmic Proportions of the Exodus Event," in *Exploring Exodus: Literary, Theological and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner and Paul R. Williamson (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 31–59, 38.

The recognition of Egyptian gods associated with the Nile are another salient point. Haney writes, "The close connection between the Egyptians the Nile River led them to identify a number of Egyptian gods with aspects of the river, its annual flood, and the fertility and abundance associated with them. Hapi, for example, is the incarnation of the life force that the Nile provides; he also symbolizes the annual inundation of the Nile. His round belly and folds of skin represent abundance. Osiris, who is most often recognized in his role associated with the afterlife, is fundamentally a god of regeneration and rebirth. Artists often depicted him with black skin, linking him to the fertility of the Nile River and its lifegiving silt. The broader natural world was a further source of inspiration

deliverance of Moses from watery chaos to life. *Yahweh*'s claim to the Israelites is embodied in

the person of Moses. Saved from death by a princess in the Egyptian royal court, Moses is given

both a Hebrew and an Egyptian upbringing in preparation for delivering God's people.[327] "The

theological significance of Moses' deliverance lies not in a general providential care for little

children, but in the overruling of the powers opposed to God's kingdom so that they cannot hurt

the one chosen to mediate God's plan of salvation.[328]

The first fifteen chapters of Exodus, the narrative is driven by the attempts of God to

reclaim a relationship with the Hebrews reminiscent of the intimacy of the relationship with the

first couple in the garden. *Yahweh* is forging ahead with a redemptive plan to restore the *imago

Dei* and water imagery plays a key communicative role in that plan. Meanwhile, Egypt serves as

the rival claim and a vacuous, chaotic antagonist. Ironically, the remainder of the book of Exodus

chronicles the acts of the Israelites, themselves, to undo God's salvific plan.

The Red Sea Redemption

The Red Sea is the climax event in the book of Exodus. The Israelites find themselves in

a perilous situation, trapped between the tumultuous waters of the Red Sea and the chaotic forces

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for Egyptian religion." Haney, "Egypt and the Nile," *Carnegie Museum of Natural History*, accessed December 11, 2023, https://carnegiemnh.org/egypt-and-the-nile/.

[327] Moses's mother is the "wet nurse" to the infant in Pharoah's court (Ex. 2:7-10). Both Tamfu and Enns associate Moses's rescue to the flood rescue: "If Moses' mother knew the flood narrative, which is very likely, it is possible that she, by faith (Heb 11:23), was trusting that God will rescue her son on water in an ark. The water that brought judgment on others (cf. Exod 1:22) brought deliverance to Moses. In like manner, the waters that condemned the world saved Noah (Gen 6–9). Moses thus presents himself as a new Noah. Enns sees three similarities between Moses' rescue and Noah's: (1) Both Noah and Moses are specifically selected to forego a tragic, watery fate; (2) both are placed on an 'ark' treated with bitumen and are carried to safety on the very body of water that brings destruction to others; and (3) both are the vehicles through whom God 'creates' a new people for his own purposes." Dieudonné Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms" (dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014); Peter Enns, *Exodus: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 62.

[328] Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 132.

led by Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Faced with impending disorder and danger that could engulf and obliterate the Israelites, *Yahweh* orchestrates the rescue of the Hebrews through a decisive act of separation. The Creator miraculously divides the tumultuous sea, reminiscent of the separation of elements in Gen. 1, allowing dry land to emerge. The divine act of parting not only brings order to the unruly waters but also marks the ultimate liberation of Israel from the clutches of Egypt. Furthermore, the Red Sea event is an act of creation, for out of it the nation of Israel was born.

Echoes of Creation and the Flood

Throughout the Pentateuch, similar terms are employed to describe significant events such as creation, the flood, and the Red Sea. The term תְהֹום is used in reference to all three contexts.[329] Ex. 15:5 draws imagery from the flood narrative, stating, "The floods covered them." The language is also akin to the description of the waters that covered the face of the uninhabited earth (Gen. 1:2, 9). In each of these instances—creation, flood, and Red Sea—the emergence of "dry land" is a common theme, expressed as יַבָּשָׁה for "dry land" at creation, at the Red Sea, and חָרְבָה for "dry land" post-flood.[330] Moreover, כָּסָה is associated with both the flood and the Red Sea, depicting a watery judgment on the wicked and redemption for God's chosen people.[331]

On each occasion, something new is created (or re-created) from water. Just as the uninhabited world originated from water during creation and a new world unfolded after the flood, the nation of Israel came into being at the Red Sea. Like God's separation of dry and

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[329] Creation: Gen. 1:2; the flood: Gen. 7:11; 8:2; the Red Sea: Ex.15:5, 8; (cf. Is. 51:10; Ps. 106:9).

[330] At creation: Gen. 1:9,10; At the Red Sea: Ex. 14:16, 22, 29; 15:19; post-flood: Gen. 7:22.

[331] The flood: Gen 7:19, 20; at the Red Sea: ex. 15:5, 10.

fertile ground from the waters to sustain vegetation during creation, the dry ground emerged for the same purpose after the flood (Gen. 9:20). The dry land encountered at the Red Sea served as preparation for Israel to enter the fertile land of Canaan (cf. Deut. 6:11). Families, all representing God's image as representatives of the human race, emerged from the water of creation, from waters of the flood, and by crossing the Red Sea. The image of God is once again redeemed through water.

The Red Sea distinctly mirrors both the processes of creation and re-creation through water, as well as redemption facilitated by the communicative element. By considering the Red Sea event as a descendant of both creation and the flood narratives offers more clarity. Frequently in the OT, the narratives of creation and the flood find expression through the Red Sea as an off shoot. When the focus is on creation, key themes from both the flood and the Red Sea often emerge. The central theme of salvation through judgment, found in the narratives of the flood and the Red Sea, frequently appears implicitly in subsequent texts (cf. Ex. 14:30). Echoes of the Red Sea in the OT

The theme of God's sovereignty over chaos is also found in OT biblical intertexts inferring a polemic over the watery depths (*tehom*); the ancient hearer of Exodus would have understood the Red Sea event as an act of creation amid a cosmic battle.[332] Samples of the intertexts are provided in Table 7 and 8.

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[332] This is particularly when ANE cosmologies and mythical contexts are considered. Scurlock and Beal write, "Gunkel's thesis, inspired by materials that were supplied by the Assyriologist Heinrich Zimmern, was that the *Chaoskampf* motif of Revelation was an event that would not only occur at the end of the world but also had already happened once, in the beginning, before creation. In other words, by this theory, God in Genesis 1 first battled Rahab, Leviathan, and Yam (the forces of Chaos) in a grand battle, and only then did he begin to create." 1. Jo Ann Scurlock and Richard Henry Beal, *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaoskampf Hypothesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), ix.

Table 8: OT References: *Yahweh* Overcoming the Depths of Chaos (Job and Psalms)

Reference	Text	Key Hebrew Words	Notable Cross-references
Job 26:12	By his power he stilled the Sea; by his understanding he struck down Rahab.	יָם – sea (also the name of the god *Yam/Yam-Nahar,* a god of the sea in the pantheon of Canaanite-Phoenicians; *Yamm* was the brother of Mot, the god of death, and is associated with chaos.)	Gen. 1:10 – Creation Gen. 1:22 – Creation multiplication command Gen. 1:26 – *imago Dei* language Gen. 1:28 – Creation multiplication command Ex. 10:19; 13:18; 14:9, 16, 21, 22, 23, 26-30, *et al.*– Red Sea references
		רַהַב - Rahab (mythical sea monster; emblematic name of Egypt)	Job 9:13; 9:13; 26:12; Is. 30:7

Ps. 74: 12-14	Yet God my King is from of old,
	    working salvation in the earth.
	 You divided the sea by your might;
	    you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
	You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
	    you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
		יָם - sea / *Yamm*	See note on Job 26:12

		תַּנִּין – serpent, dragon, sea-monster; mythological personification of chaos	Gen. 1:21 – Creation of sea creatures
		לִוְיָתָן - Leviathan	Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps 104:26; Is. 27:1

Ps. 89:9-10	You rule the raging of the sea;
	    when its waves rise, you still them.
	You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
	    you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
		יָם - sea / *Yamm*	See note on Job 26:12

		רַהַב - Rahab (mythical sea monster; emblematic name of Egypt)	See note on Job 26:12

Table 9: OT References: *Yahweh* Overcoming the Depths of Chaos (Isaiah)

Reference	Text	Key Hebrew Words	Notable Cross-references
Is. 27:1	On that day the Lord with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.	לִוְיָתָן - Leviathan	See note on Ps. 74:12-14
		נָחָשׁ – serpent	Gen. 3:1-2, 4, 13, 14 – personification of the snake at the fall
		תַּנִּין – dragon (also serpent, sea-monster; mythological personification of chaos)	Gen. 1:21 – Creation of sea creatures
		יָם – sea/*Yamm*	See note on Job 26:12
Is. 51:9b-10	Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?	רַהַב – Rahab (mythical sea monster; emblematic name of Egypt)	See note on Job 26:12
		תַּנִּין – dragon (also serpent, sea-monster; mythological personification of chaos)	Gen. 1:21 – Creation of sea creatures
		יָם – sea/*Yamm*	See note on Job 26:12
		תְּהוֹם – the deep/*Tehom-Tiamat*	Gen. 1:2 – "face of the deep" Gen 7:11; 8:2 – "foundations of the great deep" bursting – Noahic flood Ex. 15:5, 8 – overcoming the Egyptian army at the Red Sea

Clearly, the continuation of the polemic of the Creator's control over the created-natural, *Elohim* over the forces of chaos and the polytheistic gods and goddesses of the ANE is in full effect. Knowing this, the first hearers/readers of the Exodus would have viewed the Red Sea crossing as cosmic deliverance and re-creation. Scurlock and Beal entertain that 'Rahab' can reference simultaneously both Egypt and a primeval cosmic enemy of *Yahweh*."[333] Table 10 on the following page shows how two texts identify Egypt at the Red Sea with the sea monster Rahab.

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[333] Jo Ann Scurlock and Richard Henry Beal, *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaoskampf Hypothesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 220.

Table 10: OT References: Egypt and the Watery Chaos Monster

Reference	Text
Is. 30:7	For Egypt's help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, 'Rahab who sits still.'
Ps. 87:4	Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia 'This one was born there,' they say.

Ps. 106:9 also captures the Red Sea event as a creation event, with *Yahweh*'s rebuke of the sea.

He rebuked the Red Sea and it became dry;
   he led them through the deep (תְּהוֹם) as through a desert.
So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
   and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.
The waters covered their adversaries;
   not one of them was left.
Then they believed his words;
   they sang his praise.

"*Yahweh* is portrayed as taming a hostile entity, the watery depths, evoking the fundamental imagery of an act of creation."[334] Notably, the outcome of the cosmic struggle appears to be prefigured much earlier in the narrative. One of the signs given by *Yahweh* to Moses at the burning bush is the transformation of the staff, a symbol of leadership, into a snake when thrown on the ground.[335] However, in the staff encounter before Pharaoh in Ex. 7:8-13, there are subtle changes. First, Aaron's staff is the one that is cast down. More significantly, the Hebrew text uses a different word for the transformational outcome of the staff. While at the burning bush, Moses's staff becomes a נָחָשׁ (snake), before Pharaoh, Aaron's staff turns into a תַּנִּין (sea monster or dragon). Although these terms could be used interchangeably, the shift in vocabulary is interesting. תַּנִּין typically signifies a symbol of chaos that thrashes about in the

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[334] George Athas, "The Creation of Israel: The Cosmic Proportions of the Exodus Event," *Exploring Exodus: Literary, Theological and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner and Paul R. Williamson (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 31–59, 56.

[335] Ex. 4:3-5.

sea—a chaos that God subdues. The ability of Moses to pick up this creature implies the power to control chaos with the Creator's intervention.[336] Moreover, when Pharaoh's magicians replicate the feat, Aaron's staff swallows the staves of the artisans.

The narrative in Ex. 7 foreshadows the destruction of the Egyptian army by the chaotic Red Sea that *Yahweh* has tamed.[337] If Israel's escape symbolizes an act of creation through separation, the drowning of the Egyptians represents an act of un-creation through merging. The Egyptian army's existence is undone by the amalgamation of the soldiers of chaos with the waters of chaos, mirroring the swallowing of the magicians' staves by Aaron's. The Egyptian army experiences a cosmic defeat at the hands of the all-powerful, sovereign God who alone possesses the ability to tame chaos. Consequently, the act of creation that brings the nation of Israel into existence unfolds in the context of *Yahweh* overcoming the forces of chaos, akin to the Creator's actions in Genesis and in the Noahic flood. Water is a means of *imago Dei* redemption, and the Israelites celebrate this creative act of God in the Song of the Sea.[338]

The Decalogue as a Reflection of the Image of God

The ceremonial presentation of the law at Sinai, as described in Exodus 20, was not a mere legislative act but a covenantal event that solidified familial bonds carrying significant obligations that were direct reflections on the image of God. The covenant connected Israel to God and vice versa. Commencing with the words, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex. 20:2), the preamble grounded the

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[336] The control of chaos is demonstrated again by the use of Moses's staff to part the Red Sea in obedience to *Yahweh*.

[337] Detailed descriptions of the foreshadowing and the *chaoskampf* motif can be found as follows: Phillipe Guillaume, "Metamorphosis of a Ferocious Pharoah," *Biblica* 85 (2004): 232–236; 1. Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 81.

[338] Song of the Sea – Ex. 15:1-18; cross-referenced in the previous citation of Ps. 106:9.

assertion that *Yahweh* was the covenant's suzerain, authorized solely by God's actions and position as Lord. The primary command of the covenant, prohibiting the worship of other gods before *Yahweh*, emphasized the exclusivity and intimacy of the relationship. God desired to be Israel's utmost devotion, and Israel, in turn, was to honor him above all, reflecting a unique love amid all the peoples on earth. The commandments were formulated to guard against Israel's inclination to deviate from this intimate relationship. The human heart, prone to seeking security on selfish terms, could be lured into creating images of gods/goddesses for worship. Idolatry was not just a cognitive error but a heart fallacy—an attempt to gain control. The self-created gods held immense influence over the human creators, manifesting the dangers outlined in the second commandment—prohibiting the crafting of carved images. The Decalogue command warned against mistaking the created order for the Creator and highlighted the profound reality that Israel's security had already been guaranteed by *Yahweh*.

The seduction of idolatry lay in the temptation to define life's meaning based on personal desires, leading to a thinning of identity where individuals became minimal selves, contingent on the gods self-created for security. The Creator's love sought to counter this, offering security and comfort, anchoring Israel's significance in the one, true God the people imaged. Moreover, the commandment regarding God's name reinforced the uniqueness of God, a reality reflected in Israel's history. Profaning God's name was prohibited signifying a recognition that *Elohim* transcended the created order and was not to be treated as an idol.

The fourth commandment affirmed that all of time belonged to God, placing the Sabbath as a perpetual principle of the created order (a reflection of the seventh day of creation). The Sabbath principle underscored the divine pattern of work and rest embedded in creation.

The Decalogue's structure showcased a twofold emphasis—on God and responsibility toward neighbors. The second command, emphasizing love for neighbors, was deemed "like" the first because the neighbor, though not God, reflected an image of the living God.

Ultimately, the Decalogue highlighted the threat idols posed to Israel. While these idols in no way threatened the Creator, the same idols jeopardized the Israelites' well-being; the people who created the idols became like them. "We become what we worship;"[339] this reality was starkly depicted in the golden calf incident in Ex. 32, a paradigmatic episode of idolatry in the OT.

The Golden Calf Episode as Prescriptive

Moses's disappearance on Mount Sinai to receive direction from *Yahweh* is directly linked to the Israelites' propensity toward idolatry, an idolatry that characterized the self-serving acts of Adam and Eve and the "wickedness" that encapsulated the earth prior to the Noahic flood. Matthews *et al.* elaborate, "Moses was the Israelites' sole contact with *Yahweh* and was the mediator of *Yahweh*'s power and guidance, and, for all the people knew, he might be dead. With him gone it was believed that contact with *Yahweh* was lost and that they therefore needed a replacement mediator to serve the role of 'going before them.'"[340] Later, in Ex. 33:2-3, *Yahweh* instructs:

> I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.'

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[339] A general reference to: G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018).

[340] Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ex 32:1.

The role of Moses is filled by the angel through the Creator, and the calf is formed to fill the role of *Yahweh*'s representative. The text of Ex. 33:2-3 is interesting, for the Hebrew refers to the Israelites as קָשֶׁה. Could the reference be implying that the people have become "stiff-necked" like the golden calf that was fashioned? The sentiment is again repeated in Ex. 33:5. Moreover, the golden calf episode is inextricably connected to the text of Deut. 28-32 where the Israelites' idol worship is mentioned repeatedly, and in the text, the accusation is repeated through the similar term "קָשֶׁה."[341] 'Deut. 31:27-29 explicitly alludes back to the golden calf narration in Deut. 9:6-21.'[342] The text in Deuteronomy implores common phrases that illustrate the link between the golden calf episode and future idolatry by the Israelites, as exampled in Table 10.

Table 11: Phrasing in Deuteronomy Indicating Future Idolatry

Deut.	Phrase
9:6; 31:27	"stiff-necked," "stubborn"
9:7, 24; 31:27	Rebellious against the Lord
9:12, 16, 31:29	"acted corruptly," "quick to turn from the way that I commanded them; they have cast an image for themselves"[343]
9:18	"provoking the LORD by doing what was evil in his sight."

"The point of the comparison between the first generation's idolatry and that of future generations is that the golden calf idolatry was seen to be paradigmatic of Israel's future idolatry, so that the latter was to be patterned after the former."[344] In other words, the condition of the Israelite's wilderness generation is traceable back to the golden calf episode, and this idolatry continues in future generations.[345] The backdrop of Deut. 28-32 informs the context of Ex. 32,

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[341] Deut. 9:6; 31:29.

[342] Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (InterVarsity Press Academic, 2018), 77.

[343] Deut. 31:29 uses the future tense indicating that the "turning away" continues.

[344] Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 77.

[345] Cf. 2 Ki. 17:15; Hos. 4:7; Jer. 2:5-11.

emphasizing the Exodus passage's instructional significance. In Ex. 32, when the initial

generation of rescued Israelites engages in the worship of the golden calf, Moses depicts the

people in terms reminiscent of wild calves or untrained cows; the point is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 12: Israelites Reflecting the Calf Image

Ex.	Hebrew Phrase	Explanation
32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9	קָשֶׁה	"stiff-necked, obstinate" people
32:25	פָּרֻע	"out of control" or "broken loose" for Aaron had 'broken them loose'
32:8	סָרוּ מַהֵר מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ	'quickly turned aside from the way" God commanded
32:26, 27	שַׁעַר, also אָסַף	The people needed to be "gathered" back together "in the gate"
32:34	נְחֵה אֶת־הָעָם	Moses had to "lead the people" where *Yahweh* instructed

Beale contends that "The expression in Exodus 32:8, 'they quickly turned aside from the

way,' is placed directly before the phrase 'they have made for themselves a molten calf.' This is

followed by portraying the people as 'stiff-necked' in verse 9, so that the three descriptions are

inextricably linked."[346] The likelihood is that the author is portraying a sort of taunt regarding

the worship of the golden calf; 'so, you want to worship a golden calf, look what you have

become!' Surely, the initial generation of Israelites did not physically transform into golden

calves like the idol they worshipped. Instead, the Hebrews are portrayed as behaving like unruly

and stubborn calves, suggesting a mockery of the people becoming associated with the spiritually

rebellious nature of the calf that had been adored. The idotrolic portrayal indicates that "what"

they held in reverence, they had started to resemble, and this likeness was causing their own

destruction. The mention in Ex. 32:7 that their idolatry led to them "corrupting themselves"

underscores the inner spiritual decay that had taken root, transforming their very essence. The

connection between idolatry and being "stiff-necked" was established in Ex. 32, and the

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[346] Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 77.

subsequent OT references were influenced by this metaphorical representation of the idolatry of the first generation.[347]

The choice of the golden calf image was likely influenced by the Israelites captivity in Egypt. Having worshipped Egypt's gods before the Red Sea event, the image was familiar. Having "lost" Moses, the representative of *Yahweh* before the people, the search to replace the protagonist of the Exodus called the Israelites to comfort and the accustomed understanding of divine kingship imagery. The ancient Egyptian deity *Apis*, a god associated with fertility, death, and the underworld, bore the Greek name *Apis*, though the god was also known as *Hap*, *Hep*, or *Hapi* in Egypt. Imagery of *Apis* made the earliest appearances in engravings around 6000 BCE during the Predynastic Period in Egypt, suggesting to contemporary scholars that the god might be among the earliest Egyptian deities. In the First Dynasty (3150 to 2890 BCE), the bull god rose to prominence, attaining a revered status as one of the most sacred gods in Egypt. Represented as a substantial black bull with horned features, distinctive white body markings, and adorned with a *menat* collar—the sacred necklace of the goddess *Hathor*—*Apis* also sported a radiate sun crown adorned with the *uraeus*, a serpent symbolizing royal power. Egypt had chosen the bull as a divine representation of the suzerain's courage, immense strength, and warrior-like spirit. *Apis* evolved to be seen as an embodiment of the king, with bulls being emblematic of strength and fertility, traits intricately connected with kingship and the divine by proxy. Israelite's faltering back into that which was familiar, replacing the Creator with the Egyptian god, directly opposed God's command in Ex. 20:3-4. In the text, *Yahweh* affirms that he alone is the divine force which brought the Israelites out of slavery and commands that there "shall be no other gods" placed before him. The biblical account in Exodus presents a theological

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[347] See Job 39:9-12; Ps. 22:21; 29:6; 92:10.

perspective that contrasts the God of Israel with the Egyptian gods, emphasizing the uniqueness and superiority of the God of the Israelites. The episodes like the golden calf incident reflect the tension between the monotheistic worship of *Yahweh* and the polytheistic practices of the surrounding cultures, including the veneration of deities like *Apis*. Moreover, the narrative in Ex. 32 demonstrates 1) a polemic mocking of the Egyptian god and 2) that the Israelites became "like" the image revered, in direct opposition to *Yahweh*'s directives, and the Creator's plan to restore the *imago Dei* among his people.

The Exodus Summary

Throughout this subsection, the story of Exodus has demonstrated the creation-rescue-re-creation trope while linking God's redemptive plan to the restoration of the *imago Dei* through the creation, the Noahic flood, the Red Sea rescue, and other intra-textual examination. The contrasting narrative of idolatry has also been exhibited, as the Israelites are described in becoming the image that they revere. All the while, water imagery has served as a communicative element of God's redemptive plan. Water imagery in Exodus carries profound symbolic significance, representing various themes and aspects within the narrative. The separation of the waters at creation and the parting of the Red Sea echo each other, highlighting the tension between creation and chaos. In both instances, God asserts control over chaotic waters, establishing order and paving the way for the people's journey, emphasizing their status as bearers of the divine image.

Moreover, the waters of the Red Sea, initially a threat of destruction, become the means of salvation for the Israelites, symbolizing liberation from slavery and divine deliverance. As the Israelites pass through the waters, they undergo a form of purification and rebirth, marking the end of their old life in Egypt and the beginning of a new life under God's covenant. Additionally,

at the Red Sea, God's presence is manifested through a pillar of cloud and fire, with water serving as a medium for divine interaction with humanity.

Water imagery in Exodus creates thematic unity by connecting different episodes, such as creation and the Noahic flood, emphasizing overarching themes of God's power, salvation, and the establishment of a covenant relationship. Finally, the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea symbolizes judgment on oppression and redemption for God's people, signifying the defeat of evil and the vindication of the righteous through water imagery.

In conclusion, water imagery in Exodus serves as a rich and multifaceted symbol, capturing themes of creation, deliverance, purification, divine presence, trust, thematic unity, judgment, redemption, and sustenance. Each instance of water-related events contributes to the overall theological depth of the narrative and demonstrates the theological unity of the OT. Exodus links the people at the Red Sea to the historical accounts of creation and the flood and goes further to set the precedent for eschatological accounts of redemption for all people under God's covenantal promise.

With the tropic pattern set, in the sections that follow, a presentation of water imagery in both the Psalter and Jonah are offered to provide further support of the thesis, that God uses water imagery as a communicative element for the ultimate redemptive plan, to restore the *imago Dei* to humanity. The concepts lead into the discussion for Chapter Six where ANE texts are compared in order to "silhouette the biblical text against its wider literary and cultural environment."[348]

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[348] An approach consistent with Hallo's: Hallo, "Biblical History in Its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach," 26. See also the explanation of methodology herein, found in Chapter One.

The Psalter[349]

Understanding the Psalter, the collection of 150 Psalms in the Hebrew Bible, significantly contributes to the thesis by providing insights into humanity's relationship with God, the struggle against sin, and the quest for redemption. The Psalms cover a wide range of themes, emotions, and experiences, reflecting the diverse human condition. Many Psalms express the desire for restoration, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God, echoing the overarching theme of redemption in the thesis.

Moreover, the Psalms often use water imagery to convey spiritual truths and symbolize purification, renewal, and salvation. This use of water imagery aligns with the thesis's exploration of how God's plan for humanity's redemption is universally expressed through such imagery in the OT and ANE context. For example, Psalms such as Ps. 42:1-2 and Ps. 63:1-2 depict the soul thirsting for God like a deer panting for water, illustrating the longing for spiritual renewal and closeness to God.

Additionally, the Psalms frequently address the concept of *imago Dei* identity, affirming humanity's unique position as God's creation and expressing the desire to live in alignment with God's will. Ps. 8, for instance, celebrates humanity's dignity and role in God's creation, while Ps. 51 reflects on the need for forgiveness and restoration after sinning against God, highlighting the theme of identity inversion and the quest for redemption.

Furthermore, the Psalter provides a rich theological framework for understanding humanity's relationship with God and the process of redemption. Through the Psalms, readers gain insights into the complexities of the human experience, the consequences of sin, and the

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[349] Much of this section is derived from a previous work of the present author: Dawn Sutherland, "The Psalter as Polemic: A Consideration of the Inner-Biblical, Canonical, and Extra-biblical Study in Light of Ancient Near East (ANE) Mythologies," *OBST 860-01 – Writings*, (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA), October 15, 2021.

hope for restoration through God's mercy and grace. Ultimately, the Psalter contributes to the thesis by reinforcing the importance of reclaiming *imago Dei* identity and experiencing redemption as central themes in God's plan for humanity.

The Importance of Water Imagery in the Psalms

Biblical creation, the ancient Israelite Exodus, and the Noahic flood all include water imagery as a primary feature. Water imagery in the Psalter reaches back to the already established Hebrew tradition and further describes the importance of the motif in the ancient Israelite belief system. The psalmists, akin to Moses in the Pentateuch, invoke the epic motif of the primordial struggle between *Yahweh* and chaos to assert the complete sovereignty of the Hebrew God. The OT authors intricately weave connections to both the Pentateuch and historical events, crafting a tapestry of interrelated narratives. In this tapestry, water imagery emerges as a pivotal element, imbuing the Psalms with rich and multifaceted symbolic meanings, thus deepening the theological essence of the text. Through the Psalms, water takes on diverse roles, each bearing significant spiritual connotations.

Water imagery serves as a metaphor for life's challenges, symbolized by deep rivers and floods, representing the trials and adversities encountered on life's journey. Additionally, water embodies the source of life and refreshment, expressing the soul's longing for spiritual renewal and nourishment, with God depicted as the provider of living water. Moreover, water becomes a symbol of God's presence, depicted in various psalms through imagery of rivers, streams, and still waters, signifying God's perpetual presence and abundant blessings.

Likewise, water imagery extends to the concept of cleansing and purification, as water represents a powerful agent of spiritual renewal and forgiveness, facilitating a turning away from sin towards divine mercy. Furthermore, the vast and unpredictable sea serves as a symbol of

God's sovereignty over chaos and disorder, highlighting the Creator's supreme authority over all aspects of creation.

Finally, water imagery in the Psalter fosters thematic unity, connecting various psalms and aligning them with broader biblical narratives such as creation, the Noahic Flood, and the Exodus. Through these connections, the Psalms underscore God's integral role in creation, his redemptive acts, and his enduring relationship with his people, thereby enriching the theological landscape of the text.

Understanding water imagery in the Psalter requires an appreciation for its nuanced symbolic meanings, ranging from challenges and adversity to the sustaining and cleansing nature of God's presence. Water imagery adds depth to the poetic expressions in the Psalms and contributes to the broader theological understanding of God's character and divine interactions.

The Scope and Reach of the Psalter

The Hebrew title for the Psalter is *ṣēpher tehillīm* meaning "book of praises." Lay-readers and scholars alike lean into the book of Psalms for words of expressing worship, prayer, praise, and lamentation. The carefully crafted liturgies and tightly woven poetry imply that the Psalms were not spontaneous, free verse, written for certain singular occasions; rather, the book formed an ancient prayer and hymn book meant for "recurring, typical human needs and for services of worship."[350] That said, "the book of Psalms has a wider scope than any other book in the Bible;"

> Its tradition and literary history spans from the pre-monarchic period to well into the Second Temple period. It represents national circles as varied as the kingdoms of northern Israel and southern Judah, and social circles such as the royal court, the priestly temple, and rural clan settings.

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[350] C.C. Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., Logos Software ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), N.P.

Its literary genres travel from pre-monarchic victory songs to postexilic literary acrostics.[351]

As a result of this depth and breadth, the Psalter reflects a multitude of themes and theological motifs that inform theological awareness and overall interpretation of the text. Such motifs include but are not limited to that of Divine and Human Kingship, Creation, Exodus, Imprecation, Penitence, Pilgrimage, Prophecy, and Victory.[352] The writing here takes a different approach to the Psalter, reading the text as polemic in function and didactic in nature by considering the water imagery used throughout the book in the same way water is used in the Pentateuch and also in ANE context.

Though the Psalter covers a lot of ground, from the pre-monarchic period and well into the Second Temple period, there is the persisting cultural worship of pagan deities in *lieu* of or alongside the God of Israel throughout the same time periods.[353] The writers of the Psalms were dispersed and immersed in polytheistic ANE culture, notwithstanding a personal commitment and promotion of the monotheistic worship of *Yahweh*. Whether intentionally or unintentionally,

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[351] Ibid.

[352] Example references include: Divine and Human Kingship (Psalm 47, 93, 96, 97. 98 and 99); Creation (8 and 9), Exodus (78); Imprecation (7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 64, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139, and 140); Penitence (6, 38, 51, and 81); Pilgrimage (84, 120, 121, 122, and 134); Prophecy (2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 72, 110, and 118); Victory (18 and 68).

[353] This can be seen as early as the Exodus and the Yehudit worship of the golden calf in Chapter 32 and well into the Second Temple Period Hellenism.

The crux of Hebrew identity seems to always lay but on the point of knife; this identity is 'inextricably linked to the conflictual character of the concrete political institutions and social structures that were shaping ancient Israelite society;' Pieter M. Venter, "Congruent Ethos in the Second Temple Literature of the Old Testament," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (June 2011): 1-13; Venter mentions the idea in association with the entire OT.

This understanding is crucial to reading the water imagery of Psalms as polemic against pagan polytheistic gods/goddesses and sea monsters and the worship thereof as opposed to the worship and praise of a wholly sovereign *Yahweh.* Since it has already been established, "we become what we worship;" thus, humanity's *imago Dei* identity is in jeopardy when worship is directed to a human created image or the images of the polytheistic gods in the same historic stream.

the authors alluded to the God of Israel's dominance over the chaos of the sea and thereby

against the gods/goddesses and sea monsters that pervaded the polytheistic mythological milieu

in the same historic stream. Parallels can be seen in the hermeneutic tension between the cults of

Yahweh and *Baal*, in the stories of *Marduk*, *Perseus* and *Andromeda*, and *Nanshe,* and

Oannes/Dagon, among others. This understanding sets the stage for how the Psalms can be read

as polemic in function and didactive in nature, thereby demonstrating the Hebrew God's

sovereignty over all of creation, created elements, and those "other" pagan polytheistic

gods/goddesses, and sea monsters represented throughout the Psalter's *Sitz im Leben.*

Dating Hebrew Poetry by Context

Biblical psalms are extremely difficult to date because of the lack of historical

information contained within; as Broyles notes, "The psalms are generic, and thus intentionally

avoid ties to particular events or experiences."[354] As such, providing a reliable date on the

Hebrew poetry relies, almost solely, upon context clues; even then, timeframes are broad era

categorizations. The Psalter's "tradition and literary history spans from the pre-monarchic period

to well into the Second Temple period;"[355] Thus, the psalms in the Psalter can be assigned

preexilic, exilic, and postexilic general classifications.[356]

In each era there is clear evidence of a cosmic trope indicating that *Yahweh* is the wholly

sovereign, divine king over creation, created elements, and ANE deities. The following sub-

sections begin with ancient Hebrew poetry found outside of the Psalter but in the OT, then

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[354] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

[355] Ibid.

[356] The marking off of the Psalms by era is not precise nor is the marking germane to the argument at hand. Rather, marking the Psalms by era provides a usable framework for understanding water imagery an relation to the thesis.

moves to discuss preexilic, exilic, and postexilic psalms. In addition to the cosmic trope positioning the Hebrew God above all else, water imagery serves as a primary motif crossing each era boundary. As such, this overview of the Hebrew traditional poetic background provides a solid foundation on which the argument is built that water imagery is a way God communicates his character and redemptive plan to his covenant people.

Ancient Poetry Beyond the Psalter

Ancient Hebrew poetry can be found, not only in the Psalter, but throughout the OT. The following table identifies the ancient poems found outside of the Psalter along with the poems purpose, era, and a note identifying water imagery where included. According to Broyles, these ancient poems are the "oldest texts of the Hebrew Bible."[357] Table 12 on the following page demonstrates the rich history of water imagery used in ancient Hebrew poetry.[358]

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[357] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

[358] The Table is moved to the following page to ensure that the entire table with footnotes is accessible to the readers in Turabian format.

Table 13: Ancient Hebrew Poems Found Outside of the Psalter

Biblical Ref	Title	Purpose	Era	Water Imagery (Y/N)
Gen. 49 [359]	The Blessing of Jacob	Tribal Blessing	Pre-Monarchic	Y
Ex. 15	The Song of the Sea	Victory Song	Pre-Monarchic	Y
Nu. 10:35-36	The Song of the Ark	Praise, Pre-emptive Victory	Pre- or Early-Monarchic	N
Nu. 21:14 [360]	Songs in "The Book of the Wars of the Lord"	Reference	Pre- or Early-Monarchic	Y
Nu. 23-24 [361]	Four Balaam Oracles	Pentateuchal Theology	Pre- or Early-Monarchic	Y
Deut. 32 [362]	The Song of Moses	Praise; Divine Providence	Pre- or Early-Monarchic	Y
Deut. 33 [363]	The Blessing of Moses	Tribal Blessing	Pre-Monarchic	Y
Josh. 10:12-13; 2 Sam. 1:17-27 [364]	The Book of Jashar	Lamentation	Early-Monarchic	Y
Judg. 5 [365]	The Song of Deborah	Praise and Deliverance	Early-Monarchic	Y

[359] For Genesis 49, water imagery is alluded to in v. 13: "Zebulun shall settle at the shore of the sea; he shall be a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon."

[360] *The Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)* of the Bible associates the streams in this verse to the Red Sea. Full text of v. 14 in DRA is: "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord: As he did in the Red Sea, so will he do in the streams of Amen."

[361] Evidence for water imagery is found in the third oracle, Numbers 24:5-6: "how fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch far away, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall have abundant water, his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." Likewise, Balaam acknowledges the sovereignty of the Hebrew God. According to Ritenbaugh, "[The] constraint of Balaam, supposedly the world's most powerful cursing diviner, directs the glory to God and certifies that His purpose through Israel could not be hindered;" Richard T. Ritenbaugh, "The Prophecies of Balaam (Part One)," *Forerunner* (February 10, 2003).

[362] Water imagery is present in the beginning, v. 2: "May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God!" Likewise, a polemic tone is detected in vv. 16-18 warning against polytheistic worship: "They made him jealous with strange gods, with abhorrent things they provoked him. They sacrificed to demons, not God, to deities they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared. You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth."

[363] Water imagery is found in Deuteronomy 33:8 in reference to the tribe of Levi: "And of Levi he said: Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your loyal one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah." Likewise of Zebulon in v. 19, "They call peoples to the mountain; there they offer the right sacrifices; for they suck the affluence of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand."

[364] Water imagery is mentioned in passing in 2 Samuel 1:21 as a method of satiation for the fields and the provision of food, "You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor bounteous fields!"

[365] Water imagery as deliverance is acknowledges in Judges 5:4-5, "Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water. The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai, before the Lord, the God of Israel." Likewise, as praise in v. 11, "To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the triumphs of the Lord, the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel." Again, water is mentioned in v. 19, "The kings came, they fought; then fought

Through these earliest biblical poems, the expression of water imagery provides a foundation for God to communicate across geographics, cultural, and social boundaries. Clearly, water imager is a main feature in biblical poetry and thematically connects back to creation, the flood, and the Red Sea accounts. The next section provides an overview for how God uses water symbology to theologically communicate meaning in the Psalter.

Water Imagery in the Psalms by Era

The next three subsections focus solely on the Psalter and categorize the Psalms by era. In each era, water imagery is a primary theme as is God's used of the symbology to communicate with his covenant people. [366]

Preexilic Psalms

Preexilic, First Temple Psalms are marked by three clear allusions and one fourth identifying factor: '1) to a king of Israel/Judah, 2) to the armies of Israel/Judah, 3) to the cherubim-ark as a visible symbol used in ritual processions, and/or 4) The Songs of Zion that speak of its inviolability.' [367] The preexilic psalms paint the picture of *Yahweh* as divine cosmic king over any and all other claimants; this includes ANE deities, and thus affirms the polemic nature of the Psalter.

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the kings of Canaan, at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver;" and in v. 21, "The torrent Kishon swept them away, the onrushing torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might!"

[366] Certain psalms are chosen as a case study related to the Hebrew historic events since it would be impossible to provide a full treatment of the water imagery in the Psalter within the bounds of this research.

[367] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

Table 14: Preexilic Psalms with Contextual Allusion [368]

Ps.	Allusion	Water Imagery (Y/N)	Ps.	Allusion	Water Imagery (Y/N)
2	Royal Psalms	N	74	Cherubim-Ark	Y
6	Royal Psalms	N	76	The Songs of Zion	N
18	Cherubim-Ark	Y	80	Cherubim-Ark	Y
18	Royal Psalms	Y	80	Israel's Armies	Y
20	Royal Psalms	N	89	Cherubim-Ark	N
24	Cherubim-Ark	Y	89	Royal Psalms	N
29	Cherubim-Ark	Y	93	Cherubim-Ark	Y
44	Israel's Armies	N	97	Cherubim-Ark	N
46	The Songs of Zion	Y	99	Cherubim-Ark	N
47	Cherubim-Ark	N	104	Cherubim-Ark	Y
68	Cherubim-Ark	Y	132	Cherubim-Ark	N

In each of these cases, the psalm can be read as polemic and many include water imagery as a main theme; regardless of contextual allusion, the Hebrew God is presented as the overarching king of the cosmos, wholly sovereign over all created elements, beings, and ANE gods. As the cosmically divine king in the preexilic poems, *Yahweh* is portrayed through a wide Semitic lens and uses idioms familiar to neighboring ANE cultures. Among other references, God's absolute cosmic kingship is established in the preexilic poems by portraying *Yahweh* as the "rider of the clouds" (Ps. 68:4), incomparable to the royal council among the "divine beings" (Ps.), and as the ruler of earth, distinct from other claimants, because he established it upon *"the seas and 'the rivers."* "As a result, *Yahweh*, 'a warrior of war,' enters through the gates as 'King of Glory' (Psalm 24)."[369] Broyles recognizes the cosmological nature of the preexilic psalms and writes, "In Israel the cosmic king establishes 'right order' in both nature and human society.

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[368] Tables 11-13 offer a survey of the psalms assigned to the era with the highest probability. The tables are not meant to be a full treatment, including every psalm and the passages assignment to time period. This is due in part to the difficulty behind dating the Psalms, though specialized consideration for inclusion was given to those Psalms that: 1) date with high probability to an era and 2) correlate with the dissertation's thesis-case. Some of the psalms listed as preexilic may also appear in the postexilic section. The most likely case is that the allusion is pointing back to a preexilic tradition that takes on a deeper meaning for the postexilic culture. This research does not discuss theories of editing and redaction in the Psalter because it is not centrally necessary to demonstrate the thesis. Though editing and redaction may be a factor in the psalms being credited to multiple eras. Editing and redaction theories are yet another factor that complicates the dating of the Hebrew psalms.

[369] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary* (emphasis added).

Yahweh's saving activity, whereby He puts things 'right,' extends into the human realms of history and justice."[370] The exilic psalms follow in some of the same traditions as the preexilic poems, but not all, given the destruction of the First Jewish Temple. A distinctive shift regarding the worship of the Hebrew God, from corporate to individual, called for changes to the ancient Israelite perspective, resulting in the long-term written preservation of Scripture.

Exilic Psalms

"The Babylonian invasion of 587/6 BC brought a sudden end to the worship at the temple and the performance of psalms."[371] The destruction of the temple and Jewish exile was a decisive moment in Hebrew culture with, at least one, positive result. Since central, public worship was halted, writing down and preserving the Scriptures began to take precedent over oral tradition. The cultural transfer of Hebrew worship drifted from temple to *Torah*. What was the preexilic public performance of the psalms became the literary publication of the faith throughout the exilic period.

Likewise, the loss of public worship caused a shift from corporate prayers to individual ones during the exile. While these individual prayers mention corporate "Zion" and the Hebrew exodus, the references are discrete; Broyles contends that corporate traditions in the individual prayer psalms were later editorial insertions to meet the specific needs of the postexilic community.[372]

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[370] Ibid.

[371] Ibid.

[372] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary.*

The social and theological crisis of exile framed much of the era's psalms with an overarching and distinct tone change from praise to lament.[373] Still, the cosmic tradition of *Yahweh*'s victory over the sea and control of created elements persisted in some of the exilic psalms. Table 14 provides a listing of the exilic passage and a notation regarding the psalm type; those with a cosmic trope are emphasized.

Table 15: Exilic Psalms with Notation on Psalm Type

Ps.	Type	Water Imagery (Y/N)
22	Individual Prayer	Y
51	Individual Prayer	N
69	Individual Prayer	Y
74	*Lament with Cosmic Trope*	*Y*
77	Individual Prayer	Y
79	*Lament with Cosmic Trope*	*Y*
102	Individual Prayer	N

Postexilic Psalms

"In psalms that are evidently postexilic (note, e.g., the petition for restoration from exile in Psa 106:47 and the distinction between the houses of Aaron and Levi in Psa 135:19–20), the recital of the Pentateuchal storyline comes center stage (Pss 105; 106; 135; 136)."[374] Likewise, postexilic psalms trend toward the theme of *Yahweh*'s cosmic kingship. Broyles writes:

> The combination of the cosmic tradition of *Yahweh* as divine king and the historical traditions of the Pentateuchal storyline allow a symbiosis that generates a radically new theology of *Yahweh*. *Yahweh*, by becoming cosmic king over all divine beings in the heavenly council, becomes the political king over all nations, as evidenced by the repetition of the "kings" and "kingdoms" vanquished in Canaan and especially in

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[373] Robert B. Chisholm, "Suppressing Myth: *Yahweh* and the Sea in the Praise Psalms," *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 88.

[374] Broyles, "Psalms, Book Of," *Lexham Bible Dictionary.*

Transjordan (Pss 135:10–11; 136:17–20). Postexilic psalms are the first
to refer to *Yahweh*'s "kingdom" (Pss 103:19; 145:11–13).[375]

Table 15 offers a listing of evident postexilic psalms and allusions with specific emphasis
on cosmically divine and political kingship.

Table 16: Postexilic Psalms with Allusions

Ps.	Allusion	Water Imagery (Y/N)
103	*Yahweh* as Cosmic King and Sovereign over Nations Refers to *Yahweh*'s Kingdom (103:19)	N
105	Exodus Conquest - *Yahweh* as Cosmic King with Historical Evidence Sovereign over Nations/Kings	N
106	Petition for Restoration from Exile (106:47)	Y
115	*Yahweh* as Cosmic King and Sovereign over Nations/Kings	N
135	Distinction Between the Houses of Aaron and Levi (135:19-20	Y
136	Exodus Conquest - *Yahweh* as Cosmic King with Historical Evidence Sovereign over Nations	Y
145	*Yahweh* as Cosmic King and Sovereign over Nations/Kings Refers to *Yahweh*'s Kingdom (145-:11-13)	N
150	Imperatival Hymn: Doxology for the Psalter	N

While dating the biblical psalms is challenging, it is clear that the cosmic trope is present
throughout. This cosmic trope positions *Yahweh* as the wholly sovereign, divine king over
creation, and created elements throughout Hebrew poetry in ancient, preexilic, exilic, and post
exilic timeframes; this is sharply contrasted with ANE polytheistic deities that are bound by
elements of creation.

Even beyond the canon of the Psalter, water imagery as a motif permeates the OT text
and serves as a polemic indicator positioning the Hebrew God above all other deific claimants.
An overall tally of the passages of Hebrew poetry assigned to an era herein results in 61% of the
passages including water imagery.[376] The prevalence of this motif not only warrants the

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[375] Ibid.

[376] This calculation includes the following ratios of water imagery to total passages assigned to the era: 1) Ancient – 8:10; 2) Preexilic – 11:19; 3) Exilic – 5:7; and 4) Postexilic – 3:8; for a total of 27:44 or 61%. Duplicate passages were not included in this calculation.

following canonical analysis, but future research in this arena to further illuminate the Psalter's exposition and exegesis. The pervasiveness of water imagery as a motif and as illustrative symbology is explored further in the sections that follow beginning with the Psalter itself, moving outward to the OT, in the extra-canonical analysis of ANE culture and worship which offers comparison between Hebrew belief and that of ANE neighbors.

Survey of Water Imagery in the Psalter

Because the Psalter was written by various authors across a vast period of time and has undergone some editing and redaction, it has been thought that the chapters of the Psalter could and should be studied individually, in accordance with each chapter's own *Sitz im Leben*.[377] This type of study produced results however narrowly; perhaps, this is what Arter Wieser meant when he referred to the psalms as "pictures without a frame."[378] A frame is, indeed, necessary for studying the meaning behind the carefully crafted liturgies and tightly woven poetry of the Psalter. The framework is found by reading the passages of the Psalter with a canonical consciousness, acknowledging the shape of the Psalter and how the correlation within the psalms and beyond the psalms comprise a canonical context for exposition. As should be obvious by now, the frame here is water imagery as a symbolic communicative element used by *Yahweh* to express his character and the ultimate redemptive plan for humanity.

When a survey of passages from the Psalter is considered, the waters and seas present are often personified and assigned certain attributes in tension with the Hebrew God. Likewise,

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[377] Brevard Childs first introduced the "canon-exegetical approach" in the 1960s. Some of Childs' earlier works developing the approach can be found in: Brevard S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," *Journal of Bible and Theology* 18, no. 4 (1964): 432-449; Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 23, no. 1 (1969): 20-31; and, Patrick D. Miller and Brevard S. Childs, "Biblical Theology in Crisis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90, no. 2 (1971).

[378] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 2010), 7.

Yahweh is presented with opposing attributes that the Psalter uses to position the Hebrew God above the created elements, primordial chaos, ANE deities, and sea monsters. As such, water imagery in the Psalter is both polemic and didactive Water imagery serves to make the case for *Yahweh* and teaches God's divine qualities of sovereignty, peace, providence, power, and as an agent of rescue. Consider Table 17's survey of passages alongside the attributes of water and the sea in tension with the character traits of the Creator which demonstrates this polemic and didactive concept.[379]

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[379] The Table is moved to the following page to ensure that the entire table with footnotes is accessible to the readers in Turabian format.

Table 17: Survey of Psalter Passages Containing Water Imagery

Ps.	Full Text	Water/Sea as…	*Yahweh* as…
18:4, 15-16	The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils. He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters.	Mighty, fierce, chaotic // (Recalls Red Sea/Exodus)	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Rescuer
23:2	He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;	Created-Natural Element	Peace-giver
24:2	The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.	Created-Natural Element	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Creator
29:3-4	The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty	Chaos, Created-Natural Element	Sovereign, All-Powerful,
32:6-7	Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*	Mighty, fierce, chaotic	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Rescuer
33:7	He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; he put the deeps in storehouses.	Chaos, Created-Natural Element	Sovereign, All-Powerful
65:7	You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.	Mighty, fierce, chaotic	Sovereign, All-Powerful
66:5-6	Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot	Recalling Exodus	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Rescuer
72:7-8	In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more. May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.	Created Element with an end	Sovereign with no end
74:13-15	You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the **dragons in the waters.** You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. You cut openings for springs and torrents; you dried up ever-flowing streams	Recalling Exodus, Sea creature reference	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Provider
89:9	You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.	Chaos, Created-Natural Element	Sovereign, All-Powerful
93:4	More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!	Chaos, Created-Natural Element	Sovereign, All-Powerful
95:5	The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.	Created-Natural Element // Recalls creation, flood, Red Sea	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Rescuer
98:7-8	Let the **sea roar, and all that fills it**; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy	Chaos, Creatures of the Sea worship *Yahweh*	Sovereign, All-Powerful
107:23-29	Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the mighty waters; they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.	Mighty, fierce, chaotic	Sovereign, All-Powerful
135:5-7	For I know that the Lord is great; our Lord is **above all gods**. Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, *in the seas* and all deeps. It is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth; he makes lightnings for the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.	Distinctly created natural element	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Provider
144:7	Stretch out your hand from on high; set me free and rescue me from the **mighty waters**, from the hand of aliens,	Mighty, fierce, chaotic	Sovereign, All-Powerful, Rescuer
148:7	Praise the Lord from the earth, **you sea monsters and all deeps**, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!	Mighty, fierce, chaotic, sea creature reference	Sovereign, All-Powerful

Table 17 is not a full treatment of water imagery in the Psalter; rather, it is a sample of passages that contain the motif of water imagery. Even upon a mere survey of verses, clearly the sheer volume of references in the Psalter indicates that the importance of water and the sea to Hebrew belief and daily life. It is immediately clear that the writers of the psalms are referring backward to earlier texts linking the Psalter to creation, the exodus of the Israelites, and the Noahic flood all of which share this watery motif. In each of these events, there exists the trope of the cosmic battle of God against chaos and the sea. In each case, God is present, as is his wind, and the sea must be driven back to provide dry ground for the ancient Israelites survival. The pivotal evens of creation, the flood, and the exodus inform the cosmology of ancient Hebrew thought. This research contends that the authors of the Hebrew psalms were influenced by the writers of the Pentateuch and the use of water imagery therein; the connections demonstrate that the Creator uses the created-natural, specifically water, to communicate redemption to and with his covenant people.[380]

Water Imagery in the Psalter Conclusion

In the Psalter, water imagery serves as a profound and multifaceted symbol, contributing significantly to the text's theological depth. Multiple examples have been provided herein that water imagery was used by *Yahweh* and the Psalmist's to metaphorically depict life's challenges, symbolize God's presence and sovereignty, and represent purification and renewal. Throughout the Psalter, water becomes a powerful metaphor for both adversity and the sustaining, cleansing nature of God's involvement in the lives of believers. The Psalms utilize various water-related images, such as rivers, streams, and the sea, to convey different facets of the human experience and the divine-human relationship. Through water imagery, the Psalter establishes thematic

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[380] To review Psalter case studies further supporting the thesis argument, see Excursus 1.

unity, connecting individual psalms with the broader biblical narrative, emphasizing God's creative power, redemptive acts, and ongoing covenant with His people. Overall, water imagery in the Psalms enriches the text with layers of meaning, contributing to a nuanced understanding of spirituality, adversity, and the divine-human connection.

Examining the world of Israel's origins and the Psalms' authors through the lens of water imagery reveals a living history that profoundly influenced ancient perspectives. For the Psalmists, historical events such as creation, Eden, the flood, and the Red Sea are not mere relics of the past; instead, the events serve as patterns and interpretive lenses through which the people understand present circumstances. These past events become wellsprings of hope, anticipating a future where the Creator will once again bring forth new creations and rescue and reclaim his people —mirroring the transformative events of Creation, the Noahic flood, and the Exodus/Red Sea crossing.

Moreover, the character of God as a sovereign provider and rescuer is revealed through water imagery. *Yahweh*'s cosmic kingship is proclaimed above all else through polemicy found in the psalms. Likewise, the Israelite's worship was characterized by the historical events and shaped by water imagery as a communicative element; in this way, the Psalter is necessarily didactive and prescriptive, reinforcing the Decalogue command to have "no other gods before me." The worship of *Yahweh* was and is a positive affirmation of the *imago Dei* identity; whereas, the worship of "others" or "things" constitutes a harming of the individual, which was previously explored in this chapter and will be further explored in Chapter Six: ANE Comparative Analysis.

Jonah: OT Allusions and Water Imagery [381]

The importance of the water imagery and symbolism in the prophetic book of Jonah cannot be overstated; though the book is small, the text carries a profound theological message.[382] Comprised of only four chapters, the story has captured the hearts and minds of many people, standing the test of time from oral Hebrew teachings to the written words taught in contemporary Christian Sunday School classes. Second only to the book of Genesis, the story of *Jonah* is likely one of the most well-known books in the OT and is recognized as canonical in across western Christian, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox traditions, in the Hebrew Bible, and included in the Qur'an. Stories of Jonah tend to conjure visions of a small, stubborn man sitting in the belly of a grand whale having been swallowed up because of rebellion against God. Though these childhood recollections are beautifully simplistic, the memories veil the breadth and depth of the *Jonah*'s history, the complexity of its exegesis, and the thematic interpretive diversity that is implicit to the book, itself.

One of the most important motifs in Jonah is the use of water imagery. Water imagery plays a crucial role in understanding the story of Jonah, serving both as a backdrop for the narrative and as a symbolic element that communicates deeper themes.The storm raging at sea mirrors both the chaos and divine judgment resulting from Jonah's defiance. It serves as a tangible expression of God's disapproval and the repercussions of human disobedience. Jonah's descent into the ocean symbolizes a time for introspection and repentance. Within the belly of the fish, his prayer marks a pivotal moment where he acknowledges his reliance on God's mercy.

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[381] Much of this section is derived from a previous work of the present author: Dawn Sutherland, "A Comprehensive Overview on the Old Testament Book of Jonah," *OBST 800-01 – Old Testament Backgrounds*, (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA), March 7, 2021

[382] This research uses italics to differentiate between the book of *Jonah* and the person of Jonah throughout this writing. The book of *Jonah* will be included in italics while the name of the person will remain in standard form.

As Jonah is cast onto dry land, his emergence signifies a process of renewal or rebirth, with the fish acting as a metaphorical womb. Through these events, Jonah undergoes a profound transformation, learning obedience and gaining insight into God's compassionate nature. The sea and the fish serve as instruments of God's sovereignty, illustrating His control over creation and His ability to impart vital lessons. Water imagery throughout Jonah's narrative links it to broader biblical themes, such as creation, the Flood, the Exodus, and the Psalms, reinforcing God's ongoing involvement in humanity's story. Furthermore, the water elements in Jonah's tale foreshadow Jesus's use of Jonah as a sign in the New Testament. Just as Jonah spent three days and nights within the fish, Jesus would similarly spend time in the tomb before His resurrection. Overall, water imagery in the story of Jonah serves as a dynamic and multi-layered symbol enriching the narrative by providing a vivid backdrop and contributing to the overall theological depth of the text.

Moreover, the story of *Jonah* is didactive in nature, much like the Psalter, teaching the inclusivity of the message of salvation while demonstrating that God's redemptive plan is divinely providential, vindicating deific attributes of goodness, holiness, and justice in firm control of the order of creation in which chaotic and moral evil exists; this is held in stark contrast to the deities and motifs presented in ANE mythological milieu in the same geographic, historical, literary, and iconographic context. Furthermore, Jonah provides a necessary bridge to this dissertation's thesis. The prophetic book carries strong connections with ANE texts that will be explored in cursory form within this section, leading into Chapter Six: ANE Comparative Analysis.[383]

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[383] For the study of Jonah, background information must be explored to give the book context and effectively establish the correct ANE milieu. Background information including: 1) The dating of Jonah, 2) Historic-

Comparative Contextual Analyses

The chaos of ANE primordial polytheistic gods and goddesses stands in stark contrast with the monotheistic God of the Hebrews as presented in *Jonah*, the creation narratives, and the flood narratives. First, this section explores the elements of the trope of the cosmic battle of *Yahweh* against chaos and the sea as a reasonable foundation for connecting *Jonah* to the ancient Hebrew accounts of creation, the flood, and Exodus. Then, the study presents similar ANE cosmologies that include the same elements to demonstrate motif parallels. All of this is conducted pursuant to the understanding that ANE cosmologies illuminate the purpose of the book of *Jonah* as theodicy within the historical context previously established.

Jonah and Ancient Hebraic Creation, Exodus, and Flood Narratives

To demonstrate a reasonable foundation for connecting *Jonah* to Hebrew creation, the exodus, and the Noahic flood narrative the research conducts a quick word study on *Jonah*'s pseudo-odd choice of the word יָבֵשׁ to refer to dry land.[384] The word is used only fourteen times in the Hebrew Bible, three of which are found in the book of *Jonah*.[385] Nine of the occurrences occur in discussion of biblical creation and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. While this is just one simple word study, the connection between *Jonah*, creation, the exodus, and the flood are all within the realm of plausibility.[386] In each of these events, there exists the trope of the

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Geographic context and archaeology, and 3) the sociohistorical background of the Diaspora is provided in Excursus 2.

[384] Recall the use of שׁ previously discussed in Establishing a Late Date for Jonah

[385] Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," 505.

For fuller treatment see the works of John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020).and Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[386] Other intra-biblical connections can be found in the comparison of the "large scale warning and destruction" motif present in the Hebrew flood narrative and in Jonah: *e.g.* the forty-day period of deluge destruction in the Genesis flood account and the repentance of Jonah occurring over a forty-day period, the symbology of יָבֵשׁ to

cosmic battle of God against chaos and the sea. It is the same story retold to fit each occasion. In

each case, God is present, as is his wind, and the sea must be driven back to provide dry ground

for the ancient Israelites survival. Similar tropes exist in ANE cosmologies. Chaos, wind, and the

sea must be managed for creation and re-creation, though polytheistic thought illistrates that

boundaries exist for the gods/goddess, deities, and monsters in mythological milieu. The

comparative method, focused on these elements, offers evidence that illuminates the divine

providence of *Yahweh*, vindicating the attributes of goodness, holiness, and justice in control of

the order of the universe while extending God's redemptive plan to restore the *imago Dei* beyond

the Israelites to all of humanity

"The cosmos in the ANE had generally been depicted as a threefold division: the heavens

and the waters above the firmament, the skies under the firmament with the earth consisting of

land and waters such as lakes and seas, wherein the animals of the sky, land and water dwell,

with the waters under the earth forming the third tier."[387] This is true in the Gen. 1 account of

creation which shows God as "hovering over" the primordial waters. Gen. 1:2 finds the earth

"formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the

face of the waters."[388] The Hebrew word here is transliterated as *tehom*, the unformed and

threatening primeval waters which existed before creation. In the ancient Israelite creation

tradition, it is by means of a spoken word God forced back these waters and established His

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signal new beginnings. These are all viable intertextual parallels. Fuller treatments of the intertextual connections can be found in Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 497-528 and David Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-Prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

[387] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol, A Sea-Monster Associated with the Primeval Sea?" *Journal for Semitics* 28, no. 2 (February 2019): 1-18, 5.

[388] All Scripture included herein is done so in accordance with the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

creation."[389] "In Jonah 2:5 (2:6 in the Hebrew text) it is the *tehom*, once again, that surrounds

and threatens Jonah."[390] The realm of the dead located in watery graves under the earth in

Hebrew expression is described in Job 26:5-6, "The shades below tremble the waters and their

inhabitants. Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering." So sits Jonah at the

bottom of the sea: "The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped

around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon

me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God." From darkness to light,

Jonah is resurrected from presumed death by *Yahweh*'s divine providence.

Jonah and *Tehom/Tiamat*

The similarity between *tehom* and Tiamat can be noted here; *Tiamat* is depicted as

"mother of all" in the *Enûma Elish* stories.[391] Tiamat, the primordial goddess of the sea, is an

important figure in Babylonian cosmology. Further, "…the Tiamat myth is one of the earliest

recorded versions of the *Chaoskampf,* the battle between a culture hero and achthonic or aquatic

monster."[392] "The *Enûma Elish* states that Tiamat gave birth to dragons and serpents among a

more general list of monsters including scorpion men and merpeople."[393] Though the creation as

recorded in the *Enûma Elish* occurs in a crisis episode, it is Tiamat who gives birth to all the

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[389] Louis C. Jonker and Douglas G. Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), 40.

[390] Ibid.

[391] Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels,* 24. (Enuma Elish - I:132-40)

[392] Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 1 (1968): 104-108.

[393] Leonard William King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation (with Supplementary Texts),* vol. II, 1902, accessed February 28, 2021, https://sacred-texts.com/ane/stc/stc02.htm.

members of the divine assembly.[394] The Babylonian creator-goddess turns into the primordial

chaotic evil later in the texts and is defeated by Marduk, the sun god, who was charged by the

divine assembly to "scatter her blood to the winds."[395]

Tiamat's decent in the chaos of the deep, bound by salt water, and left to the will of the

Babylonian polytheistic divine assembly sits starkly in contrast against the monotheistic God of

ancient Israel, who is believed to be the ultimate Creator in direct control of creation: land, sea,

and air, commanding chaos and directing the order of the world. This is called out explicitly by

Jonah 1:9. In the character's introduction to the pagan sailors, Jonah says, "I am a Hebrew," he

replied. "I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Since the

pagan sailors, like the Hebrew people, understood a threefold division of the cosmos, Jonah's

introduction is an explicit declaration of the Hebrew God as sovereign over all created elements,

ironically the same God from whom Jonah is running.

Likewise, listeners and readers of *Jonah* in the fourth century, would have known of the

threefold cosmological division and polytheistic worldviews that pervaded in the ANE; in this

way the book of *Jonah* would be read as anti-narrative to pagan polytheistic creation

cosmologies. While Tiamat and other like gods and goddesses are bound by the elements like the

sea, chaos, and the will of other gods, the Hebrew God is in full control of creation; to wit, *Jonah*

demonstrates the sovereignty of *Yahweh* while also illustrating the divine providential character

of the Hebrew God, good, holy, and just, even in the face of existent chaos and evil in contrast to

the story of Tiamat in the *Enûma Elish* and in generality, other ANE cosmologies.[396]

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[394] Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels,* 24. (Enuma Elish - I:132-40)

[395] Ibid.

[396] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol, a Sea-Monster Associated with the Primeval Sea?" *Journal for Semitics* 28, no. 2 (February 2019): 1-18. In the author's footnotes, Dysell makes reference to the following ANE deific archetypes and respective parallels specifically in the context of the pagan sailor's penitent prayers in *Jonah:*

Jonah, Tehom, and The Underworld

Jonah 2:5 says, "The waters closed in over me; the deep (*tehom*) surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head."[397] Here the study analyzes *tehom* again, but this time considering the knowledge of the underworld that was shared among ancient Israelite and ANE traditions. The waters of the deep/primeval/primordial sea were considered an underworld. "From the opening verses in Gen. 1 that at least these waters were in existence when God started his creation. The waters of the deep were wrapped in total darkness, and the breath/wind of God lingered over the waters."[398]

Exodus 20:4 further relates the understanding of waters as underworld, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." More broadly, the book of Exodus chronicles the rescue of the Hebrew people by the hands of *Yahweh*, using the physical means of parting the waters of the Red Sea, so that the Israelites might escape capture of the Egyptian Pharoah to arrive on dry land in apparent freedom. The odd use of יָבֵּשׁ to refer to dry land has already been established in the ancient Israelite creation, flood, and Exodus accounts; suffice to note specifically here that the word for "dry land" connects Exodus and the book of *Jonah* as

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"established and respective weather/storm gods that they turned to in prayer would most probably have been Baal (who conquered Yamm in the Canaanite tradition, and for good measure also יָ֣ם נַ֯הֲ and Lotan), Teshub (Hittite/Hurrian, who fought against Illuyanka) (Oldenburg 1969, 64), with battles also by Kumarbi (Mittani) and Hadad (Syria), (Wyatt 2007, 118;(Schwemer 2001) Egyptian Horus had fought against Seth, Babylonian Marduk against Tiamat, Greek Zeus against Typhon. Akkadian Tishpak battled Labbu (Heidel 1951, 141–43). And to conclude the list of extensive examples, Demarous fought against Pontos in the Phoenician history of Philo of Byblos (Baumgarten 1981, 195), and even *Yahweh*."

[397] *Tehom* is added to the verse as a transliteration of the Hebrew word used for "the deep." Also, the verse referenced in the Hebrew Bible is Jonah 2:6. Noting here that Jonah 2:5 is the verse reference in English translations. Jonah 2:5 as a reference is used throughout this section with the note that Jonah 2:6 is the Hebrew reference.

[398] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 5.

does the motif of God's sovereignty and divine providence, control of creation: wind, sea, and air, using the elements of dry land and water as instruments for deliverance demonstrating *Yahweh*'s holy, good, and just attributes.

The occasion of Ex. 20:4 is also enlightening. Moses had returned from Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments in direct communion with the Hebrew God, only to find the ancient Israelites making idols to pagan gods and goddesses, likely influenced by the Egyptian culture among whom the Israelites had existed for generations. Before reading the Ten Commandments, Moses speaks against idolatry on behalf of *Yahweh* and issues the parameters for divine judgment. In this way Ex. 20:4 is a reminder of the "waters of the deep" as an underworld metaphor consistent with Egyptian cosmology. Dyssel codifies the ancient Israelite outlook regarding waters of the deep as underworld with biblical intertextual citations:

> The ancient Israelites imagined the earth as flat and covered by a solid dome of the firmament which is held up by mountain as pillars (Job 26:11; 37:18). Above the firmament and below the earth were the primeval waters that *Yahweh* divided at creation (Gen. 1:6, 7; Ps. 24:2; 148:4). The heavenly lights were attached to the firmament (Gen. 1:14–19; Ps. 19:4, 6). שׁאול, the place of the dead, lay under the earth, in the deep (Num. 16:30–33; Isa 14:9,15)[399]

Likewise, *The Experience Ancient Egypt Organization* describes the Egyptian cosmological understanding, "In ancient Egyptian cosmology, the Earth was thought to be flat and oval-shaped and surrounded by oceans. Underneath this earth lay the vast expanse of the underworld, which also had the primordial waters of Nun running through them."[400] While the cosmologies have differences both share the association of primeval waters of the *tehom* associated with the

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[399] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol,"5-6.

[400] "Duat - The Ancient Egyptian Underworld," *The Experience Ancient Egypt Organization*, accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.experience-ancient-egypt.com/egyptian-religion-mythology/egyptian-afterlife/duat.

underworld. These ancient understandings serve as the backdrop for *Jonah* and Jonah 2:5, specifically. To wit, Jonah's experience in the primeval depths demonstrates a trope understood in both ancient Israelite and ANE cultures as a journey to the underworld, that which is the realm of chaos waters and chaos monsters. In the context of Hebraic understanding, *Yahweh* has control over this chaos; in ANE literature, gods and goddesses are often at the mercy of these same forces.[401] The mythological history of the fourth century lends credence to these findings, with the chaos waters in residence by the chaos monsters.

Jonah and Sea-monster Parallels

Fourth century coastal cities of the ANE, ancient Israel, and ancient Judah are rife with seafaring terminology, as is the story of Jonah. The chaos of the sea is the realm of sea-monster myth that cannot be ignored in this analysis, because it illumes readers to understand the context of the fantasticated story of the great fish in *Jonah* and the reading of *Jonah* as an anti-narrative to polytheism highlighting the deific power and attributes of the Hebrew God.[402] According to Boyd, "when the gods of [ANE] myths set out to bring order to the chaotic waters, they did so through war, battle, and violence."[403] Accordingly, the God of Israel requires no such violence. The chaotic sea calms by *Yahweh*'s word. This understanding is contrasted here in the myths of Perseus and Andromeda, by the chaos sea-god Dagon, and later in the story of Herakles.

To wit, the story of Perseus and Andromeda has already been established in this work residing the same historic and geographic stream as *Jonah*, both having originated in the city of

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[401] One example is Tiamut, who descends into the depths of the chaos waters only to be defeated by Marduk at the goddess'children's behest (having birthed the entire divine assembly as creator-goddess.) Other parallels are previously discussed.

[402] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 5-6.

[403] Gregory Boyd, *God at War* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 159-164.

Joppa around the fourth century. Summarizing the myth of Perseus and Andromeda from

archaeology in the tradition of Hansen, Dyssel writes:[404]

> In the myth of Perseus and Andromeda, Andromeda's mother, queen
> Cassiopeia boasts that she and Andromeda were more beautiful than the
> Nereids (sea-goddesses). They complained to the god of the sea Poseidon
> who in rage threatened to destroy the entire kingdom. King Cepheus
> consulted an oracle and subsequently tied Andromeda to the sea's edge as
> a sacrifice for the sea-monster Cetus to devour her. Perseus, after asking
> her if she would marry him if he kills the sea-monster, killed the sea-
> monster in a gruesome battle at Joppa in Palestine.[405]

Similarly, ancient Greek mythology finds the legend of Herakles who rescues Hesione

just as Perseus delivered Andromeda. Hesione was the daughter of the King Laomedon of Troy

who had provoked the wrath of Poseidon. As a sacrifice to Poseidon, the King of Troy tied

Hesione to the shore. Poseidon then sends a sea-monster to dispose of the princess, only to be

thwarted by the demigod, Herakles. Some of the legends of Herakles' rescue of the Trojan

princess, report that Herakles was only able to save Hesione by allowing himself to be

swallowed by the sea-monster; then the demi-god killed the sea-monster from the inside out.[406]

Likewise, Dagon has been established herein as an important deity in Nineveh and

broader ANE context dating back from the third millennium, during the fourth century, and even

unto the second century. In literary context, The LXX translates the Hebrew word for Jonah (יוֹנָה)

into Ιωνας (trans, Ionas) similar to the word Ὠάννης (trans. Oannes) and Ἰωάννης (trans.

Oannes). Ἰωάννης is the Greek name for John, but it is no wonder that scholars have made the

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[404] William F. Hansen, *Ariadne's Thread: A Guide to International Tales Found in Classical Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 122.

[405] Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol...," 8.

[406] The parallel of "swallowing" the protagonist in Herakles and in the book of *Jonah* is noted here, though a full treatment is outside of the scope of this research.

connection between the story of Jonah and the Assyrico-Babylonian myth of the sea god

Oannes.[407] Oannes represents the Hellenized version of the ANE god called Dagon consistent

with a fourth century *Jonah* dating. Interestingly, references to the god are often illustrated in sea

creature form. While older scholarship discredits the importance of Dagon in the ANE, the

contemporary academy has resurrected the argument of Dagon's existence as a fish-god/sea-

monster in Nineveh and beyond, setting the god's authority upon the sea with a prevalence for

belief in coastal, seafaring ANE areas.[408] In the context of the chaotic sea, Dagon appears a

resident chaotic sea-monster in the abode of the chaotic waters in the geographic context of the

Jonah story. It is plausible that a sea-monster, or the likes thereof, intruded ANE seafaring

conversation in prevalent fear of the mysterious depths of the underworld. "Berossus, a

Babylonian priest of the fourth century BCE describes the form of Dagon as the body of a fish;

while 'under the head of the fish is the head of a man and added to its tail were the feet of a

woman.'"[409] The fifth century Phoenician inscription on the sarcophagus of King Eshmunʿazar

of Sidon adds another association of Dagon with the book of *Jonah*: "Furthermore, the Lord of

Kings gave us Dor and *Joppa*, the mighty lands of *Dagon*, which are in the Plain of Sharon, in

accordance with the important deeds which I did."[410] Dagon as a god of the sea is consistent with

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[407] For fuller treatment, see: Chrn Friedr Illgen and Ferdinand Christian Baur, "The Prophet Jonas an Assyrico-Babylonian Symbol," in *Zeitschrift für Die Historische Theologie*, English. (Leipzig, 1832).

[408] The most obvious resurrection of the argument occurs in: Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol, a Sea-Monster Associated with the Primeval Sea?" *Journal for Semitics* 28, no. 2 (February 2019): 1-18. The modern argument is further supported by Ben Zvi Ehud, "Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 367 (London: Sheffield Academic Press: 2003); Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2014); and, Alhena Gadotti, *"Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld" and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Cycle* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2014).

[409] The Editor, "Is the Book of Jonah Historical?" *The Old Testament Student* III, no. 2 (October 1883): 33-40, accessed February 23, 2021, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/469321, 35.

[410] Ibid, 662.

the fear of the depths persistent to a fourth century dating of *Jonah*. Scholars like Dyssel have concluded that no mere whale or fish by scientific explanation could have swallowed the character of Jonah; therefore, the presence of a chaotic sea-monster resident in the chaotic underworld sea would have best suited the mythological milieu pervading the fourth century narrative. Thereby, the story of Jonah fleeing the presence of the Hebrew omniscient God, is juxtaposed against the chaotic powers of the sea and those that abide therein.

In *Jonah*, *Yahweh* chooses a vehicle of deliverance common among ANE residents to communicate sovereignty, control over creation, over chaos, and the underworld and for the benefit of His inclusive salvific plan for all people. The prayers of the sailors who bore Jonah on the ship at Joppa may have called out to patron deities of the sea and the chaotic monsters of its abode at first, but "the severity of the storm eventually caused the captain to abandon his own patron-god for that of Jonah's."[411] Deliverance occurs on the behalf of the pagan sailors and Jonah the prophet, although by different means. For the sailors, the sacrifice of Jonah and their penitent prayers to the Hebrew God caused a quiet sea. For Jonah, God delivered a creature who would serve as a taxi for deliverance upon יַבֶּשֶׁ, just as the people of Israel in Exodus, and Noah's family and the animals upon the ark, achieved deliverance by the hand of the monotheistic and sovereign, Hebrew God by way of dry land and water. The chaotic sea contrast of ANE polytheistic gods becomes apparent in this light and is further exemplified by way of imagery, iconography, and culture.

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[411] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 1-18.

Jonah, Inversion Imagery, and Sea-Monster Iconography

In the book of Jonah, inversion imagery and sea monster iconography contribute to the thesis by serving as powerful metaphors for the struggle between humanity's fallen state and God's redemptive plan. The narrative of Jonah depicts the prophet's rebellion against God's command to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh, leading to his descent into the depths of the sea and subsequent rescue by a great fish.

The sea, often portrayed as a chaotic and menacing force in ANE literature, symbolizes the realm of chaos and destruction. Jonah's descent into the sea reflects humanity's fall from grace and departure from God's intended design, highlighting the theme of identity inversion. Through Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish, readers are confronted with the consequences of disobedience and the need for repentance and redemption.

Furthermore, the sea monster iconography in the book of Jonah serves as a powerful symbol of God's sovereignty and mercy. Despite Jonah's rebellion, God orchestrates events to bring about Jonah's repentance and eventual obedience. The image of the sea monster swallowing Jonah and later spitting him out onto dry land mirrors the process of death and resurrection, symbolizing the possibility of redemption even in the midst of disobedience.

Moreover, the inversion imagery in the book of Jonah reflects the broader biblical theme of God's redemptive plan for humanity. Despite Jonah's attempt to flee from God's presence and the prophet's resistance to God's call, God's grace ultimately prevails, leading to the repentance of the people of Nineveh and the restoration of Jonah's mission. This narrative arc reinforces the thesis's exploration of how God's plan for humanity's redemption is universally expressed through imagery of chaos and restoration.

Overall, the inversion imagery and sea monster iconography in the book of Jonah contribute to the thesis by highlighting the consequences of disobedience, the need for repentance and redemption, and God's sovereignty and mercy in the face of human rebellion. These motifs serve as powerful metaphors for the broader biblical narrative of God's redemptive plan for humanity and the ongoing struggle between sin and restoration.

Inversion Imagery

Inversion imagery makes up the entire book of Jonah. Even the book's literary structure presents inversion through chiasm.[412] To wit, a brief overview of the structure of Jonah is reasonable it reveals inversion imagery that iconographic in both Hebrew and ANE cultures further supporting the thesis illuminating Jonah as theodicy in the fourth century BCE. "The first sign of the inversion in the text is that God asks Jonah to go East to Nineveh, the Capital city of the Assyrian empire, the current enemy of Israel, but Jonah goes West towards Tarshish to flee God."[413] This is symbolic inversion imagery is noted because the west is associated with "the edge of the world, darkness, and death," the abode of chaos gods/goddesses and sea-monsters.[414] In this way, Jonah chooses darkness over light, death over life, chaos over obedience. After boarding the ship to Tarshish, Jonah falls asleep in the boat. Again, the imagery of the text

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[412] Dawn Sutherland, "An Analysis of Jonah's Hebraic Structure," OTCL 511: Advanced Hebrew Tools (B01), (Lynchburg: Liberty University, October 13, 2020). This original work analyzes Jonah's structure through the Hebrew language. An excerpt is included as an Appendix A to show a chaos thematic and Appendix A demonstrates the chiastic structure of the book holistically around the theme of chaos. While other scholars have broken down Jonah into segments of chiasm, an analysis of the book as a whole is relevant to show literary unity and demonstrates the purposeful chiastic structure of the book clueing readers into the thematic reversal that fourth century listeners and readers would have picked up both by Israelites and ANE people groups.

[413] Jonathan Pageau, "Jonah - Resurrecting the Body and Saving the City," *Orthodox Arts Journal* (May 2014), accessed March 7, 2021, https://orthodoxartsjournal.org/jonah.

[414] Ibid.

suggests Jonah's death, this time at the bottom of the boat protected by the shell of the boat.[415] Intertextually, the reader is reminded of Noah and family in the bottom of the ark, linking the two characters together again in the ancient Hebrew mind. When Jonah is thrown off the ship into the depths of the primordial sea reveals a dynamic climax through narrative and imagery reversal. Protected by the belly of דָּג גָּדוֹל Jonah descends to the third and lowest segment of the cosmos, שְׁאוֹל - the underworld, understood in ancient Hebrew and ANE religious traditions.[416] The great reversal occurs in the depths and is played out upon the rest of Jonah's story an encompassing life-to-death, death-to-life theodicy.[417]

Dyssel relates Jonah's descent to that of Hercules' visit to the underworld.[418] Carper calls this episode, "an undertaking only mythic men attempted – going to the land of death and, after touring, coming home again."[419] *The Gilgamesh Epic* shows the Egyptian god Enki attempting to rescue his wife Inanna from within the netherworld. An indication that demonstrates that even gods could not enter the netherworld, but although no one could enter, "reaching the gates of the deep seems like a feat no ordinary person or animal could achieve."[420] In this way, readers can recall the thesis. ANE gods are bound by creation and elements therein, bound to territorial reign, and disallowed entry to certain places. *Yahweh* is not bound, nor does chaos hinder the Hebrew God's sovereign rule in Divine Providence of his people inclusive of the "other."

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[415] One can infer that the ship was provided by *Yahweh* in divine providence in direct contrast to Jonah's "wickedness." See Appendix A and B for fuller treatment.

[416] Again, *Yahweh* provides showing dominion over the chaos of the storm and despite Jonah's "wickedness."

[417] See the subsection herein titled "Penitent Prayer in the Fourth Century."

[418] Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 12.

[419] Thomas Carper, "Hercules' Descent into the Underworld," *Poetry* 142, no. 2 (1983), 75.

[420] Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 12.

Sea-Monster Iconography

Day proposes the imagery of a fish/whale is better represented by that of a sea-monster swallowing the character Jonah, which sits well within ANE mythological contexts and supports this thesis. Day surmises that the whale/fish mentioned in Jonah is derivative of the Canaanite chaos monster.[421] Indeed, "The city of Nineveh, its king and inhabitants as the central protagonist in the book of Jonah may have elemental mythical undertones. The name Nineveh is derived from the Akkadian word *nūnu*, 'fish', thus the city is 'Fishtown.'"[422] Merrill speculates that *Nanshe* could have been the chief deity in Nineveh.[423] Since there is a town called *Nina* near Lagash that worshipped the fish-goddess *Nanshe*, this speculation is reasonable. *Nanshe's* birth is described in the Sumerian myth of "*Enki* and *Ninhursag*." It is interesting that *Nanshe* is the daughter of *Enki;* as established herein, *Enki* traveled to the underworld in an attempt to save Inanna but failed. Enki's daughter is symbolized by a fish representing her initial role as water goddess. *Nanshe* is often accompanied by water birds and is said to have been worshipped as a provider and caregiver as illustrated by the later iconography of *Nanshe* as a pelican, a bird in folklore that understood to open its own chest to feed her young. *Nanshe's* legend is an ancient one dating back to the second millennium, but the worship of *Nanshe* may have persisted based on Nineveh's name and that of *Nana* in the same geographic area persistent in iconography.

In the same historic stream as Jonah, "Berossus has preserved an Assyrian tradition to the effect that Assyria's arts and sciences were brought from the Persian Gulf by a half-fish, half-

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[421] John Day, "Problems in the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah," in *Quest of the Past. Studies on Israelite Religion, Literature and Prophetism: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference, Held at Elspeet, 1988*, ed. A.S. van der Woude (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 32-47.

[422] Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol," 12.

[423] Eugene Merrill, "The Sign of Jonah," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 1 (1980): 23-30.

man deity, called in the Greek, Oannes."[424] Readers will recall that Berossus is a fourth century

Babylonian priest and relates Oannes to Dagon as discussed herein under the subsection titled

"Sea-Monster Parallels." Crowell notes the particular etymology among medieval commentators

on the Hebrew Bible "was that the name was related to the Hebrew lexeme dāg gādôl."[425]

Crowell recalls the rejection of the theory by the majority of scholars, despite its support by

several scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[426] Dyssel, Crowell, and others have

resurrected the story of Dagon as the sea-monster of *Jonah*. Crowell notes that fish-like men or

gods on coins pervaded in fourth century coastal Mediterranean iconography.[427] "The strongest

proof comes from the personal name on a fifth or fourth century BCE Phoenician seal from

Tharros on Sardinia."[428] The author continues asserting that, "A similar inscription is found on a

fourth century BCE coin from the satrapy of the governor Mazday."[429] Whether Nanshe or

Oannes/Dagon were the prime deity of Ninevah, is not relevant for this research.[430] Rather, the

point is that the iconography of fish gods/goddesses and sea-monsters persisted in ANE religious

thought in the geographical context and historic stream of *Jonah*.

When viewed against this iconographic/historical background, the story of Jonah and the

fish becomes an explicit a declaration that *Yahweh* is in fact the true-God, dominant over

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[424] Ibid.

[425] Bradley Crowell, "The Development of Dagan: A Sketch," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 32-83, 33.

[426] Ibid.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Ibid, 48.

[429] Ibid.

[430] Layard's fish low relief excavation in Ninevah has already been discussed herein.

Nanshe, Oannes/Dagon, over the realms of chaos and the netherworld, over any sea-monster that is commanded therein. Indeed, the Hebrew God even turns the "fish-man" who was the supposed progenitor-deity of Nineveh into His messenger in the person of Jonah using chaos to overcome itself. The return of the prophet Jonah from death, darkness, and the abyss in the milieu of iconography explains the Ninevites acceptance and immediate repentance from polytheistic worship and "wickedness," to the monotheistic Hebrew God in control of all of creation and all-good provider for His prophet and His people. Thus again, Jonah can be read as an anti-polytheistic treatise exposing the divine provision and attributes of *Yahweh* as good, just, and holy as illumed by the historic background, geographical area, literary comparisons, and iconography in the context of ANE mythological milieu.

A Conclusion on Jonah

Childhood recollections of *Jonah* are replaced with the fanaticized imagery of the chaotic deep, the underworld, and sea-monsters, and the Hebrew God stands in Divine Providence over chaos, death, to resurrection from death to life. Jonah's three-day stint in the depths of the primordial sea, delivered by *dāg gādôl*, demonstrate *Yahweh*'s sovereignty in the face of the chaotic sea and all who reside within and without in ANE mythological milieu. The same three-day life-to-death motif is recalled in the reading of the *Decent of Inanna*:

> From the great heaven she set her mind on the great below. From the
> great heaven the goddess set her mind on the great below. From the great
> heaven Inanna set her mind on the great below. My mistress abandoned
> heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the
> underworld. Inanna abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended
> to the underworld.[431]

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[431] "The Descent of Inanna into the Underworld: A 5,500-Year-Old Literary Masterpiece," *Ancient Origins: Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past* (January 2, 2017), accessed March 7, 2021, https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends/descent-inanna-underworld-5500-year-old-literary-masterpiece-007296.

Though by choosing the underworld over life, *Inanna* could not escape the tragedy of the choice nor could she be rescued by the god *Enki*. In contrast, Jonah's choice of darkness was met by deific deliverance, a deliverance that could only be explained by the Divine Providence of the ancient, monotheistic Israelite God. In modern Bible study, readers can infer even more meaning to the three-days, death-to-life motif, at the hand of Creator-God. Fast forward to *circa* 28 CE, where in Matt. 13, Jonah is the only prophet to which Jesus compares Himself.

> Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here! (Matthew 13:38-41)

Deliverance from death-to-life is distinctive to *Yahweh* and is demonstrated in the Hebrew creation, the Genesis flood narrative, the Exodus, in *Jonah*. Water imagery contributes as both narrative backdrop and a symbolic element conveying deeper themes. The storm at sea represents chaos and judgment; while, Jonah's descent into the sea and subsequent prayer within the fish symbolize repentance and redemption, a transformative experience in the watery depths. The fish, serving as a kind of womb, becomes a symbol of rebirth. The water in Jonah's story also symbolizes God's sovereignty, showcasing His control over creation and using elements like the sea and the fish to impart crucial lessons to Jonah. Additionally, the water elements foreshadow Jesus's use of Jonah as a sign, connecting the Old and New Testaments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter Five sheds light on the enduring significance of *imago Dei*, extending beyond the initial act of creation to encompass theological dynamics. By conducting

intra-biblical comparative analyses, this chapter unveils profound insights gleaned from the

Exodus, the Psalter, and the book of Jonah. The discussion on Exodus reaffirms the theological

unity previously explored, underscoring how God's redemptive plan consistently revolves around

the restoration of *imago Dei* identity. Furthermore, the examination of the Psalter underscores

the pivotal role of water imagery in Yahweh's communication and the prescription of worship,

reinforcing the thesis's exploration of water symbolism as a universal expression of God's plan

for humanity's redemption. Additionally, the analysis of Jonah serves as a vital bridge between

intra-biblical analysis and ANE contextual research, showcasing how supernatural intent is

conveyed through natural processes, leading to the eventual restoration of *imago Dei.* Across

these case studies, the unifying thread of water imagery emerges, revealing God's character,

guiding worship practices, and pointing towards an eschatological realization of *imago Dei*

restoration accessible to all humanity. Thus, the chapter provides compelling evidence

supporting the thesis's argument that *imago Dei* restoration is the ultimate end-state of God's

redemptive plan, universally expressed through water imagery in both the OT and in ANE

context.

Chapter Six: ANE Comparative Analysis

Chapter Six explores the ANE context surrounding the biblical narrative of God's redemptive plan. Topics covered include understanding the *imago Dei* in ANE context, research supporting the trope of creation-rescue-re-creation, an analysis of Babylonian creation stories, and a comparison of ancient flood narratives. The chapter concludes with an investigation into the character of ANE primary gods and goddesses and worship practices associated. Understanding that "we become what we worship" is the primary focus of this section.

In exploring the cultural and psychological ramifications of ANE religious practices, the journey takes us through the disturbing rituals associated with primary gods and their idols, marked by sexual perversion and human sacrifice. Within the rich tapestry of the ANE, where such practices were prevalent, it becomes evident why *Yahweh*, the God of the Hebrew people, sought to shield them from the profound impact of these rituals. This chapter examines these practices from a sociological perspective, suggesting that human sacrifice and sexual worship may have functioned as mechanisms of social control. Through these extreme rituals, elites and rulers could solidify their power, reinforcing authority structures and societal norms. The cultural and psychological trauma inflicted upon those participating in the rituals of deities like Baal, Asherah, Chemosh, and Molech is a central focus. Drawing on the insights of scholars like Bayer, Ammann, and Khadem, the research delves into the concept of cultural trauma, exploring how events, especially those involving extreme rituals, shape the collective consciousness of a society. The chapter seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between psychological trauma, cultural memory, and historical hermeneutics in the context of ancient societies. Ultimately, the narrative guides us to a pivotal realization: that the images people revere shape not only their beliefs and values but also their very essence. As we examine the ancient Israelites' divergence

from *Yahweh* and the subsequent resemblance to the gods they worshipped, the investigation lays

the groundwork for understanding an overarching theme of the dissertation — the profound

impact of worship on human identity. Through this exploration, the research paves the way for

an insightful journey into the redemptive narrative woven by *Elohim* throughout the OT and into

the New (Chapter Seven), emphasizing the Creator's relentless pursuit of restoring the *imago Dei*

in humanity.

<div align="center">Understanding Imago Dei in ANE Context</div>

"Throughout the ancient Near East, an image was believed to contain the essence of that

which it represented. That essence equipped the image to carry out its function."[432] In Egyptian

literature, there is a single instance around 2000 BCE in the *Instructions of Merikare* where

people, in general, are said to have been created in the image of deity, although the focus is

generally on the king in such contexts.[433] The image is depicted as the origin of the king's power

and privileges. The king's power and privileges stem from the image. When compared to the

Genesis assertion that humankind was created *imago Dei,* the Egyptian reference can be clearly

read as an inversion of identity.

Likewise, in Mesopotamia the image carries three measures of significance. First, like the

Egyptian holding, the king is described as being in the image of a god. Second, a formed idol can

metaphysically hold the image of a god or goddess. Third, the image of Mesopotamian kings are

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[432] John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 20.

All of the translations of the ANE texts used in this section are from the following resource unless otherwise noted: Victor Harold Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2023).

[433] Detailed explanations provided in: E. M. Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1984); J. R. Middleton, *The Liberating Image* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 93–231.

found as a monumental reference in cities that had been conquered in battle. In a study of royal imagery, Winter finds that the monumental representations of kings were not necessarily done in the king's likeness. Rather, "those aspects of his features/appearance that had been molded by the gods and that resembled (or could be attributed to) the gods, such that the ruler's features convey qualities of ideal, divinely sanctioned rulership, not just personhood."[434] Therefore, in depictions, the emphasis lay not on physical resemblance but on a more abstract, idealized portrayal of identity tied to the position or role and the significance associated with the image.[435]

Contrastingly, according to the biblical worldview, humans are created in the image of God, embodying *Elohim*'s attributes and carrying his essence. Previously noted, the primary dimension of the image in relation to the original is that of worship, honor, completion, and satisfaction. Conversely, the subversion of this relationship is associated with perversion, corruption, consumption, and possession.

OT canonical witness regarding the *imago Dei* emphasizes the contrast between the true worship of the Creator and the false worship of created idols, highlighting the profound impact on human identity and the quest for security and significance. The effect of worship on the created is manifested through morality. In ANE context, the Yahwists had a choice: 1) reflect the image of the Creator or 2) reflect the image of another god or king.[436] The choice is still present in contemporary contexts. The decline in *imago Dei* language post-creation coincides with the

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[434] Irene Winters, "Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology," *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 359–381, 373.

[435] Ibid, 374-376.

[436] The effect of worship and reflection of polytheistic deities is discussed further under the subtitle "Worship Reflections" in this chapter.

language prohibiting idolatry; while the resurgence of image language occurs closely with the arrival of Jesus Christ, the *imago Dei par excellence*. The prohibition of polytheistic deity worship and the worship of idols was put in place by *Yahweh* to protect humanity, to preserve people and give them the best life on earth, while God affected the redemptive plan to restore humanity to *imago Dei* perfection in the eschatological future.

<div align="center">Creation Narratives</div>

The trope of creation-rescue-re-creation can be witnessed in ANE creation epics, though the word for "rescue" may be better termed as "crisis event," and the word for "re-creation" representing a new start for the gods, themselves. By studying the creation narratives readers can juxtapose the motivations of the polytheistic deities by the stories told in archaeological findings in the ANE. The motivations of the gods and goddesses reveal negative character in opposition to the Hebrew God's altruism and mercy for humanity. Also, the study reveals that the ANE deities were bound by the created-natural, while *Elohim* is in sovereign control.

The Trope of Creation-Rescue-Re-Creation

The structure and substance of Gen. 1–11 draw parallels from the extensive literary traditions of the ANE, a recognition that has been in place since the discovery of tablets detailing a "Babylonian Creation" and a "Babylonian Flood" in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fact is that, in Gen. 1–11, before Terah and Abraham left Ur, Bible readers step into a vastly different world. Beyond the Hebrew Bible, in the ANE, there is a rich history unfolding over a thousand years in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia. The ancients were aware of primordial history, as discussed in Chapter Three on cosmologies, but the understanding was much simpler, more functional. Gen. 1–11 reflects an ancient view in historical and social

contexts. So, once more, in this dissertation journey, readers can explore the biblical account, but now with broader literary, conceptual, and archaeological context.

As previously discussed, Gen. 1-11 lends to a tropic reading of creation-rescue-creation narrative; similarly, the redemptive plan – identity-inversion-reclamation is also present. Likewise, water imagery plays an important role to communicate the redemptive plan to the masses. A compilation of lists and narratives comes together to present a depiction of "primeval protohistory," notably akin to what is encountered in Gen. 1–11:[437]

1. *Sumerian King List*, ca. eighteenth century, before/after the flood.[438]

2. *Atrahasis Epic,* ca. eighteenth century at latest, likely composed earlier.[439]

3. *Sumerian Flood Tale* (or *Eridu Genesis*). ~1600 BCE. Narrative, damaged.[440]

All these Mesopotamian sources originate from the second millennium, particularly during its first half (~2000-1600 BCE). Subsequently, these texts, or some of them, were continuously copied until the seventh century BCE. The process was essentially replicative, essentially comparable to a contemporary reprinting of classic works like Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton; all were an act of edited replication rather than creative writing. Interestingly, no

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[437] The numbered list was modified from: Kenneth Anderson Kitchen, *On the Reliability of The Old Testament*, electronic. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006), NP, Chapter 9.

[438] For the fragments of Berossus in English, see Stanley M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus ,* *Sources from the Ancient Near East* 1/5 (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1978).

[439] For the Jews, the real equivalent of such works as these was in practice the much later set of writings by Flavius Josephus (translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, and L. H. Feldman), *The Jewish War*, and especially *Jewish Antiquities*, which are available in nine volumes (1927-65) of the LCL series.

[440] For overall presentations of the civilizations of the ancient Near East, valuable (but of occasionally variable quality in some respects) are (e.g.): J. M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East I-IV* (New York: Scribner, 1995); E. M. Meyers, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Ancient Near East I-V* (New York: OUP, 1997); plus D. B. Redford, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt I-III* (New York: OUP, 2000); and for biblical study and archaeology, D. N. Freedman et al., eds., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary I-VI* (New York: Doubleday, 1992). A one-volume handbook to the ancient Near East is provided by P. Bienkowski and A. R. Millard, eds., *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2000).

further literary compositions of this nature emerged in Mesopotamia after approximately 1600

BCE. The complete *Epic of Gilgamesh* had its inception in the early second millennium, with the

Old Babylonian version. Unfortunately, the text's fragmentary condition makes it challenging to

determine whether the narrative had already incorporated the flood episode from *Atrahasis* by

then. The incorporation is evident in the later "Standard Version" of the epic, created by the

Babylonian literary scribe *Sin-liqe-unninni*, roughly a century or two before or after 1000 BCE.

Notably, this "takeover" was limited to the flood episode, and no additional elements were

borrowed from *Atrahasis,* limiting the impact on the broader framework tradition of which the

flood was a part. An overview comparison of the tropes between the texts is exhibited in Table

17; note that in the ANE tropes, the concept of "rescue" should be replaced with "crisis."[441]

Table 18: Overview Comparison Between Mesopotamian Creation Stories and Genesis[442]

Sumerian Kings List	Atrahasis Epic	Eridu Genesis	Gen. 1-11
Creation assumed; kingship from Heaven	Creation assumed; humans to do the work previously assigned to gods	Creation; cities instituted	Creation (1-2)
Series of eight kings in five cities	Noisy humans alienate deities	Alienation	Crisis through malevolent manipulation (3); redemption through genealogies (4-5)
Flood	Flood; ark	Flood; ark	Flood; ark; *imago Dei* redemption through genealogy
Kingship; dynasties follow	New start	New start	Re-created beginning; redemption through genealogy

The general alignment of the primeval protohistory in all four sources should be evident

with little need for additional commentary, except to say that *Elohim*'s framework is categorized

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[441] Regarding the creation-rescue-recreation trope. For the ANE, creation-crisis-new start seems to fit better. The positive attributes of *Elohim* are not present in the polytheistic gods/goddesses, which is explored throughout this chapter.

[442] Derivative of a table provided by Kitchen but modified to thesis understanding. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of The Old Testament*, electronic, "Primeval Protohistories".

by creative acts and humanity's restoration; In Mesopotamia, the framework is marked by chaos and destruction. The absence of a "dynastic" nature in *Atrahasis* and *Eridu* accounts explains a lack of emphasis on dynasties or genealogies; the flow of time is seamlessly integrated into the narratives. Whereas the necessity of genealogies in the Genesis account flows out from humanity's *imago Dei* creation, setting the foundation for ultimate redemption.

Babylonian Creation Stories: Enuma Elish and Atrahasis

This section provides an overview of the Babylonian creation texts: the *Enuma Elish* and the *Atrahasis epic*. After a brief explanation of the creation aspects of the stories individually, the comparative analysis moves to make general then thematic comparative observations.

Enuma Elish

The recurring themes of creation and the flood, distinct from the previously discussed framework, appear in various writings. An example is the Babylonian epic Enuma Elish, often referred to as the "Babylonian Creation," which was compiled around 1000 BCE from older sources. Scholars have frequently drawn comparisons between *Enuma Elish* and Gen. 1–2.[443]

In the Babylonian tale, Marduk is described as the champion, a sixth-generation god. The text holds that before the inception of creation, two divine entities, Apsu, representing male fresh waters, and Tiamat, representing female waters, mingled, producing a second generation, Lahmu and Lahamu, possibly associated with the silt produced by these waters.[444] Then, a third

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[443] For an example of the classic study of Enuma Elish and relation to Gen. 1– 2, see: Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Also: Benjamin R. Foster, "Epic of Creation (1.111)," *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 391–402.

[444] This section is a cognate explanation and amalgamation of work by Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2015), 36; a reading of the *Enuma Elish* in: Foster, "Epic of Creation (1.111)," *The Context of Scripture;* and supplemental material in Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1.

generation, Anshar and Kishar, associated with the horizon, emerges. Anu, the god of heaven, comes from them, and from Anu, Ea (Enki) is born. Apsu, disturbed by the noise of the younger deities, plans their demise. However, Ea, with a magical spell, kills Apsu before the plan is executed. Outraged, Tiamat vows to carry out Apsu's plan and takes Kingu as her second husband. Marduk, the son of Ea, becomes a central character, accepting the challenge to lead and defend those marked for execution. After eliminating Tiamat, Marduk creates heaven and earth from her cadaver, tasks the imprisoned gods with building Babylon, and later relieves them through the creation of humankind using Kingu's blood. The story culminates in a royal banquet where Marduk receives permanent kingship, and his fifty names are listed in celebration.

The Atrahasis Epic

The Atrahasis Epic originated around 1700 BCE according to archaeological findings. Though the Atrahasis Epic deals primarily with a flood event, the focus in this section is the cosmological creative acts that are also described in the text.

As per the Atrahasis Epic, the universe had been divided among the three supreme gods, with Anu presiding over heaven, Enlil over the earth, and Enki over bodies of water.[445] The narrative primarily focuses on the earth, a responsibility seen as more of a burden than a source of joy. Enlil oversees the gods responsible for digging the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. However, akin to modern labor disputes, these divine workers rebel, alarming even Enlil himself. Witnessing the obstinacy of his offspring, Enlil becomes distressed and contemplates retiring to heaven to live with Anu. Enki, serving as the arbiter, empathizes with the grievances of the

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[445] This section is a cognate explanation and amalgamation of work by Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2015), 36; a reading of the *Atrahasis Epic* in: Foster, "Epic of Creation (1.111)," *The Context of Scripture;* and supplemental material in Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1.

overworked gods. His proposal is to create humankind, thus relieving the gods of their labor. Following Enki's suggestion, the gods sacrifice one of their own, We-ila, potentially the instigator of the rebellion. Using We-ila's blood, flesh, and clay, humankind is fashioned, assisted by the birth goddess Nintu(r)/Mami, who is subsequently honored with the title Mistress of all the gods. In total, seven males and seven females are created in appreciation for her role.

Enuma Elish, Atrahasis, and Genesis Compared

General Observations

The first observation to note is that both stories are set in a polytheistic system. Likewise, creation in both epics is described through procreation. In the beginning, there were two, not one, and through "mingling" the created order appeared. The distinction brings out a point about the Babylonian deities: like humans, the gods are subject to desires, magic, chance, and death. The gods originate from sexual unions, and their inherent nature entails a dependence on sexual desires.[446] The "humanity' of the gods is also expressed through Apsu's annoyance when the god is exasperated because of sleep deprivations. Caught in the conflicting counsel of Tiamat, his spouse advising against the execution plan, and Mummu, his vizier and counselor pushing for its implementation, Apsu decides to heed Mummu's advice, choosing it over that of his consort. Despite being a divine entity, Apsu is susceptible to magic. Ea's spell successfully immobilizes him, leading to the Apsu's death. As for being subject to chance, before sending the flood in the Atrahasis Epic, the gods decide through casting lots.

According to Hamilton, "If myth is the poetic expression of pagan religion, magic is its practical expression, and it can be called on in situations of god against human, human against

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[446] Because the Babylonian gods were dependent on sexual desires, meaningful worship of those deities was inseparable from engaging in sexual relationships. This is discussed further in the subsection in this chapter on ANE Worship.

god, or god against god."[447] The assertion underscores the existence of a realm or metadivine

space by which the gods are subservient and challenges all notion of any polytheistic god,

including Apsu, as wholly sovereign. In direct comparison, the Hebrew God is presented as all-

powerful and sovereign from the very first verse of the book of Genesis. To wit, the God of

Israel creates *ex nihilo*, by spoken word.[448] In the *Enuma Elish*, the world is formed by the death

of Tiamat, the slain god.

Thematic Observations

The Thematic Observations subsection compares concepts between the Babylonian

creation epics and the Genesis account of creation. The motifs examined include cosmological

control, water imagery, creatures of the sea, and the creation of humans. The key takeaway from

the thematic parallels is to understand the difference between *Elohim*'s sovereignty over creation

and the Babylonian god/goddesses subjugation to the created-natural. Likewise, readers can also

notice that the motivations of the Babylonian deities is self-fulfillment with a negative view of

humanity in stark contrast with the Hebrew God's rescue and redemption of humanity.

Cosmological Control. According to Walton, "The most important reflection of the way

the world worked in Mesopotamian thinking is embodied in the conceptual spectrum framed by

the Akkadian term *parṣu*…"[449] *Parṣu* is the control attribute of cosmological formation and

functioning and a distinctive characteristic defining the cosmos, deity, temple, or city. In the

context of Uruk and the patron deity Inanna, Inanna and Enki enumerate ninety-four of these

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[447] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 38–39.

[448] In this dissertation, it has already been established the *tehom/Tiamat* rendered "the deep" in English is a cognate of the name of the Babylonian goddess and associated with chaos. In this way and others, Genesis creation can be seen as polemic against the ANE creation stories.

[449] Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 14.

control attributes. One noteworthy observation is that these attributes are not of divine origin but are delegated to the primary gods—Anu, Enlil, and Enki—who administer the control attributes, but are also bound by *parṣu*.[450] The comparison of the role of the spoken word in Gen. 1 reaches a heightened level of significance when considering that the *parṣi* were established through the spoken word of the omnipotent Creator. 'In distinct contrast to Mesopotamian beliefs, Gen. 1 deals with the *parṣi*, by positioning the control mechanisms differently. Rather than positing deity as guardian of the cosmic *parṣi,* Genesis portrays God as the one who initiates the cosmic *parṣi*.'[451]

Table 18 demonstrates a thematic comparison between the use of water imagery in the stories of the Enuma Elish and Genesis.[452]

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[450] This concept is explained in great detail in: Wilfred G. Lambert, Andrew R. George, and Takayoshi Oshima, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion and Mythology: Selected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[451] Summarized from: Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 14.

The page here is separated from the following page to allow for Table 17 to be on one page in accordance with Turabian format.

[452] Water imagery in the Atrahasis Epic is compared later in this dissertation as a flood narrative.

Table 19: Thematic Water Imagery Comparisons - Enuma Elish and Genesis

Theme	Enuma Elish	Genesis
Primordial Chaos:	Characterized by disorder/bound by chaos	Characterize as sovereign, order derived from chaos
	In the Enuma Elish, the world begins with the primordial waters, symbolizing chaos. The god Apsu and the goddess Tiamat (*tehom*) represent the mingling of fresh and marine waters, creating the initial state of formlessness and disorder.	In Gen. 1:2, the description of the earth as "formless and empty" is depicted through water-related imagery. The Hebrew term תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ conveys the sense of chaos, confusion, and desolation. Water, particularly in its unbounded state, symbolizes the absence of order, structure, and purpose. The chaos is bound by the sovereign Creator.
Creation Through Conquest	The god Marduk's victory over Tiamat involves significant water imagery. Marduk splits Tiamat's body into two, creating the heavens from one part and the earth from the other. This act uses water as a medium for the process of creation through conquest.	Creation through spoken word; conquest is not required, except one could conjecture that God conquered chaos to order the cosmos.
Source of Life and Fertility	The "mingling" of Apsu (personification of fresh water) and Tiamat (personification of sea water) creates other gods	In Gen. 1:2, the presence of water is connected to the idea of creation and the potential for human life to emerge. The subsequent creative acts of God, including the separation of the waters and the formation of dry land, indicate the transformative power of water and its role in enabling life to flourish.
Water as Renewal	Tiamat as personified sea water is killed by Marduk. Rather than renewal, water is portrayed as death.	In the creation narrative, the Spirit of God hovers over the waters (Gen. 1:2), suggesting the active involvement of God's Spirit in the process of renewal and transformation. The separation of the waters signifies a purification of the chaotic elements, preparing the stage for the ordered creation to unfold.
Sovereignty	By Tiamat's death, water imagery reveals that the Mesopotamian gods are bound by the *parsu*, whereas, *Elohim* is wholly sovereign.	The act of God separating the waters and assigning boundaries to them showcases God's creative power and sovereignty over the natural world. It demonstrates that God has ultimate control over the elements, including water, and establishes order and purpose within His creation.

Creatures of the Sea. In the mythologies of the ANE, the sea was believed to be home to a multitude of menacing creatures. The sea beings were often linked to the tumultuous forces of chaos, presenting a challenge that creator deities had to overcome and subdue. In the *Enuma Elish*, *Tiamat*, the goddess of primeval waters, takes a prominent role as the leader of a rebellion

and is assisted by eleven hybrid sea beings.[453] The OT makes mention of various cosmic sea creatures.[454] The Hebrew term "*tannîn*" is often associated with the Ugaritic noun "*tunnanu*," denoting a formidable sea monster overcome by Anat/Baal. In Job 7:12, "*tannîn*" appears in conjunction with "*yam*."[455] Ps. 74:13–14 presents the "*tannîn*" with multiple heads, paralleling the description of Leviathan. Combat imagery is also evident in Is.51:9, where the defeat of "*tannîn*," akin to Rahab (figuratively Egypt), is depicted. In all cases *Yahweh* overcomes, whereas *Tiamat* is murdered in the Babylonian epic.

Creation of Humans. One distinct contrast between the Babylonian creation narratives and Gensis is found in the deity's motivation for the creation of man. In Gen., humans are created in the image of God. "When people are created in the rest of the ancient Near East, it is for the purpose of performing all the menial tasks necessary for providing food for the gods.[456] In Gen. 1:28, *Elohim* makes a command for humans to "multiply" and gives humanity dominion over creation. The Gen. 1:28 assertions by *Yahweh* are in direct contrast to the purpose of

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[453] Lambert et al. contend that there were only eight sea monsters and the others were simply misinterpreted poetics. What is interesting about the authors' description of the monsters is the interpretation for "what" they actually are. The authors write, "A careful reading of the passage in Enuma Elish (I 133– 46 and parallels in II and III) shows that there are in fact eight specific monsters: ba š mu , mu šḫ u šš u , la ḫ amu , ugallu , uridimmu , girtablullû , kulullû , and kusarikku (snake, 'savage snake', hairy hero, 'big d**emon**' savage dog, scorpion-man, fish-man and bull-man), which are referred to in the three generic plural descriptions: mu š ma ḫḫū , u š umgall ū nadr ū tu and ū m ū dabr ū tu ('monster serpents', dragons, and fierce **demons**)." Wilfred G. Lambert, Andrew R. George, and Takayoshi Oshima, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion and Mythology: Selected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 145, emphasis added.

These creatures are obviously a corruption of creation and a sort of genetic crossbreeding. If one conjectures that ANE gods/goddesses are reminiscent of the "sons of god," fallen angels, or Nephilim, then these interpretations take on new meaning as a malevolent force negatively impacting humanity, causing the disruption of creation, identity inversion, and the necessity for judgment.

[454] cf. Ps. 74:13–15; Isa. 27:1.

[455] Interpreted either as the sea in a general sense or, due to the parallel in this context, the entity symbolizing the sea as in Ugaritic literature, the chaos god of Yamm.

[456] Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 21.

humans in the Babylonian creation epics. In the Atrahasis Epic, the gods become troubled as the

population grows, leading to an escalation of issues and disturbances. Consequently, the gods

decide to address the population surge by unleashing plagues, famine, and drought. While

Yahweh gives humanity dominion over the created-natural, the Babylonian epics subjugate

people to god/goddess control and the dominion of the king, considered a god-incarnate. *Elohim*

continually restores the *imago Dei* through genealogies, and the Babylonian gods continually

destroy and oppress humanity.

<div align="center">Flood Narratives</div>

The story of an epic flood exists across all geographic, cultural, and social boundaries.

The marvel of the flood as a universal episode across ancient borders lies in its pervasive

presence in diverse cultural narratives around the world. Numerous ancient civilizations,

spanning various regions and cultures, have independently incorporated flood stories into the

stories of their people. The cross-cultural recurrence suggests a shared human experience while

capturing the imagination and collective memory of humanity, reflecting a deep-seated

awareness of events in the ancient past. The flood episode becomes a testament to the enduring

power of storytelling to bridge geographical and cultural divides, highlighting shared themes and

concerns that resonate across civilizations; of this, Walton rightly concludes, "The flood stories

from the ancient Near East and from around the world offer persuasive evidence that a flood of

significant magnitude occurred and was remembered."[457]

Centuries preceding the composition of the book of Genesis, there existed a narrative of a

colossal and devastating flood in written form within Mesopotamia. As this story circulated,

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[457] Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 49.

most likely through generations of oral transmission during family and community gatherings, adaptations unfolded, molding the specifics of its narration to align with the cultural context of the audience. The existence of alternate ANE flood narratives does not require a belief in "borrowing" theory.[458] Rather, comparing the versions is more important for telling us about the cultures in which the stories were preserved.

The oldest flood narrative is in Sumerian and details the tale of Ziusudra. Dating back to the early second millennium, the earliest Babylonian account is found in the *Atrahasis Epic*. Perhaps the most familiar rendition from Mesopotamia is integrated into the renowned *Gilgamesh Epic*. For the purpose of the research, the Babylonian accounts will be considered for comparison. Although the Epic of Atrahasis has been discussed previously, regarding creation elements, the flood episode will be analyzed here.

The Gilgamesh Epic: Overview

"Named after Gilgamesh, king of Uruk (Erech in Gen. 10:10) around 2600 BC, this epic dates to approximately 1600 BC according to Thorkild Jacobsen."[459] Gilgamesh, a king known for his oppressive and ruthless rule, instills profound bitterness among his people. Seeking to overthrow the king, the populace implores the other gods to craft a rival; the resultant figure is named Enkidu. Enkidu is considered a "wild man" and is only "civilized" after a week-long romp with a temple prostitute, Shamhat. Enkidu and Gilgamesh eventually meet and engage in a fierce battle. However, the fight ends in a draw, leading to mutual respect and friendship between the two. Together, the intense combatants become partners and go to battle all types of celestial

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[458] "Borrowing" history was addressed in this dissertation in Chapter One, under "Research Methodology and Structure."

[459] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 64. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

maleficent monsters. One such event was the quest to the Cedar Forest to defeat Humbaba, a monstrous guardian appointed by the gods. Gilgamesh and Enkidu succeed in killing Humbaba with the help of the Mesopotamian sun god, Shamash. During the combatants adventures, Ishtar, the goddess of love, proposes marriage to Gilgamesh, but he rejects her due to her history of mistreating past lovers. In retaliation, Ishtar sends the "Bull of Heaven" to wreak havoc on Uruk. Meanwhile, the gods punish Enkidu for killing Humbaba and subsequently, the "Bull of Heaven," by putting him to death. Enkidu's death sparks a pathological fear of death in Gilgamesh's own life. Gilgamesh recalls a story about a "Great Flood" and how a mortal, Utnapishtim, was granted eternal life by the polytheistic pantheon. Should Gilgamesh manage to locate Utnapishtim, there exists the possibility of uncovering the secret that could potentially secure his own eternal life. The journey through the intricate realms of the underworld proves arduous, culminating in Gilgamesh's eventual encounter with Utnapishtim, and this is the story that Utnapishtim told.

The god, Ea, tells Utnapishtim that Enlil was on a quest to destroy humankind with a flood. Humankind had come to a point that irritated Enlil as the noise of human population had interrupted the god's rest. Ea informs Utnapishtim that, "if he is wise, should build a boat, upon which he is to take members of his family, cattle, some valuables, and professional sailors."[460] The storm rages on for seven consecutive days and nights, causing Utnapishtim's boat to become entangled on a mountaintop once the waters begin to subside. After disembarking, Utnapishtim pays homage to his gods. It then comes to the attention of Enlil that two humans have survived the deluge. To complete the task of eradicating humanity, Enlil grants immortality to Utnapishtim and his wife. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh about a plant that can renew youth at the

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[460] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 65.

base of the ocean. Gilgamesh retrieves the plant only to lose the key to eternal life on the journey

back to Uruk. 'Gilgamesh returns to his home of Uruk, resigned to reality. Denied personal

immortality, the king resigns himself to at least live on in the minds of the people through

impressive Uruk, which he has built. Immortality thus becomes the work of his own hands

through legacy.'[461]

The Atrahasis Epic: Overview

Just like the Gilgamesh Epic, humans annoy Enlil after their creation. Created to fulfill

the gods needs, the humans multiply so quickly that Enlil suffers from sleep deprivation. In the

Atrahasis Epic, Enlil refers to the humans as "bellowing like a bull." The gods, led by Enlil,

decide to send a series of plagues and disasters to reduce the human population. After a series of

failures, the plan of a flood is concocted through the casting of lots. Enki, the god of wisdom,

warns Atrahasis (also known as Utnapishtim) about the impending disaster and instructs him to

build a boat (ark) to save himself, his family, and representatives of various animals. As the gods

unleash a great flood upon the earth, Atrahasis and his family, along with the animals, board the

boat and survive the deluge.[462] "On Enki's advice Atrahasis builds a boat to weather the storm,

destined to last seven days and nights. So devastating was the storm and so thorough was the

annihilation of humanity that even the gods had serious questions about the sagacity of Enlil's

plan."[463] After the floodwaters recede, Atrahasis releases birds to determine if the land is dry.

When the birds do not return, Atrahasis and group disembark anyway. Upon leaving the ark,

Atrahasis, much like Utnapishtim, presents a sacrifice to express gratitude to the gods for his

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[461] Summarized from: Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 65.

[462] Much like the Gilgamesh Epic, except that the hero is Atrahasis, not Gilgamesh.

[463] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 65-66.

survival. The gesture is particularly timely as the Mesopotamian gods have been deprived of sustenance throughout the flood. The offerings of food from mortals, their primary source of nourishment, have been depleted. The god Enlil is initially angry that some humans survived, but Enki convinces the gods to grant Atrahasis and his wife immortality, making them exceptions among mortals. Following this, lasting measures are implemented to curb the incessant growth of the global population. The strategy involves the implementation of birth control through the establishment of permanently barren women, the invention of a demon tasked with taking infants from their mothers' laps, and the designation of various categories of priestesses who are forbidden from bearing children.

Gilgamesh, Atrahasis, and Genesis Compared

General Observations

Both biblical texts and Mesopotamian literature reference a flood, indicating a historical occurrence. Exploring and comparing how these distinct traditions interpret the same event unveils significant differences in mentality and worldview. For OT believers delving into ANE stories, the episode provides insights into how ancient societies addressed profound questions about life without the guidance of revelation.

For instance, the Gilgamesh Epic lacks a clear motive for the flood, with the only relevant line stating, "That city was ancient, [as were] the gods within it / When their heart led the great gods to produce the flood." Moreover, following the flood, Ea questions Enlil's decision, expressing disapproval of the indiscriminate imposition of punishment. In contrast, the Atrahasis Epic attributes Enlil's wrath to the noise of the masses, with indications that the term "noise" refers more to audible disturbance than moral turmoil, according to cuneiform specialists.

Additionally, the proportions of the vessel constructed by the protagonists are peculiar, described as "equal shall be her width and her length," implying a cubic shape, a detail later affirmed in the epic. The hero, accompanied by his family and various animals, also welcomes skilled sailors on board, relying on human expertise to ensure the ship's stability. Additionally, Utnapishtim brings significant quantities of silver and gold, a modest financial reserve to potentially rebuild his life should he survive the harrowing ordeal. The ark construction and reliance on human navigation is held in stark contrast to the Noahic narrative. In Gen. 6:14, "the Lord specifies the construction of the ark, just as he specified the construction of his tabernacle."[464] Each element was defined by *Yahweh*, whereas, in both Babylonian accounts, design is left to the human imagination. In both Gilgamesh and Atrahasis, everything is entrusted to human deliverance rather than divine. Though the dimensions of the ark are provided in Atrahasis, the ark is anything but seaworthy.[465] Constructed as a cube, the Atrahasis ark would have surely sunk.

Ultimately, both Babylonian epics narratives lack a clear didactive purpose. This fact raises questions about intended messages and a general thematic significance. In the Gilgamesh Epic, the emphasis is more on Gilgamesh than Utnapishtim, focusing on the former's epic journeys rather than the latter's escape from the flood. One could potentially infer a lesson from the narrative: to find contentment in one's current circumstances and not exceed one's limits

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[464] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 135.

[465] In Genesis 6:15, God instructed Noah to build an ark that was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. This is a ratio of 30 to 5 to 3 (length to breadth to height). The ratio of 6:1 is well known in naval design for optimum stability. Many modern naval engineers, when designing cargo ships to battleships, utilize this same basic design ratio. Scientific research has referred to the ratio as the "golden ratio." The golden ratio has been studied broadly in context with the Egyptian pyramids and as a ratio for the Fibonacci sequence. It is interesting that the golden ratio was introduced in the Genesis text for the ark, a testament to the ship's seaworthiness, and studied for centuries thereafter as the solution for mathematical balance.

(reminiscent of themes in Gen. 3). However, the text's dialogue offers scant evidence to firmly establish this principle.

In contrast, the Genesis flood narrative offers a reason for the deluge, a corruption of creation and a marring of the *imago Dei*.[466] Of this occurrence, Hamiltion notes:

> …God himself suffers emotional pain: God was "grieved" (Gen. 6:6). How interesting that the Hebrew word here for "pain" in the phrase "and his heart was filled with pain" (NIV) is from the same root as the word for the "pain" that Eve will experience in childbirth (3:16) and that the man will confront in his working and attempting to make productive the soil (3:17).[467]

The suffering of humanity has become a source of distress for God. It holds importance that God's initial reaction in Gen. 6 to the widespread sinfulness in His creation is not anger or indignation, but rather a sense of profound sorrow.

While the Babylonian protagonists are saved from the flood by requirement or favoritism, Noah is rescued because of purity, be it genetic purity or moral righteousness. Utnapishtim brings worldly possessions and professional sailors for navigation, but Noah strictly follows the instructions of *Yahweh*. God's covenant promise is salvation, redemption of *imago Dei* through the genetic lines of Noah. "What God had once said to Adam (1:28), he now says to Noah (9:1). Thus, there is a second start, a second chance for humankind."[468] *Yahweh*'s covenant establishes a precedence, rather than the favoritism exhibited by the Babylonian gods. The flood will not be repeated (9:11). "Note that the rainbow in the sky is for God's benefit (9:12–17). God almighty

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[466] Previously discussed.

[467] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 68.

[468] Ibid, 69.

writes himself a memo! Such is the extension of this story into the lives of its readers."[469] The

memo is a new symbol and a reminder of the promise to restore *imago Dei* to all of humanity.

In the ark disembarkation, other contrasts are well-noted. Noah expressed gratitude

through a thanksgiving sacrifice, receiving covenant promises from God that emphasized

maintaining order in the cosmos rather than resorting to floods to counteract the chaos of

violence and sin. In contrast, the Mesopotamian flood heroes presented a propitiatory sacrifice to

appease the angered gods. The gods, realizing a dependence on humans for sustenance (through

sacrifices), gathered eagerly, questioning the wisdom behind the flood. The hero reluctantly

gained eternal life from the Babylonian gods, who remained disgruntled about the revelation of

the flood and its outcome.

Thematic Observations

The Thematic Observations subsection compares concepts between the Babylonian flood

epics and the Genesis Noahic account. The motifs examined in include divine planning, the

reason for the flood, rescue vs. punishment, the salvation of the hero and human lives, ark

construction viability, physical flood causes and duration, varied landing sites for the ark,

response to the sending of birds for safety, and the final heroic blessing. The key takeaway from

the thematic parallels is to understand the difference the motivations of the Babylonian deities as

self-fulfillment with a negative view of humanity in stark contrast with the Hebrew God's rescue

and redemption of humanity that extends generationally in perpetuity.

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[469] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch,* 69.

Table 20: Noahic and Babylonian Flood Accounts Thematically Compared

Theme	Genesis Account	Babylonian Accounts
Divinely Planned	Planned by *Yahweh*	Planned at a council of gods – Anu, Enlil, Ninurta, Ennugi, Ea, Ishtar
Divinely Planned Hero	Noah was spared because of purity – genetic and/or moral	Ea warned hero, Utnapishtim, in a dream
Reason for the Flood	Immorality and abhorrent violence	The multiplication of humans caused the gods' sleep deprivation
Rescue / Punishment	*Yahweh* planned to rescue humanity through *imago Dei* restoration via genealogies biblically recorded into the NT coming of Jesus Christ	Ethically am biguous and later regretted
Heroic Salvation	Redemption was a part of God's plan	Done secretly by one entity outside of the polytheistic pantheon
Saved Human Lives	Noah, his family (a total of eight), and representative couples of animals for procreation	Representatives of all living things, beasts… included several families, craftsmen, and technicians for the god's benefit
Ark Construction	Designed by God to the golden ratio, later discovered by modern mathematicians and shipbuilders	Designed by man into sinkable form: Ziggurat-shaped, x120 cubits, 7 levels, 9 sections, door, window, pitch coating
Physical Flood Causes	Comprehensive, land upheavals, subterranean waters, heavy rains	Rains, winds, breaking of dams
Flood Duration	40 days, 40 nights	~7 days
Ark Landing	Mountains of Ararat	Mount Nisir
Sending of Birds	Raven, dove (three times), disembarkation only occurs after a safe return of a dove	Dove, swallow, raven, disembarkation occurs without safe return
Worship Acts	Sacrifice of worship	Sacrifice for appeasement of the gods
Heroic Blessing	Earthly covenant, replicated for all of humanity	Singular divinity, immortality for one human/couple

The thematic comparisons between the Genesis creation versus Babylonian accounts and the Noahic flood versus the Gilgamesh and Atrahasis epics lead naturally into a discussion about ANE gods and requirements for worship. Understanding the Golden Calf episode of Exodus and the fact that humans take on the essence of "what" they worship is vital to comprehending the nature of *Yahweh*'s character versus the character of ANE polytheistic pantheons. The Hebrew God consistently demonstrates sovereignty and compassion in contrast to the gods of the ANE. The way people worship the gods is a reflection of the image they most revere, and the same is true of modern society.

Gods and Worship Practices in the ANE

In reminiscent language of the golden calf incident, the prophets of Israel often spoke of the nation's unyielding hearts, stubborn necks, possessing ears that could not truly hear, and eyes that couldn't truly see.[470] The golden calf, despite having sensory organs, was dysfunctional. Similarly, Israel had the capacity to perceive and understand *Yahweh*, yet these capacities were flawed, akin to the impaired sensory organs of the golden calf. These terms became common expressions for Israel's faithlessness to *Yahweh*. Connected to the imprint of the idol at the base of Mt. Sinai, all similar post-rebellion was not identical, but the template for idolatry was in place. If the term *imago Dei, ṣelem 'ĕlōhîm* directed attention to the visible portrayal of the living God, the term 'idol' shifted focus to the visible representation of gods that lacked vitality. What do readers know about the ANE for whom these idols were crafted? What did worship of these gods require? The answers to these questions reveal more about why the worship of other gods and idolatry was prohibited by *Yahweh*. If God was to protect his covenant people, the Israelites could not become the immoral, violent image of the ANE polytheistic pantheon.[471]

The OT primarily focuses on the worship of the Hebrew God in the OT, however, the biblical texts also mention other ancient gods. The primary gods mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the worship practices thereof are the focus of the remainder of the research in this chapter. Though the gods and associated worship practices may be well acknowledged in the academy, a summary is provided in the following sections to remind readers of the abject moral depravity and how the worship of these gods adversely affects humanity's identity.

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[470] See Chapter Five and the subsection titled, "The Golden Calf Episode as Prescriptive." (cf. 2 Chr. 30:8; 36:13; Neh. 9:16–17; Job 41:24; Isa. 6:9; 32:3; 44:18; Jer. 5:21; 7:26; 17:23; Ezek. 3:7; 12:2; Pss. 95:8; 115:5–6; Zech. 7:11).

[471] The research here is not meant to be a full treatment of the hundreds, possibly thousands, of gods and goddesses in the ANE. Rather the focus is on primary gods and the typical means of worship associated.

Some of the polytheistic gods mentioned in the Bible include:[472]

1. Baal: Baal is frequently mentioned in the OT as a god worshiped by various cultures including in Canaan, Ugarit - modern-day Syria, and parts of the ancient Levant. The term is sometimes used in the Hebrew Bible to generically to refer to foreign deities.[473]
2. Asherah: The goddess Asherah (Akkadian Ishtar) was worshipped in Canaan, Israel, Ugarit, Phoenicia and Carthage, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Transjordan, and Southern Levant. Over time, the worship of Asherah in the context of ancient Israel became a point of conflict as the leaders and prophets sought to establish the exclusive worship of *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, and discourage the syncretistic practices associated with Asherah.[474]
3. Astarte: Though not explicitly named in the Bible, Astarte is believed to be referred to indirectly in certain passages. Astarte is often associated with Asherah. Over time, as cultures interacted and blended, Astarte's attributes and associations may have overlapped with other goddesses in the broader Mediterranean religious landscape.[475]
4. Chemosh: Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites, a people who lived east of ancient Israel. References to Chemosh worship are found in the Bible, particularly in connection with the Moabite king Mesha.[476]
5. Molech: Molech (or Moloch) was a god worshiped by various ancient Semitic cultures, including the Ammonites, Phoenicians and Carthaginians, and Canaanites. The worship of Molech involved passing children through fire as a sacrificial offering.[477]

Baal

Recognized as the storm god and provider of rain, Baal played a crucial role in sustaining the fertility of crops, animals, and people in various ANE cultures. Baal worship permeated much of the ANE geographic regions and cultures, including the Israelites. Inman notes the pervading sexual notions that form the foundation for worship of the god:

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[472] Not meant to be a full treatment of all ANE gods/goddesses mentioned in the Bible, rather examples where worship practices can be verified in ancient texts.

[473] Judg. 2:11-13; 6:25-32; 1 Kings 16:30-32; 18:17-40; Jer. 2:23.

[474] Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5; Judg. 3:7; 1 Kings 14:15, 16:33; 2 Kings 17:10, 21:7.

[475] Judg. 2:13; 1 Sam. 7:3-4; 1 Kings 11:5; 2 Kings 23:13.

[476] Nu. 21:29; Judg. 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13.

[477] Lev. 18:21, 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:10.

> As the generative and productive power, he was worshipped under the form of the phallus, Baal-Peor; and youths and maidens, even of high birth, prostituted themselves in his honour or service; Num. 25, 2 Kings 23:7. As the creator, he was represented to be of either or of both sexes.[478]

The two sexes of Baal often associate the female version of Baal as Astarte/Asherah.[479] "Each of this god's names had a female counterpart; and the feminine form of Baal was Beltis, Ishtar, and Ashtarte. As he was the sun-god, she was the moon-goddess. Now, whilst the masculine name (as Bël or Bâl, Baal, Baalim,) appears nearly one hundred times in the Hebrew Old Testament, the feminine equivalent is only found three times in the singular Ashtoreth, and six times in the plural Ashtaroth; always in association with Baal-worship."[480] During the worship of this god, the embodiment of both sexes, there were times when men dressed in women's clothing, and women wore men's attire while carrying weapons. The unconventional practice off cross dressing was part of the religious ceremonies dedicated to the androgynous deity.[481] Moreover, devotees of Baal believed that engaging in sexual acts within his temple would enhance Baal's sexual prowess, thereby contributing to the god's efforts in promoting fertility among worshippers. Support for the sex-laden worship practice dedicated to Baal comes from Ugaritic texts. [482] Baal is frequently depicted in the company of a group of gods, many of whom were

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[478] Thomas Inman, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism* (SI: Salzwasser-Verlag GMBH, 2020).

[479] See Judg. 2:13.

[480] Inman, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism.*

[481] Summarized from Inman, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism.* Also mentioned in: Winfried Corduan, "Baal," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Barry and L. Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[482] James B. Pritchard, *Ancient near East Texts: Relating to The Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 92-116, 116-118.

portrayed as engaging in promiscuous behavior. The worship of these deities included temple

prostitution, involving both males and females.

Baal Worship in Israel

From the period preceding the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile, the allure of

Baal worship consistently tempted the Israelites, especially when supported by the reigning king.

Despite the prophets' warnings and efforts by certain kings to eradicate the practice, Baal

worship persisted, with some rulers actively participating.[483] The first instance of Baal worship

recorded in the Bible occurs in Num. 25:1-9. In the passage, the Israelites were camped in the

plains of Moab, near the end of the wilderness journey and were getting ready to enter the land

of Canaan. Several men were drawn to the allure of Moabite women residing nearby, who were

followers of Baal. The Moabite women engaged in a ritual that combined sexual activities with

offerings to the deity; the men partook in the practice and promoted Baal worship among the rest

of the Israelites. In the book of Judges and 1 Samuel, the cycle is repeated several times

recording the Israelites abandoning the worship of *Yahweh* for Baalism.[484]

After the kingdom was divided, Baal worship became a feature of the Israelite narrative

once again. Jezebel, Ahab, and successors decreed Baal worship as the national religion of Israel.

According to Corduan, "The people worshiped various Canaanite deities alongside the worship

of *Yahweh* as represented by two golden calves (1 Kgs 12:28). However, when Ahab married

Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, the couple established Baal worship (1 Kgs 16:30–

31), and even persecuted those who worshiped *Yahweh* as prescribed by the Law (1 Kgs

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[483] Summarized from the work of Archer: Gleason Leonard Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2007), 384.

[484] Judges 2:11-13; 3:7; 6:25-32; 8:33, and 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:2-6.

19:10)."[485] In 1 Kgs. 17:1b, Elijah asserts, "As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." Since Baal was considered a storm god, the prophet's declaration was a direct claim of *Yahweh*'s superiority over the deity. Moreover, according to the Baal myths, drought is linked to the deity's death; this understanding clarifies the desperation of the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel to persuade Baal to bring rain. Rain was not merely about proving the credibility of the god, but also validating the very purpose of their own existence.[486]

Baal Worship in Judah

In Judah, the established worship of Baal alternated with the worship of *Yahweh*. Certain kings may have gone as far as sacrificing their children to Baal, yet others, under the guidance of prophets, sought to eradicate the worship of Baal. Some of the kings of Judah, including Ahaz and Manasseh, might have gone to the extent of sacrificing their children by burning them in these rituals. [487] Support for associating child sacrifice with Baal comes from archaeological evidence and in writings of Diodorus of Sicily. In *Bibliotheca Historica*, Diodorus describes the ritual practices of religious practices of the Carthaginians, including the people's dedication to the god Baal Hamon and the ritual sacrifice of children as part of their religious ceremonies.[488] The archaeological evidence supporting the idea of child sacrifice in the worship of Baal primarily comes from the excavations at the ancient Carthaginian city of Carthage in modern-day

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[485] Corduan, "Baal," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

[486] 1 Kings 18:20-28.

[487] 2 Chr. 28:2-3, 33:6; (cf. 2 Chr. 36:14).

[488] Diodorus, *Diodorus of Sicily: Bibliotheca Historica*, ed. Charles L. Sherman et al., trans. C. H. Oldfather, vol. 20 (London: W. Heinemann, 1933), Chapter 14.

Tunisia.[489] The practice of child sacrifice is particularly associated with the Tophet, an area within Carthage containing numerous small urns and burial sites. Tophet is a sacred precinct containing numerous burial sites with urns and stelae; archaeologists have identified the sites as places of ritual activity and child sacrifice with stelae inscriptions specifically mentioning the dedication to Baal Hamon.

Only through the exile in Babylon, Baal worship was ultimately eradicated among the Hebrew people. The writings produced after the exile, including Ezra, Nehemiah, or Malachi, do not make reference to idolatry as a prevalent national problem in Judah. The absence of mention might suggest that the Hebrew people had moved away from engaging in Canaanite idolatry, including the worship of Baal.

Asherah / Astarte

Ashtaroth represents the plural form of Ashtoreth, a Canaanite goddess associated with fertility, love, and war. She is considered the daughter of the god El and the goddess Asherah. In the Old Testament, the plural form "Ashtaroth" is more prevalent than the singular form "Ashtoreth." The Hebrew scribes altered the vowels in the name ʾAshtart or ʾAshteret by substituting them with the vowels from the Hebrew word for shame, "*boshet*," as a way to dishonor the goddess's memory. This vowel substitution resulted in the word Ashtoreth, while the Greek form of the name is Astarte. Scholars have suggested that iterations of Asherah span the ANE and that the goddess is one on the same with Mesopotamia's Ishtar/Inanna in the Sumerian period, Astarte in Late Bronze Age Syria and in the southern Levant, and Aphrodite in

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[489] Lawrence E. Stager, "Excavations at the Carthage Tophet: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 10, no. 1 (1975): 45–78.

Cyprus.[490] An interesting thread connects these goddesses and worship practices thereof: participation in sexual rituals, sacred prostitution, and sex magic. Of this thread, McKenzie writes:

> The practice of prostitution in the ancient Near East seems to have been under no moral censure whatever and was common. A peculiar feature of the Mesopotamian and Canaanite culture was ritual prostitution. To the temple of the goddess of fertility (Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte) were attached bordellos served by consecrated women who represented the goddess, the female principle of fertility.[491]

The acts were codified in temple goddess worship as a "sacred marriage" ritual, first exhibited in the Sumerian love song of Innana and Dumuzi.[492] "The 'sacred marriage' ritual, staged by Near Eastern kings since the time of the Sumerians as a means of establishing their rule or re-affirming divine patronage."[493] 'In the ritual was a re-enactment of the sexual affair between Inanna and Dumuzi the king played the role of Dumuzi, and the priestess that of the goddess - hence they were allegedly expected to have actual rather than merely symbolic sexual relations during the ceremony.'[494] Smith defines the ritual as, "sexual relations between humans as a ritual imitation of sexual relations on the divine plane, designed to promote fertility, or symbolic

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[490] Sugimoto does a masterful job connecting the entities in: Tomotoshi Sugimoto, *Transformation of a Goddess Ishtar - Astarte - Aphrodite*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014).

[491] John L. McKenzie, "Prostitution," *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Smart and Schuster, 1965), 700-701.

[492] "A Song of Inana and Dumuzi (Dumuzi-Inana W): Translation," *A Song of Inana and Dumuzi (Dumuzi-Inana W): Translation*, n.d., accessed December 14, 2023, https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr40823.htm.

[493] Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Michael B. Charles, "Herodotus on Sacred Marriage and Sacred Prostitution at Babylon," *Kernos*, no. 31 (2018): 9–37, https://doi.org/10.4000/kernos.2653.

[494] Ibid.

representation or evocation of these sexual relations."[495] Herodotus wrote that sexual rituals was customary, in that every Babylonian woman was required to visit the temple of Ishtar/Inanna and engage in intercourse with any man who requested.[496] Following the ritual, the male participant would provide her with money, which the woman would then contribute as a donation to the temple. While scholars commonly refer to this practice as sacred prostitution, the ritual was fundamentally conducted as an act of devotion or prayer to the goddess, aimed at securing fertility.[497] "Although, by the first millennium, the king and priestess were probably replaced by cultic statues, the use of sexual ecstasy as a valid means of communicating with the god was never eradicated from ancient Near Eastern societies, which continued to celebrate 'sacred marriages' in various forms, especially at times of crisis."[498]

As early as Gen. 14 in the Hebrew Bible, readers can find an association with the goddess. The city of Ashtaroth was derived from the name of the goddess Asherah and is a significant city located to the east of the Sea of Galilee, serving as the capital of Og, the king of Bashan. Gen. 14:5 records the battle between King Cherdolaomer of Elam and the רְפָאִים (*rᵊpāʾîm*) in the city of Ashteroth-Karnaim. Ashteroth-Karnaim is literally translated to Astarte of Horns and may refer to a crescent moon crowning the goddess. The Hebrew usage of רְפָאִים necessitates an association between Asherah worship and giants. Ugaritic texts outside of the Bible elaborate that the Rephaim are "heroes, warriors, judges, kings, and demigods, much like Heracles or

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[495] Mark S. Smith, "Sacred Marriage in the Ugaritic Texts? The Case of KTU/CAT 1.23," *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Risto Uro and Martti Nissinen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 93.

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[497] Herodotus, *The Histories: Herodotus*, trans. De Aubrey Sélincourt (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981), 1.181.5–182.1–2.

[498] Anagnostou-Laoutide and Charles, "Herodotus on Sacred Marriage and Sacred Prostitution at Babylon."

Theseus in Greek myths."[499] The same ancient texts refer to rituals associated with Baal and

Asherah.[500]

The biblical record demonstrates that Jeroboam and Rehoboam promoted the worship of

Asherah. [501] Jezebel strongly advocated for the worship of Asherah and maintained the presence

of 400 prophets who held a position in the court of her husband, King Ahab.[502] Efforts to

eliminate the worship of Asherah were undertaken by Asa, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and

Gideon.[503] Despite these attempts, devotion to the goddess/cult symbol persisted.[504] Notably,

objections to Asherah are predominantly found in Deuteronomistic literature rather than in the

prophetic writings. Indeed, it seems the Israelites worshiped Asherah alongside *Yahweh*.[505]

The term Asherah appears to relate to both the deity and the image created. The inclusion

of Asherah alongside Baal in the Hebrew Bible and other Canaanite deities suggests its status as

a divine name, but the term Asherah also refers to an idol, image, and sacred poles. Asherah

poles were placed alongside altars to Baal (Judg. 6) and *Yahweh* at Bethel (2 Kings. 23:15).

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[499] Robert Bronder, "The Riddle of the Rephaim," *Biblical Archaeology Society*, accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/the-riddle-of-the-rephaim/.

[500] In the biblical texts, Rephaim are portrayed as adversaries of both Israel and God—enormous, monstrous beings evoking fear and terror. Rephaim have been associated with the Nephilim, being born with divine blood to the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men." That Asherah worship is associated with giants and the pre-flood violence that occurred is an interesting sidebar considering *Yahweh*'s clear instructions to the Israelites against polytheism and idol worship. Could the worship of Asherah be a door to malevolent entities interfering once again with human identity?

[501] 1 Kings 14:15, 23.

[502] 1 Kings 18:19

[503] Exodus 34:13-14; Deuteronomy 7:5; Judges 6:25-30; (1 Kings 15:13/2 Chronicles 15:16); (2 Kings 23:4,7/2 Chronicles 34:3,7); (2 Kings 21:7/2 Chronicles 33:3,19); (2 Chronicles 19:3; 2 Kings 18:4).

[504] Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 17:1; Micah 5:14.

[505] 2 Kings 21:7 accuses Manasseh of placing an *asherah* image (פֶּסֶל) in the temple in Jerusalem, suggesting its use in syncretistic Israelite practices.

Inscriptions from the eighth century BCE, found at Khirbet el-Qom, approximately twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem, exhibit language akin to passages in 1 Kings 15:13 and 2 Kings 18:4, 21:7, and 23:6 (with corresponding parallels in 2 Chronicles). The inscriptions suggest that during specific periods in the ninth, eighth, and seventh centuries BCE, Asherah's sacred pole was considered a suitable symbol for installation in Jerusalem, even within the precincts of *Yahweh*'s temple.

Furthermore, temple vessels were employed for sacrifices dedicated to Asherah (2 Kings 23:4), and within the temple compound, female cult functionaries engaged in weaving garments utilized for clothing Asherah's cult statue (2 Kings 23:7). Archaeological discoveries have also provided evidence of Asherah worship among the ancient people. Dating back to the 1920s, over 850 terracotta female figurines have been unearthed across Israel and Judah, particularly prevalent in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. The figurines portray a female figure holding her prominently emphasized breasts, as if making a gesture of offering them to a nursing child; these types of figures are typical of fertility cults in the ANE.

Chemosh

Chemosh (כְּמוֹשׁ), an ancient Semitic deity documented in the Iron Age, held a prominent position as the supreme god of the Canaanite state of Moab. Additionally, Chemosh served as the patron deity for the Moabite population.[506] Even following the conclusion of the Moabite kingdom, the worship of Chemosh persisted, and individuals of Moabite descent residing in Egypt and Babylonia incorporated the name of the god as a theophoric element. An Aramaic

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[506] Edward Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age: Historical and Topographical Researches* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies, 2006), 319-360. H.P. Müller, "Chemosh," *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible: (DDD)*, ed. Toorn Karel van der, Bob Becking, and Horst Pieter W van der (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 186-189.

inscription discovered in Al-Karak, dating back to the third century BCE, makes reference to Chemosh.[507]

In accordance with the biblical account, King Solomon of Israel is said to have established the worship of Astarte, Chemosh, and Milcom (Molech) in eastern Jerusalem for the sake of his foreign concubines.[508] Subsequently, King Josiah of Judah is reported to have eradicated the high places dedicated to these deities as part of efforts to reform the religious practices within the kingdom.[509] 2 Kings 3:27 records that Chemosh may have been the deity involved with Mesha's (king of Moab) sacrifice of his eldest son. Chemosh assumed a martial role, leading the Moabite king Mesha to designate him as "the subduer of the enemies of Moab." Mesha attributed his own military triumphs to Chemosh.[510] The primary source of information regarding Chemosh is the Mesha Inscription, which dates back to the ninth century BC. In this inscription, the beliefs associated with the deity Chemosh align with biblical concepts related to *Yahweh*:

- Mesha attributes his victories to Chemosh (line 4; 8–9; 12–13; 18; 19; 33).
- During the oppression of Moab by Omri, the king of Israel, the cause is attributed to Chemosh's displeasure (line 5).
- Chemosh directly communicates with Mesha, providing him with instructions (line 14).[511]

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[507] Manfred Weippert, "Mesa von Moab Im Kampf Mit Israel Und Juda (9. Jahrhundert)," *Historisches Textbuch Zum Alten Testament*, ed. Herbert Donner (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 242–248.

[508] 1 Kings 11:7.

[509] Müller, "Chemosh," *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible: (DDD).*

[510] Michele Barasso, "What Does the Mesha Stele Say?," *Biblical Archaeology Society*, accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/inscriptions/what-does-the-mesha-stele-say/.

[511] Ibid.

Around 850 B.C.E., Mesha erected the stele as a commemoration of his triumphs, particularly his rebellion against the Kingdom of Israel, which he seemingly initiated following the demise of Israel's King Ahab. Now exhibited at the Louvre Museum in Paris, the stele stands at 124 cm in height and 71 cm in width and depth (44" x 27" x 27"), featuring a rounded top. Reverend F. A. Klein, a German missionary to Jerusalem, discovered this

The worship of Chemosh extended beyond the borders of Moab, suggesting his presence in an early Semitic pantheon. This is evident from his recognition in various locations:

- Kamish, a deity documented on tablets dating back to the mid-third millennium BCE from Tel Mardikh in ancient Ebla. His popularity is evident through appearances in personal names, placenames, and the establishment of a dedicated temple, indicating the widespread worship of Chemosh in Ebla.
- Chemosh might have been venerated at Ugarit alongside Kammut(u).
- Assyrian god lists reference Kammush, equating this deity with Nergal.[512]

Chemosh was associated with both Baal and Ashtar. In a triumphal stele, Mesha documented the construction of a high place devoted to Chemosh within the citadel of Ḏaybān, the Moabite capital. This act was an expression of gratitude to the god for ensuring Mesha's success in a military campaign against the Israelites. Additionally, Mesha asserted that he had reconstructed the site known as Bēt-Bāmōt, denoting the "House of High Places," alternatively referred to as Bamoth-Baal.[513] Chemosh was also identified with Aštar who was the Moabite adaptation of Venus, sometimes referred to Ashtar-Chemosh in association with the Canaanite goddess Astarte.[514] Occasionally, offerings of human sacrifice were consecrated to Chemosh, much like they were to Molech.[515]

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monument in August 1868. John Andrew Dearman, *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989).

[512] Reinhard Gregor Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[513] Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age: Historical and Topographical Researches*, 319-360.

[514] Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2010).

[515] The primary reference for this association is typically 2 Kings 3:6.

Molech / Moloch

The term Moloch (מולך) appears eight times in the Masoretic text.[516] Among these occurrences, five are found in Leviticus, one in 1 Kings, one in 2 Kings, and another in the Book of Jeremiah. In seven instances, the Hebrew definite article "ha-" (meaning 'the') is present or implied through a prepositional form. In all of these biblical passages, condemnation is directed towards Israelites involved in rituals associated with Moloch, with a prevalent association between Moloch and the reprehensible practice of offering children in sacrifice for the god's favoritism. "In Israel, child sacrifice was most prominent in Topheth during Manasseh's reign (2 Chr 33:6; 2 Kgs 23:10). The kings Ahaz and Manasseh are said to have made their own sons "pass through the fire" (2 Kgs 16:3; 21:6 LEB)."[517] Leviticus expressly forbids the practice of offering children to Moloch:

> You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. (18:21)

> Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. 3 I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech. (20:2-5)

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516 Certain contemporary scholars suggest the possibility that Moloch could be identified with the same deity as Milcom, Adad-Milki, or serve as an epithet for Baal. See: John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Acad. Press, 2000).

517 April Favara, "Molech," *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry and L. Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

In 2 Kings, Moloch is associated with Tophet in the valley of Gehenna, "He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech." The same act of causing children "to pass over the fire" is referenced, without explicit mention of Moloch, in various other verses throughout the Bible. These include passages in Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekial.[518]

The practice of child sacrifice to Molech was practiced primarily by the Carthaginians. The city-state of Carthage, an ancient Phoenician colony situated in present-day Tunisia, functioned from approximately 800 BC until its destruction by the Romans in 146 BC. According to recent evidence produced by the University of Oxford:

> Children – both male and female, and mostly a few weeks old – were sacrificed by the Carthaginians at locations known as tophets. The practice was also carried out by their neighbours at other Phoenician colonies in Sicily, Sardinia and Malta. Dedications from the children's parents to the gods are inscribed on slabs of stone above their cremated remains, ending with the explanation that the god or gods concerned had 'heard my voice and blessed me'.[519]

Dr Quinn added: 'We think of it as a slander because we view it in our own terms. But people looked at it differently 2,500 years ago. Indeed, contemporary Greek and Roman writers tended to describe the practice as more of an eccentricity or historical oddity – they're not actually very critical."[520] The pristine member of the Oxford Faculty of Classics continued, "Perhaps the reason the people who established Carthage and its neighbours left their original home of Phoenicia – modern-day Lebanon – was because others there disapproved of their

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[518] Deut. 12:31; 18:10; 2 Kings 16:3, 17:17, 17:31, 21:6; 2 Chron. 28:3, 33:6; Jer. 7:31, 19:5; Ez. 16:21, 20:26, 20:31, 23:37.

[519] "Ancient Carthaginians Really Did Sacrifice Their Children," *University of Oxford*, accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2014-01-23-ancient-carthaginians-really-did-sacrifice-their-children.

[520] Ibid.

unusual religious practice. We should not imagine that ancient people thought like us and were horrified by the same things."[521]

Conclusion

Given that the ANE primary gods and their idols were associated with sexual perversion and human sacrifice, there is no wonder why *Yahweh* sought to protect the Hebrew people. From a sociological perspective, rituals involving human sacrifice and sexual worship may have served as mechanisms of social control. The presence of these practices in religious and cultural contexts could reinforce human authority structures and norms. Elites or rulers may have used these practices to solidify their power. Human sacrifice and sexual rituals could be linked to demonstrating the ruler's authority or ensuring divine favor for the state. Human sacrifice and sexual rituals often had symbolic meanings deeply ingrained in the culture. These rituals might represent concepts such as fertility, renewal, or appeasement of deities, influencing the psychological perceptions of individuals. Participation in or witnessing extreme rituals could induce a range of emotions, from catharsis to fear. These intense emotional experiences likely have psychological effects on individuals, shaping their beliefs, values, and behavior.

There is a distinct possibility that those who participated in the rituals of Baal, Asherah, Chemosh, and Molech were victims of both psychological and cultural trauma. Bayer describes it this way, "An event that psychologically destroys a person's well-being is considered a psychological trauma but may not necessarily cause a cultural trauma. It may cause psychological trauma for those involved, and that trauma may even be passed down from generation to generation. However, for this trauma to be a cultural trauma, someone must

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[521] Ibid.

interpret the event that leaves a mark on a society's consciousness."[522] Could there be any doubt

that such practices as human sacrifice and sexual worship caused psychological trauma? Could

there by any doubt that the level of psychological trauma "left a mark" on the social

consciousness of the eras?

According to Ammann, "Cultural trauma theory precisely refers to the process that takes

place between an event and its collective representation, that is, an image of the event shared by

a group of people."[523] Amir Khadem offers, "cultural trauma is a communal practice of historical

hermeneutics."[524] "The focus lies, so to speak, on memory as a river that flows backward – on

the way people look back on and construe past events."[525] Could this psychological trauma have

pervaded the ancient society in such a way as to be undetectable in their milieu?

The main idea of this section is to demonstrate that "people resemble what they revere,

either for ruin or restoration."[526] The images of the polytheistic gods and goddesses of the ANE

were so perverse and so depraved that the earth resembled, once again the "days of Noah." The

Israelites, in their relentless pursuit beyond *Yahweh*, became like the gods they worshipped.

Elohim created all humans to reflect the *imago Dei*. Those committed to God, become like him;

reflecting divine attributes of goodness and compassion (previously established in this

dissertation.) Those committed to some other form of worship become like that thing, spiritually

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[522] Scott P. Bayer, "Micah 1–3 and Cultural Trauma Theory: An Exploration," *Open Theology* 8, no. 1 (2022): 492–502, https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2022-0222.

[523] Sonja Ammann, "The Fall of Jerusalem: Cultural Trauma as a Process," *Open Theology* 8, no. 1 (2022): 362–371, https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2022-0212.

[524] Amir Khadem, "Cultural Trauma as a Social Construct: 9/11 Fiction and the Epistemology of Communal Pain," *Intertexts* 18, no. 2 (2014): 181–197, https://doi.org/10.1353/itx.2014.0007.

[525] Sonja Ammann, "The Fall of Jerusalem: Cultural Trauma as a Process."

[526] Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*.

inanimate and empty like the lifeless idol, or the violent god they choose. To the ancient

Israelites and to modern people, God is not the angry, violent, merciless God portrayed in such

works as "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God;"[527] rather, the God of Adam, Noah, Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob, David, unto the Son of God, Jesus Christ… He is a loving Father, protecting his

covenant people from unnecessary trauma, from hurtful practices, and immoral ritual abuses.

In conclusion, the exploration of idolatry and the worship practices of ancient gods in the

Hebrew Bible sheds light on the broader themes of *imago Dei* identity and God's redemptive

plan for humanity. Through the lens of Israel's faithlessness and propensity towards idolatry, the

narrative highlights the inherent human tendency to deviate from the worship of the living God

towards lifeless representations lacking vitality. The parallels drawn between Israel's idolatry and

the dysfunctionality of the golden calf serve as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of

remaining faithful to *Yahweh* and rejecting the worship of false gods. By understanding the

cultural context of idol worship in the ANE and its adverse effects on human identity, readers

gain insight into why idolatry was prohibited by *Yahweh* as a means to protect his covenant

people from moral depravity and spiritual corruption. Thus, the examination of idol worship in

the Hebrew Bible underscores the significance of *imago Dei* restoration and the universal

expression of God's redemptive plan, emphasizing the necessity of faithful obedience to the one

true God. The final chapter in this dissertation will show this truth and will combine the findings

in the OT and ANE to demonstrate hermeneutical principles that affect modern life and the

eschatological future for believers in *Yahweh*.

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[527] Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God: A Sermon, Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741, at a Time of Great Awakenings, and Attended with Remarkable Impressions on Many of the Hearers* (Schenectady N.Y.: Printed by Riggs & Stevens, 1980).

Chapter Seven: Theological Conclusions and Hermeneutic Implications

Introduction

Chapters 1-6 have shown that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption; this plan is universally expressed to humanity through water imagery in OT and in ANE context. Chapter 7 navigates the realm of biblical hermeneutics, theological paradigms, and the interpretation of natural phenomena to unveil the intricate tapestry of God's redemptive design. The chapter explores natural processes as supernational revelation, water imagery in the NT, eschatological imagery and modern-day idolatry to explore the hermeneutical implications thereof. Moreover, the symbolic significance of water, from its portrayal in the Genesis Flood narrative to its transformative imagery in the NT, emerges as a potent metaphor for divine judgment, purification, and ultimate redemption.

The dissertation further contends that the corruption of creation by the adversary, as evident in Genesis and echoed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, serves to underscore the ongoing conflict within God's redemptive saga. Ultimately, the restoration of the *imago Dei* identity, epitomized in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, stands as the consummate realization of God's salvific plan. Through this comprehensive exploration of creational identity, the juxtaposition with idolatrous tendencies, and the nuanced analysis of water imagery, this study contributes to a deeper comprehension of God's redemptive narrative within the overarching contexts of both the OT and the ANE presenting a scholarly tapestry interwoven with threads of theological insight and biblical wisdom.

Natural Processes as Supernatural Revelation

In contemplating the majesty of God, the Scriptures invite readers to discern the supernatural within the natural, revealing a divine presence woven intricately into the fabric of

creation. Job 12:7-10 illuminates the profound wisdom of God, asserting that even the animals, birds, and fish serve as teachers, testifying to the Creator's mastery over natural processes. In Rom.1:20, the Apostle Paul builds upon this theme, declaring that God's invisible qualities and eternal power are clearly perceived through the created-natural. These verses collectively emphasize God's use of the observable world and natural processes as a canvas to showcase the supernatural. From the intricate ecosystems to the grandeur of the cosmos, God's fingerprints are discernible, inviting believers to recognize *Yahweh*'s presence and wisdom in the very essence of the created order. The intricacies of nature, far from mere random occurrences, become a tapestry through which the supernatural is unveiled, beckoning humanity to awe and wonder at the divine intelligence inherent in every facet of existence.

'But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
   the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
   and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
   that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
   and the breath of every human being. Job 12:7-10

In the book of Job, the author attempts to explain his suffering to an unbelieving friend (12:7-10). Job's perspective is one of renewal and restoration of identity. Instead of accepting a limited and conventional understanding of God's ways, Job asserts an understanding of God's power and sovereignty through the created-natural. In these verses, Job points to creation as a source of wisdom and revelation about God's character.

Job begins by encouraging his friends to turn to the natural world for wisdom. The use of animals and birds as teachers is a poetic way of expressing the idea that creation itself testifies to

certain truths about God.[528] Job extends the call to gain wisdom from the natural world to include the earth and vegetation, emphasizing that the entire created order holds insights into the nature and ways of God. This reflects a broader biblical theme of nature revealing God's character, the Creator's sovereignty, wisdom, and provision. Although this is only one passage in the Bible, the message is powerful. God uses the created-natural to communicate his redemptive plan to humanity. In this way, the restoration of *imago Dei* is accessible to everyone; as Job poetically and rhetorically questions, 'Who can deny God when all of creation speaks his name?'

Moreover, in the NT book of Romans, Paul introduces key theological concepts to both Jewish and Gentile believers. In the first chapter, the apostle expresses the concept of general revelation—the knowledge of God available to all people through creation. The visible world testifies to the invisible attributes of God. Rom.1:20 reads, "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse;" Paul contends that the perception of God's attributes is not a recent development but has been available to humanity from the very creation of the world. This highlights the longstanding accessibility of the revelation of God in the created order. Rom. 1:20 underscores the idea that God's invisible attributes are clearly perceived in creation, rendering humanity without excuse for not recognizing the existence and character of God. The nature of the theology set forth in the passage lays the foundation for Paul's later discussions on the need for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. While the theological perception of God is not unique to the medium of water, the water imagery in the

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[528] Seeking wisdom from nature is a biblical motif reflected in many verses, some from the words of Jesus, himself. Consider: Pss. 19:1-4; 104:24-30; Prov. 6:6; Matt. 6:26; 10:29; Luke 12:27-28; Rom. 1:20.

Bible and in the ANE weaves together the revelation of *Elohim*'s salvific plan for humanity as accessible to all.

Water Imagery in the NT

The pervasiveness of water imagery in the NT is profound. Now that the use of OT water imagery has been expressed as a communicative element used by God to reveal his redemptive plan to all people, a brief look at water imagery in the NT helps to clarify the eschatological realizations of these truths. The power of God's acts of creation-rescue-and re-creation is a prevalent theme in the NT, demonstrated by water imagery as a means to restore humanity's original identity.

Baptism

Baptism is the most obvious water imagery used to restore identity that pervades the NT. Not unlike the waters of the flood or the Red Sea deliverance, baptism water serves as a symbolic cleansing, a proclamation of new identity in Christ. The baptism of Jesus recalls tones of creation. Matt. 3:13-17 recounts the event, "And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'" Just as in creation, the Spirit of God was above the water, the *ruah* Spirit of God descended, and the Creator thought it was "good." The symbolic gesture of Jesus's baptism set the precedent for all believers to be made new through water baptism, to reclaim *imago Dei*, and to live a life pursuant to the image of God.

Jesus recounts the purpose of water later in a conversation with Nicodemus. "Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." (Jon. 3:5). The double "truly, truly" at the beginning of the verse calls

Nicodemus to listen intently, for Christ is emphasizing the certainty and importance of what he is

about to say. Jesus is introducing the concept of regeneration or being born again through both

water and the Spirit, an identity transformation initiated by the Holy Spirit. Christ asserts that

this spiritual rebirth is not optional but necessary for entry into the kingdom of God; the identity

transformation is a prerequisite for experiencing the fullness of God's redemptive plan on earth

and eschatologically.

Jesus as Living Water

In Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, the Savior introduces the

concept of living water. While water imagery throughout the Bible is used metaphorically to

symbolize life, purification, and renewal, Jesus presents himself as living water, a representation

of spiritual nourishment and eternal life. The repetition of thirst, both physical and spiritual,

becomes a metaphor for the human condition and the longing for something more profound. This

longing is the need for humanity to return to the *imago Dei* image, the need to know God and be

known by him; this is exactly what Jesus offers the Samaritan woman. Christ recounts her life

and her failures, not to embarrass her, but to communicate that she is known and still loved, still

pursued by God's grace. Jesus contrasts the water from the well, which temporarily satisfies

physical thirst but requires constant replenishing, with the living water he offers. This living

water, once received, becomes a perpetual source within the individual, leading to eternal life. It

signifies a transformative experience that goes beyond immediate satisfaction to a sustained,

profound change in one's spiritual identity. The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus is

transformative of her identity. Jon. 4:10-14 employs water imagery to convey deeper spiritual

truths about the transformative nature of encountering Jesus, recognizing the divine gift, and

finding eternal satisfaction in a relationship with the Messiah. The passage invites readers to

reflect on their own identity, thirst, and the possibility of spiritual transformation through the living water that Christ offers.

Symbolism of the Sea and Power over Nature

Mk. 4:35-41 records that after a day of teaching, Jesus suggests to his disciples that they should cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee; the simple command initiates a significant event and recalls the OT notion that the sea is used metaphorically to represent chaos, danger, and forces of evil. A sudden, violent storm arises, causing the boat to be battered by waves. The disciples, experienced fishermen, find are in a perilous situation. Human fear and desperation take over, and the disciples question Jesus's concern for their safety. The Messiah calms the sea, demonstrating Jesus's authority over chaos and nature. By challenging the apostles' faith, Christ leads the men to a growing realization of his own divine identity. Other passages in the NT also point to Jesus' as *imago Dei* par excellence and demonstrate the Savior's power over nature through water imagery. Examples include: the calming of the storm (Mat. 8:23-27), walking on water (Mat. 14:22-33), and turning water into wine (Jon. 2:1-11).

The Role of Water in Miracles

Water is often associated with the working of miracles in the NT. The healing of the blind man with mud made from spit and water in Jon. 9:6-7 and in the pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-9 are examples where water plays a role in the miraculous.

In Jon. 9:6-7, Jesus uses unconventional methods to heal the blind man. He spits on the ground, makes mud with the saliva, and applies it to the man's eyes; the act may seem unusual, but the physical act reflects the creative and transformative power of Jesus. The Messiah instructs the blind man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam; the name "Siloam" means "Sent" carrying a theological significance. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is often referred to as one "sent"

by God. The connection between the pool's name and Jesus' role as the sent one reinforces the idea that the blind man's healing is not just a physical miracle but a sign of the divine mission of Jesus. Because water has such a symbolic significance in Jewish culture, the blind man's act of washing in the Pool of Siloam highlights the idea of spiritual cleansing and transformation through Christ. The water, in this context, becomes a medium through which divine power is manifested.

In Jon.5:1-9, the narrative unfolds in Jerusalem during one of the Jewish festivals, near the Sheep Gate. There is a pool called Bethesda with five covered colonnades, and a multitude of disabled people gather there, seeking healing. Bethesda, in Aramaic, means "House of Mercy" or "House of Grace." The pool is a place associated with the possibility of healing, and its very name suggests a connection to mercy and grace. The pool is surrounded by a group of disabled individuals—blind, lame, and paralyzed. These people represent those in need of restoration and healing. The people's presence by the pool indicates a collective hope and desire for a transformative encounter. The man Jesus approaches has been an invalid for thirty-eight years and explains to Jesus that there is a belief that when the water of the pool is stirred, the first person to enter will be healed. The stirring of the water is a key element in the anticipation of healing, and it serves as a focal point for the people's faith in the pool's therapeutic powers. Jesus asks the man a seemingly straightforward question, "Do you want to get well?" This question invites the man to express his desire for healing. The man, however, responds with a limitation— lack of assistance to enter the stirred water. Christ, bypassing the water ritual, issues a direct command: "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." The command emphasizes the immediate and transformative power of Jesus' words, bypassing the need for water stirring or any ritualistic action. In response to Jesus' command, the man is instantly cured. He picks up his mat and

walks, signifying a dramatic and immediate transformation. The man's identity is transformed from invalid to whole through the Messiah. The water imagery surrounding the Pool of Bethesda serves as a backdrop to the greater reality that Jesus, as the source of mercy and grace, transcends the need for ritualistic elements and can bring about instantaneous transformation.

Eschatological Imagery

Water imagery is utilized in the Bible, from the OT to the New, to convey eschatological concepts such as the renewal of creation, the absence of chaos, the flow of the water of life, and the abundance of blessings in the future kingdom. Water, in these contexts, serves as a powerful symbol of purification, life, and the ultimate fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. In the OT, Zechariah and Ezekiel have visions of water in the eschatological future, and the apostle John has similar visions in the New.

Zec. 14:8 reads, "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter." Zec.14 is part of a larger eschatological passage describing the Day of the Lord, a future event when God will bring about the final judgment and establish His kingdom. In this specific verse, the focus is on the transformation of the land and the flow of living water. The term "living water" carries rich theological symbolism, representing not just physical water but a source of spiritual refreshment, purification, and life. Moreover, Jesus declares himself "living water" in the NT in Jon.4:10-14. Zechariah is foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah and the eschatological future.

In the context of the "Day of the Lord," the living water is a divine and life-giving force that will flow out from Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the holy city, is the source from which the living water flows. This imagery is reminiscent of other biblical passages, including Rev. 22, where a

river of the water of life flows from the throne of God. The origin in Jerusalem emphasizes the centrality of God's presence and his role in providing spiritual nourishment. The living water is described as flowing in two directions—half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea. This geographical imagery underscores the comprehensive nature of God's blessings. The Dead Sea, known for its high salt content and lifelessness, and the Mediterranean Sea represent opposite directions, suggesting that God's transformative power will reach every corner of the land. The verse specifies that the flow of living water will occur "in summer and in winter." This detail emphasizes the continuity and consistency of God's blessings. Unlike natural water sources that may fluctuate with the seasons, the living water from God's presence will be a constant, providing spiritual vitality and abundance in perpetuity. The image of living water flowing from Jerusalem signifies spiritual renewal, cleansing, and the abundance of God's blessings in the eschatological era. The water imagery in Zec.14:8 paints a vivid picture of a transformed and flourishing landscape, where the life-giving water of God's presence brings about the renewal of creation and humanity's restoration to the *imago Dei* of original creation.

Ez. 47:1-12, with its vivid water imagery, presents a powerful vision of God's life-giving presence and the transformative impact it has on the land and its inhabitants. The temple as the source of the water, the increasing depth of the river, the flourishing trees, and the transformation of the Dead Sea collectively convey the abundant and rejuvenating nature of God's creational blessings in the eschatological future. The vision begins with the narrator being brought to the entrance of the temple, and the man sees water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. The temple, a central symbol of God's presence, becomes the source of this life-giving water.

The man with the measuring line guides the narrator as they move eastward, measuring the depth of the water. The gradual increase in depth—from ankle-deep to knee-deep to waist-deep and finally a river deep enough to swim in—symbolizes the increasing abundance and power of God's blessings and life that flow from the presence of the Creator. The vision reaches a point where the water becomes a river too deep to cross. The depth symbolizes the inexhaustible and immeasurable nature of God's provision for humanity; the depth suggests that God's abundance is beyond human comprehension, emphasizing the supernatural aspect of the vision. As the narrator observes the river, he sees a great number of trees on each side. The presence of these trees along the banks of the river signifies not only the abundance of life but also the fruitfulness and flourishing that result from the life-giving water of God's presence. The river flows into the Arabah and empties into the Dead Sea. The transformation of the salty, lifeless waters of the Dead Sea into fresh water symbolizes the renewing and transformative power of God's presence. The symbology points to a supernatural reversal of natural limitations and death, bringing life where there was once was death and barrenness. The vision concludes with the promise that wherever the river flows, there will be swarms of living creatures and large numbers of fish, emphasizing the idea that God's life-giving presence brings abundance and vitality to all.

The river of the water of life is a powerful eschatological image in the book of Revelation. Water imagery signifies the source of eternal life flowing from the very presence of God. The imagery of a crystal-clear river emphasizes purity and the life-giving nature of God's ultimate redemption for humanity and the restoration of the *imago Dei*. In Rev. 21:1, the vision of a new heaven and a new earth marks a momentous creational transformation. The absence of the sea is significant, as the sea in biblical imagery can symbolize chaos, instability, and

separation. The lack of the sea in the new creation suggests a state of perfect order, peace, and unity. In eschatological terms, the removal of the sea underscores the complete restoration of God's original design, where there is no more division or disorder.

Rev. 22:1-2 presents a vivid contrast to the absence of the sea in the new heaven and new earth. Here, the imagery shifts to a river, the "water of life," flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. This river symbolizes the continuous source of spiritual refreshment, renewal, and life emanating from the divine presence. The clarity of the water underscores its purity and the transparency of God's grace. The river's flow down the middle of the great street of the city emphasizes a central role in the new Jerusalem. The presence of the tree of life on each side of the river recalls the Gen. narrative, symbolizing eternal sustenance and the abundance of God's provision. The mention of twelve crops of fruit and leaves for the healing of the nations portrays a picture of the perpetual flourishing of creation and restoration to creational identity to humanity. The absence of the sea signifies the removal of chaos and disorder, while the river of the water of life represents the continuous flow of God's grace and the flourishing vitality of redeemed creation and community in the heavenly city.

Creation-Rescue-Re-Creation

The trope of creation-rescue-re-creation began in Gen. and is a repetitive narrative pattern found throughout the Bible that mirrors the themes of creation, the need for rescue or redemption, and the eventual promise of re-creation or restoration. The pattern often reflects God's ongoing work in the world, moving from an initial state, through a period of fallenness or crisis, toward a future state of renewal, particularly as it relates to humanity's identity. The Genesis precedent has been set, the Noahic flood, and the Exodus have demonstrated trope

repetition. The trope will be explored here again in light of an eschatological understanding. The

following topics are reviewed:

- Tropic Cycles: In Ecclesiastes, the preacher reaffirms the cyclical nature of the trope and of history.
- Creation Corruption and Identity Inversion: Paul, in Ephesians, emphasizes the spiritual forces of forces of evil at work, reinforcing the notion that the enemy seeks to corrupt creation and disrupt God's redemptive plan.
- Divine Rescue and Redemption: In Romans Paul affirms humanity's *imago Dei* restoration through the image of Christ.
- Eschatological Realities: In Matthew, Jesus alerts the apostles to recurrence by aligning the "days of Noah" to the "coming of the Son of Man."

These Scriptures are surveyed, then modern revelations are presented as contemporary

divinations of idolatry and image corruptions that correlate to the "days of Noah."

Nothing New Under the Sun

"There is nothing new under the sun" is a familiar motif presented in Ecc. 1:2-11. In this

opening passage of Ecclesiastes, the author introduces the recurring theme of "vanity" or

"meaninglessness" in various human pursuits. The imagery used includes the cyclical nature of

natural phenomena (sunrise and sunset, wind circuits, water cycles), emphasizing the idea that

despite human endeavors, the fundamental patterns of life persist. Ecc. 1:9 specifically highlights

the repetitiveness of historical events and human experiences, asserting that there is "nothing

new under the sun." The phrase "under the sun" is a key expression in Ecclesiastes, emphasizing

the perspective of life from a worldly, earthly standpoint, apart from a divine, transcendent

perspective.

The overall message of Ecclesiastes invites contemplation on the nature of existence, the

pursuit of meaning, and the recognition of life's cyclical patterns. The author's observations are

often characterized by a sense of realism and a recognition of the limitations of human wisdom

and achievement. The message is transcendental, particularly when compared to *Yahweh*'s edict

to the Israelites against "other gods" in the OT. The cyclical nature of history informs an eschatological truth: humans become that which they revere. The message is particularly relevant when understanding Jesus's own words about the second coming.

Creation Corruption and Identity Inversion

The process of creation corruption and identity inversion began in the Garden of Eden with the serpent's deceptive tactics and false promises. In Gen. 6, the enemy tried again through unnatural sexual unions producing genetically modified beings, corrupting the *imago Dei* in an attempt to make humanity irredeemable, and creating the environment for a wantonly violent world, filled with bloodshed. Likewise, the ancient peoples struggled with worship of other deities, creating images of these gods, and becoming like them; this is a concept that is still alive in the present world. In each case, God provided a means of rescue for creation and his image in humanity. Though, the enemy never gives up. As times change and technology progresses, Satan's strategies evolve as well; in the NT letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds hearers and readers of this immutable fact.

"For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (6:12). Paul emphasizes the spiritual forces of evil at work, reinforcing the notion that the enemy seeks to corrupt and disrupt God's redemptive plan. The author contends that the "struggle" is an intense and ongoing "cosmic" conflict, and the adversaries are not human. The terms "rulers," "authorities," and "powers" denote different levels of spiritual entities, suggesting a structured and organized opposition, reflecting the fallen spiritual order that resulted from the corruption of creation. "This present darkness" signifies a corrupted or fallen state of the created order. The darkness, often associated with sin and

separation from God, reflects the consequences of creation corruption and the inversion of human identity.

While the verse does not explicitly mention the concept of the image of God, the idea of spiritual forces opposing God's purposes implies a distortion or inversion of the divine image in creation. The spiritual struggle involves forces working against the principles of justice, love, and harmony, which are inherent aspects of the *imago Dei*. While Ephesians 6:12 highlights the reality of spiritual opposition and the corruption in creation, the verse is situated within a letter that also emphasizes the redemptive work of Christ, the perfect image. Humanity's *imago Dei* inversion and the corruption of creation are addressed through the message of reconciliation and renewal, providing hope for believers amid the supernatural and very spiritual struggle.

Rescue and Restoration of *Imago Dei* Identity

God's redemptive narrative begins in Gen. 1 with the creation of humanity and the imparting of the divine image and royal status. Though the image was marred in the fall and humanity continually fails, God comes to the rescue restoring the *imago Dei* through the generational multiplication of his covenant people. The climax of *imago Dei* restoration comes by way of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the culmination of which occurs in the Day of the Lord. Paul reminds the Romans of the concept in 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family."

The verse begins with the concept of divine foreknowledge, emphasizing God's intimate knowledge and awareness of individuals and their identity. The central theme is the transformative process—believers being conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ, echoing the notion of creational *imago Dei*. The restoration process involves believers being

molded and shaped to resemble Christ, who embodies the perfect reflection of God's image. The concept of being conformed to the image of Christ implies an intentional process of restoring the *imago Dei* in humanity. This restoration involves the renewal and transformation of believers to reflect the moral and spiritual likeness of Jesus. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, believers are being reshaped into the image of God, with Christ serving as the exemplar of restored humanity.

The purpose of this *imago Dei* restoration is illuminated in the phrase "in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family." Christ, as the firstborn, holds a preeminent position, and believers, through identity restoration, become part of a redeemed family, sharing in the restored image of God. The reference to "a large family" underscores the communal aspect of this restoration, reflecting a familial bond among believers who share in Christ's restored image.

In the broader context of Rom. 8, which explores themes of redemption, liberation from bondage, and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit, *imago Dei* restoration is part of the overarching redemptive narrative, highlighting God's plan to bring humanity back into conformity with the Creator's original design through the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the book of Revelation offers the promise of *imago Dei* restoration to believers through new creation (21:1), the image of the Lamb (5:6), restored communion with God (5:10; 21), and a victory over sin and death (20-21). The eschatological revelation is that humanity will be restored to original identity through Jesus Christ. The Messiah's overcoming of sin and death and the removal of the curse and the absence of death in Revelation (21:4) imply a return to the original state of perfection when humanity was originally created in the image of God. With those promises in mind, how do believers know the time of the Second Coming is

near? While no one can know the day or the hour, Jesus gives some signs to look for and an admonishment to be vigilant in Matt. 24:37-44.

As in the Days of Noah

Matt. 24:37-44 is part of the *Olivet Discourse* records Jesus's words about the Second Coming. Verse 37 reads, "For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." When the Noahic flood is explored themes like genetic modification, bloodshed, abhorrent violence color the narrative. While the presence of the Nephilim and subsequent presence of the Rephaim may be debated, the bloodshed, human sacrifice, and sexual perversion required of their gods is not. The atrocious brutality that painted humanity was a reflection of a chosen image, not that of *Elohim*, but of something else. This dissertation has provided research into the ANE gods and the images thereof, and the worship practices toward those entities damaged the identity of humans to the point where no one knew who they were or where they belonged. The resulting consequence is chaos, identity confusion, gender confusion, and psychological and cultural trauma that resulted in the abject fall of civilizations. In this author's opinion, based on research, Jesus is warning NT readers and future Christian believers against this same fate in an eschatological future. *Elohim* protects his chosen people; he is a loving father who seeks to keep his kids from misery. Just as modern parents would advise their children from running into oncoming traffic, so *Yahweh* protects humanity, seeking to restore the *imago Dei* in perpetuity.

An Eschatological What If…

Taking the Messiah's words literally from Matt. 24:37, what can believers expect based on the historical narrative on "the days of Noah?"

1) Similarity in Conditions: By likening the conditions of the future coming of the Son of Man to the days of Noah, Jesus suggests that there will be similarities between the two periods. The likening includes moral and spiritual conditions, as well as a lack of readiness among people for the impending judgment. The likening could include the enemy's tactics to mar the image of God in humanity through genetic modification and other means.
2) Indifference: In the days of Noah, people were largely unaware and unconcerned about the impending flood. Matthew 24:38-39 further explains that they were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark. Similarly, the verse implies that there will be widespread unawareness or indifference concerning the second coming of Christ.
3) Divine Rescue: The reference to the days of Noah underscores the idea of divine judgment and divine intervention. In Noah's time, God intervened with a flood to judge a corrupted creation, the offspring of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men," and those given over to the violence and bloodshed that defined the earth at that time, yet Noah and family were rescued. The comparison suggests that, similarly, there will be divine intervention and judgment at the second coming of the Son of Man.
4) The Need for Vigilance: The context of Matthew 24 emphasizes the need for preparedness among believers. Just as Noah and his family were prepared for the flood by entering the ark, believers are called to be spiritually prepared for the return of Christ. The unexpected nature of the flood and the suddenness of Noah's entrance into the ark serve as a warning to be ready for the unexpected return of the Son of Man.

Knowing these cautions, offered through the words of Jesus, believers should also be vigilant of the enemy's strategies, for he is not flesh and blood and the struggle is ongoing. The subsections that follow introduce possible tactics the enemy could use in modern times to invert humanity's identity. Speculation does take the forefront in the following subsections but offers plausible opinions on Satan's tactics based on historical biblical evidence. One major take away is that the enemy is relentless and will continue to devise strategies and modify tactics to mar humanity's identity, to attempt to make people irredeemable, and to continually corrupt God's creation up unto the Day of the Lord.

Modern Day Idolatry

The critical dynamic at the heart of the biblical argument against idols is human identity.

Lints writes: "The plastic narratives of our times suggests that reality is eminently moldable into

our image, that our image and identity are profoundly flexible and ought to be shaped according

to our deepest desires, and finally that those desires are most fruitful when empowered with

choice. This is the mega-narrative of late modernity."[529] While traditional forms of idolatry often

involve physical objects or images, contemporary expressions can be more subtle, involving

attitudes, values, and pursuits that take precedence over a relationship with God. Idolatry

involves "taking something out of creation's totality, raising it above that creation, and making

the latter revolve around and serve it."[530] Brink qualifies modern idolatry in terms of certain

ideologies:

> Idols are something in creation viewed as singularly having the capacity
> to save. Following from the fact that idols fail to account for the complete
> fallenness of humanity results in the identification of a single thing
> as the problem needing overcoming (for example, lack of freedom or
> inequality), idols, and ideologies, ultimately fail.[531]

The outcome of modern idolatry is often humanism, an elevation of self above all else. Self

becomes the center of the cosmos as all else wanders in the orbit of one's own ego. Humans

devolve into a form of self-worship, where humans become the ultimate authority and source of

meaning, rejecting any sense of overarching morality, transcendent authority, and divine reality.

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[529] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry,* 161.

[530] David Theodore Koyzis, *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

[531] Robert Brink, "Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies," *Comment Magazine*, accessed December 15, 2023, https://comment.org/political-visions-and-illusions-a-survey-and-christian-critique-of-contemporary-ideologies/.

In the modern age, people have experienced a contemporary flattening of truth claims. The barrage of accessible information has led to a cultural tendency to minimize the significance of asserting objective or absolute truths. Relativism and post-modernism have ushered in an era where what is considered true is contingent upon individual experience and there are no overarching truth claims, even when it comes to morality. The very vocabulary of the modern age reflects an act of worship: self-esteem, self-actualized, self-experience, self-integration, self-determination, self-care…"let me take a selfie." Elevating self over God is the oldest trick in the book, quite literally. Satan's fall from heaven was driven by pride and ambition. Declarations of "I will ascend" and "I will make myself like the Most High," reflect an arrogant desire for self-exaltation.[532]

One of the most pervasive narratives of our age comes by way of identity politics. Identity politics is based on a label, such as race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, caste, and social class. The ideology diminishes individuals to specific discernible identities that are deemed more esteemed and prioritized than others, shaping a fundamental sense of human identity around distinctions rather than emphasizing a shared commonality among all people. The Bible does not deny the reality of human differences or the importance of identity to the human story. "It *does*, however, begin with what unites all humanity—the *Imago Dei*. The biblical worldview starts in sameness not differences. It grounds the value of an individual in something more transcendent than experience, background, race, or gender; it starts with the image of God that resides in every human being on the planet."[533]

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[532] Isaiah 14:12-15.

[533] "The Power of the Gospel and the Meltdown of Identity Politics," *Albert Mohler*, accessed December 15, 2023, https://albertmohler.com/2019/02/12/power-gospel-meltdown-identity-politics.

Modern Technology Tactics

To be clear, technology advancement is a beautiful thing. Progress effected how people live, increased the ability to travel, to study the stars, to examine the seas, and to better understand God's creation. Technology is not inherently evil. Like most things, technology is a tool. A hammer can both build a home and be a weapon, depending on how the tool is used. The same is true for technology. Technology is a tool that can be leverage for amazing, wonderful advances in science, theology, biology, communications, etc., but in the wrong hands technology can be used for surveillance, war, violence, bloodshed, targeting, and other terrible purposes. The adversary of God and humanity possesses an increasing array of means to undermine the original purpose of creation, rather than diminishing them. Drawing a parallel with the corruption of the human genome mentioned in Gen. 6 through the influence of the Nephilim, the weaponization of scientific and technological progress has the potential to yield similarly irreparable consequences. Students of the Bible would be remised if not to acknowledge the nefarious counterapplication on human identity, genetic modification, and the design of artificial intelligence. At the introduction of this dissertation, modern technologies were presented as potential tools for nefarious purpose, to corrupt the *imago Dei* in humanity: CRISPR Technology, neurological implants, and Artificial Intelligence. Each of these technologies can be used to heal, cure diseases, and change the world for good, but each also presents ethical concerns that should be addressed, particularly in light of human modification and the corruption of identity.

A notable theological implication revolves round the notion of humans "playing god." Critics contend that creating sophisticated AI systems with human-like intelligence might be perceived as an endeavor to assume divine powers, potentially challenging the authority and

agency of God. The concept of playing god prompts inquiries into the limits of human agency and creativity in relation to God's sovereignty. The incorporation of AI in decision-making processes within sacred contexts raises theological concerns about human agency and the supremacy of God. AI systems are designed to make decisions on algorithms, sometimes autonomously; therein lies a risk that these decisions may run counter to universal moral principles. As AI systems advance to pseudo-sentience or actual sentience, wherein lies the moral culpability? AI may very well be humanity's most dangerous idol yet; we may be very well designing our own "god" instead of carving an image of one.

The way forward with the technologies discussed in this section requires engaging in open dialogue that considers both the potential benefits and ethical challenges can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between science and theology in the context of genetic technologies. Advancement in the space will require technologists, scientists, ethicists, and academic theologians working together into a space where the whole world will benefit, the exploration of God's creation is advanced, moral considerations are taken into account, and humanity's *imago Dei* is protected and preserved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between the created-natural and supernatural forces underscores a fundamental truth: God utilizes the natural world for supernatural purposes, while antithetical spiritual forces seek to pervert and corrupt the same creation for destructive ends. Nowhere is this dichotomy more evident than in the corruption of human identity, symbolized by the separation of humankind from their Creator. Humanity, originally fashioned in the image of God, experienced both divine communion and subsequent estrangement following the commonly termed "Fall of Man" in Genesis. The enemy's agenda, laid bare in Genesis 3, aimed at

corrupting human identity, remains unchanged throughout history. In the OT and ANE, manifestations of this corruption abound, from the intermingling of divine and human lineage in Genesis 6 to the lessons against idolatry and other gods, which fractured humanity's moral fabric and deepened the rift between humanity and its original identity in God. God's redemptive mission seeks to restore humanity to its *imago Dei* identity and the unity experienced with the Creator in Genesis 1 and 2, counter to the adversary's goal of perpetual corruption. The key to understanding this overarching biblical narrative lies in recognizing God's use of the natural world for communication, restoration, and redemption, juxtaposed against continued attempts to corrupt creation throughout history.

The worship of ANE gods and the associated images led to widespread identity confusion, resulting in chaos, psychological trauma, and the downfall of civilizations. Like the ancients, contemporary society grapples with questions of identity and purpose, often seeking substitutes for the void left by separation from the one true God. The malevolent exploitation of human identity persists, evidenced by advancements in technology and scientific manipulation, which, while potentially beneficial, also harbor the potential for irredeemable harm to human identity and dignity. Thus, the battle for human identity and redemption continues across time and space, with the faithful challenged to discern God's redemptive work amidst the ongoing attempts to corrupt and distort humanity's true image and purpose. Through research and analysis, it becomes evident that NT warnings serve as a cautionary tale against repeating the ancient's fate in future eschatological events. Like a caring parent guiding their children away from danger, *Yahweh* seeks to protect humanity and restore the *imago Dei*, ensuring our perpetual well-being and identity through Jesus Christ.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that the reclamation of *imago Dei* identity is the ultimate and terminal end-state of God's plan for humanity's redemption; this plan is universally expressed to humanity through water imagery in OT and in ANE context. The study has revealed the complex tapestry of God's redemptive design. Through an examination of OT and ANE texts, this study traces the threads of creation and the *imago Dei* identity, recognizing the profound purpose embedded within humanity's reflection of the divine image. Emphasizing the revelation of God's supernatural intent through the ordinary workings of nature, biblical passages affirming the instructional role of the natural world in portraying God's attributes are highlighted. By delving into the dangers of idolatry juxtaposed with the pursuit of understanding God's intent through His creation, this research underscores the importance of safeguarding the *imago Dei* amidst the allure of worshiping created entities or self-idolatry. Furthermore, the symbolic significance of water emerges as a potent metaphor for divine judgment, purification, and ultimate redemption, from its portrayal in the Genesis Flood narrative to its transformative imagery in the NT. The dissertation also argues that the corruption of creation by the adversary, evident in Genesis and echoed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, underscores the ongoing conflict within God's redemptive saga. Ultimately, the restoration of the *imago Dei* identity, epitomized in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, stands as the consummate realization of God's salvific plan. Through this comprehensive exploration of creational identity, the juxtaposition with idolatrous tendencies, and the nuanced analysis of water imagery, this study offers a deeper understanding of God's redemptive narrative within the overarching contexts of both the OT and the ANE.

Excursus 1: Case Studies of Water Imagery in the Psalms

The following sections provide exemplifications of water imagery and how the symbology is used throughout the Psalter. Because of the limitations of the research scope here, Psalms are chosen based on contribution to the thesis case. The case studies are not intended to be a full treatment of the topic; rather the selections provide examples for how the OT is thematically tied together by water imagery used by God as a tool to communicate to the Israelites. Chapter Six will demonstrate that water imagery was a feature in ANE context and *Yahweh*'s plan for *imago Dei* restoration to all of humanity was accessible across cultures and people groups in the same historical *milieu*.

Psalm 74: Recalls of Genesis and Exodus

Psalm 74 is considered a song of lament. The chapter describes "God subduing the sea in conjunction with his creative work."[534] Creation at the beginning forms the setting of the chapter as can be understood by comparing verses 16-17 with Gen. 1:14-18:

Table 21: Intra-Textual Comparison: Ps. 74:16-17 and Gen. 1:14-18

Ps. 74:16-17	Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the luminaries and the sun. You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter
Gen. 1:14-18	And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

In Psalm 74, water imagery is used to convey "the sea" as both a created element and to demonstrate God's "might" and sovereignty over the waters and the creatures therein. See verses 13-14, "You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan;" Likewise in Gen. 1:6, God separated "the waters from the

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[534] Chisholm, "Suppressing Myth: *Yahweh* and the Sea in the Praise Psalms," 75.

waters," before gathering the waters together as Seas (1:9-10). The dragons and the Leviathan who resided in the Seas were no match for the wholly Sovereign Hebrew God.

Though creation is the setting of the psalm, there are also allusions to the exodus. Psalm 74:12 affirms God's kingship while asserting salvation "in the earth." Thematically, this can be compared to God divine deliverance of the Israelites through the Red Sea on "dry land" (r. Ex. 16, 22, 29, and 15:19 previously discussed in the Exodus section). As such, the moving of the sea, the subjugation of the waters is illustrative of God's superiority over Creation, created elements, and the creatures that reside in the sea; *Yahweh*'s moving of those waters "delivers" the ancient Israelites to "dry land" which becomes the means for salvation. Chisholm summarizes the purpose of Psalm 74 as, "affirm[ing] God's kingship and recall[ing] his mighty victories over hostile forces at creation and in history (vv. 12–17)."[535] The author continues, "enemies have ravaged God's people, but they know that God defeated enemies, symbolized by the sea and its allies, in the past and is capable of doing so again."[536]

Psalm 89: The Red Sea and Cosmic Kingship

Once again, the creative work of *Yahweh* is the setting to Psalm 89 confirmed most clearly in verse 11, "The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it—you have founded them." "Psalm 89 laments the demise of the Davidic dynasty and the resulting humiliation of *Yahweh*'s people (vv. 38–51). Yet the psalmist knows *Yahweh* is the great King who subdued enemies at creation and swore allegiance to David (vv. 1–34)."[537]

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[535] Chisholm, "Suppressing Myth: *Yahweh* and the Sea in the Praise Psalms," 77.

[536] Ibid.

[537] Ibid, 78.

Water imagery takes center stage in verses 9-10, "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm." God's divinity is once again juxtaposed against the sea. In the OT canon, the image of Rahab is paired with water imagery: the sea, the depths of the sea, the "great deep," and the "raging sea." Likewise, Rahab is accompanied by visuals of water serpents, dragons, and Leviathan. Psalm 87:4 (cf. Is. 30:7) could be seen as a connection to the ancient Israelite Exodus, since Rahab is used to represent Egypt; therefore, "it is possible that *Yahweh*'s primordial victory over the sea and the exodus event are merged here. Consider the following intra-textual comparisons of passages in the OT canon:

Table 22: Rahab in the OT Canon (allusions emphasized)

Job		Is.		Ps.	
9:13	"God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the **helpers of Rahab**.	27:1	In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish **Leviathan** the **fleeing serpent**, **Leviathan** the **twisting serpent**, and he will slay the **dragon** that is in the **sea (great deep)**	89:9-10	You rule the **raging** of the **sea**; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed **Rahab** like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
26:12-13	By his power he stilled the **sea;** by his understanding he shattered **Rahab.** By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing **serpent.**	51:9-10	Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; wake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut **Rahab** in pieces, who pierced the **dragon**? Was it not you who dried up **the sea**, the waters of the **great deep**, who made the **depths of the sea** a way for the redeemed to pass over?	87:4	Among those who know me I mention **Rahab** and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush[a] "This one was born there," they say.

The elements of the cosmic trope of *Yahweh*'s victory over the sea are present in the Psalter and throughout the OT canon. In both Psalm 74 and 89, God's absolute sovereignty as Divine Cosmic King is juxtaposed to the created order which is subjected to his rule, and both his sovereignty and Divine Providence are historically rooted in the Exodus (as testified by the Hebrew people). The idea is, simply stated, "Since he achieved victory before, he will again."

"The power of such vivid imagery explains in part why it occurs in Isaiah's visions of the new exodus (Isa. 51:9–10) and of God's final victory over his enemies in conjunction with the restoration of his people from exile (Isa. 27:1, 12–13)."[538] Writing with respect to Isaiah 51 and Psalms 74 and 89, Levenson states:

> The exhilarating reminiscence of *Yahweh*'s primordial victory is set directly against the bitter defeat of those with whom he has announced a unique relationship, his special treasures. The idea of God's absolute sovereignty … is not affirmed in an unqualified way. Rather, its inaccuracy in the light of historical experience is boldly proclaimed, not so as to promote skepticism, but so as to call upon God to close the gap between his reputation and his current behavior.[539]

<div align="center">Psalm 77: The Personified Red Sea</div>

Psalm 77 personifies the Red Sea and depicts the self-revelation of *Yahweh*'s power in the exodus from Egypt. Psalm 77 is a praise psalm that is recalls God's divine providence delivering the ancient Israelites from slavery. Verses 13-20 serves the passages "hymnic conclusion" poetically describing the Exodus event; this is also where water imagery takes precedent in the passage. Verse 19 reads, "Your way was through the sea, your path, through the mighty waters; yet your footprints were unseen." The path in the psalm correlates to the "dry land" deliverance of the ancient Israelites across the Red Sea. Though this Israelites were rescued by God's providence and the pushing back of the waters, the Egyptians were drowned in their attempt to follow. In this way, water imagery is presented as both a means of rescue and judgment. Psalm 77:9-10 is at the heart of God's redemption of Israel from Egypt. *Yahweh* redeemed Israel because of his steadfast love, graciousness, and compassion (cf. Ex. 15:13). Additionally consider the nature of the psalmist's praise to God in in parallel to Ex. 15:

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[538] Chisholm, "Suppressing Myth: *Yahweh* and the Sea in the Praise Psalms," 78.

[539] Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Franscisco, CA: HarperOne, 2014), 23-24.

Table 23: Psalm 77:13-16 and Exodus 15:11, 13-14, & 16a Compared [540]

Psalm 77:13-16	Exodus 15:11, 13-14, 16a
Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who works wonders; you have displayed your might among the peoples. With your strong arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah.* When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; the very deep trembled.	Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders? "In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people

The passages share language and the praise of *Yahweh*, his holiness, his strength, the redemption of his people. The psalmist recalls this deliverance and finds hope in it. While the author "casts the waters/depths (v. 16) of the sea (v. 19) in an adversarial role, but they are terrified by the mere sight of *Yahweh* (v. 16) and can offer no resistance to his militant advance (v. 19)."[541] Neither the primordial sea, the Red Sea nor the Egyptians, Philistia, nor the 'waters of the deep' can stand against the might and power of the Hebrew God; all of those that opposed *Yahweh* trembled in fear. Both the references to the Lord's deliverance of his people and the self-revelation also demonstrate his power among the nations (rf. Ps. 77:4–15).

Once again, the Hebrew God's power and absolute sovereignty are on display through water imagery, but there is another type of imagery in this Psalm that is worth noting for further extrapolation in contrast to ANE mythologies. The allusions are found in Psalm 77:18-19 and are theophanic natural phenomena referred to also in Exodus; these phenomena are present during and after the Exodus/Red Sea event. Consider the table that follows comparing the verses:

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[540] Similar to, Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms: An Inner-Biblical Interpretation," 112.

[541] Chisholm, "Suppressing Myth: *Yahweh* and the Sea in the Praise Psalms," 82.

Table 24: Theophanic Natural Phenomena in Psalm 77 and in Exodus

Ps		Ex.	
77:17	The <u>clouds</u> poured out water; the skies <u>thundered;</u> your arrows flashed on every side.	14:20	It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the <u>cloud</u> was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all <u>night</u>.
77:18	The crash of your <u>thunder</u> was in the whirlwind; your <u>lightnings</u> lit up the world; the earth <u>trembled and shook.</u> (earthquake)	19:9	Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense <u>cloud</u>, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after."
		19:16	On the morning of the third day there was <u>thunder and lightning</u>, as well as a thick <u>cloud</u> on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled.
		19:18	Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole <u>mountain shook violently. (earthquake)</u>

The key takeaway from this, for now, is divine deliverance by the absolute sovereign Hebrew God, in control of all created elements, who intervenes in compassion and steadfast love on behalf of his people; this intervention is indicative of *Yahweh*'s most salient qualities of sovereignty, love, and providence, which can be held in stark contrast to the ANE deities in the same historic stream.

Psalm 114: OT Allusions

"Of all the water imagery in the Psalter that recalls history, that of Psalm 114 is one of the strongest allusions to earlier Scripture."[542] Psalm 114 serves as a poetic account of the entire exodus, while water imagery describes the journey from Egypt to Canaan. The chapter begins, "When Israel went out from Egypt," a clear allusion to the Israelite escape from the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. Nature is personified in verses 3-4, which read, "the sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs." Unlike some of

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[542] Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms: An Inner-Biblical Interpretation," 185.

Yahweh's other conflicts with the primordial sea, this time the waters simply fled as a created

element, subject to the Creator's control. Tamfu rightly concludes:

> The author personifies the Red Sea as "seeing and fleeing" but does not
> state what the sea saw; Psalm 77:17, the only other instance in the Psalter
> where the waters see, supplies that object, רָאוּךָ מַּיִם אֱלֹהִ ים. Following
> Psalm 77, the Red Sea saw Israel's God and fled. The verb נוס poetically
> describes what happened at the Red Sea, when *Yahweh* drove the sea
> back for the redemption of his people, Israel (cf. Exod 14:21). Jordan
> turning back figuratively refers to Joshua 3:13, where the sea stood in one
> heap. The two unfathomable water crossings were accomplished by
> *Yahweh*'s presence and word (cf. Josh 3:13; Pss 18:15; 76:6)[543]

The Hebrew God's absolute sovereignty and divine providence is once again

communicated through water imagery and the exodus account. Likewise, *Yahweh*'s turning a

rock into water in 114:8 is symbolically considered. "The crossing of the Red Sea (Ex.14) and

the Jordan (Js. 3–4) referred to in verses 3–5 frame the exit from Egypt and the entrance into the

Promised Land."[544] Between these two great events lay the wilderness wandering alluded to in

Psalm 144:8. See the following Scriptures and OT references:

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[543] Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms: An Inner-Biblical Interpretation," 188. Goldingay makes similar observations: Goldingay, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 323.

[544] Ibid.

Table 25: OT References for *Yahweh*'s Providence Providing Water *ex nihilo*

Ps.		Dt.		Is.	
114:8	who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.	8:15	who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock	41:18	I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water
107:35	He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.			43:16-21	I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

By supplying water from nothing, *Yahweh* continues to provide for his people through an act of creation and water imagery. Berlin agrees and notes the passages connection with both creation and exodus:

> Psalm 114 joins the creation (the defeat of chaos) with the exodus and its aftermath. A wonderfully poetic nexus is formed between these two past events, implying their equivalence. The psalm describes the exodus, or more specifically, the founding of the nation of Israel in its land that the exodus initiated, in terms of the creation of the world. By implication, the exodus is a re-creation of the world. After the exodus, intimates the psalm, the map of the world must be redrawn, for a new nation has come into existence. The exodus-event thereby transcends its national significance and becomes an event of universal significance.[545]

Psalm 29: Flood Symbology

Psalm 29 shares key verbal and thematic links with the flood narrative of Gen. 6–9, making it evident that history played a significant role in the composition of the psalm. "The

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[545] Adele Berlin, "Myth and Meaning in Psalm 114," essay, in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time*, ed. Joel S. Burnett, W.H. Bellinger, and W. Dennis Tucker (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2007), 67–80, 69.

concluding praise (Ps 29:10–11) draws upon the flood narrative, precisely with the use of the

rare term מַבּוּל. Of the thirteen occurrences of מַבּוּל, twelve occur in Gen. 6–11, describing the

flood of Noah. The only other occurrence of מבול is in Psalm 29:10. Consider that both in Gen.

and Psalm 29, the Hebrew God demonstrates strong control over מבול. According to Kaiser, מַבּוּל

is a technical term reserved for the watery catastrophe, which God brought on the earth during

the days of Noah.[546] "The event was so well known that מבול usually occurs with the definite

article (except in Gen 9:11, 15). This means that מַ בּוּל in verse 10 refers to the flood of Noah."[547]

The "heavenly beings" of verse one are subject to the Hebrew God. Likewise, the waters

described in verse 3 are in subjugation. Theophanic references continue through references in

verse 3 to "mighty waters," and "thunders" demonstrating that *Yahweh* is the sole and absolute

authority over created elements. Harkening back to the findings presented in the section

referencing Psalm 77, Psalm 29 echoes the Davidic portrayal of theophany with natural

phenomena similar to the depiction of God's presence to Moses at Sinai.

> In both contexts, *Yahweh* comes in thunder (Ps 29:3; cf. Exod 19:16),
> lightening (Ps 29:7; cf. Exod 19:16), and earthquake (Ps 29:8; cf. Exod
> 19:16). In both passages the voice of *Yahweh* generates these natural
> phenomena (Ps 29:3,4; cf. Exod 19:16). In Psalm 114 the skipping of a
> place (vv. 4, 6) and earthquake (v. 7) are linked to the exodus (v. 1).
> Psalms 77:16–19 also links thunders, earthquakes, lightening to the Red
> Sea rescue.[548]

Psalm 29 looks back to *Yahweh*'s work and interprets the present in light of that past.

Yahweh was over the flood (water imagery) in Noah's day, and he still reigns in David's day; the

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[546] Walter Kaiser, "מבול," *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2004).

[547] Tamfu, "The Water Imagery in the Psalms: An Inner-Biblical Interpretation," 44.

[548] Ibid, 46.

same God who manifested himself to Israel with natural phenomena appears in similar ways to David, as the author celebrates it in Psalm 29.

Excursus 2: Jonah's Background Information

For the study of Jonah, background information must be explored to give the book

context and to effectively establish the correct ANE milieu. The following subsections 1)

establish a late date for Jonah, 2) explore the historic-geographical context and archaeological

data, and 3) explains the sociohistorical background of the Diaspora, all of which are necessary

for understanding context for the original hearers of the book and readers of the scrolls.

Establishing a Late Date for Jonah

There are no in-text, explicit declarations that definitively reveal the identity of *Jonah*'s

author; biblical commentaries and scholarly discourses rely on historical context clues in order

approximate its date which is vital to understanding the book's message as anti-narrative to ANE

polytheism, illuming the divine providence of *Yahweh*, and the book's didactic purpose as a

message of salvific inclusivity and of hope for displaced Yehudites and ANE "others."

Traditionally, the book has been attributed to the prophet Jonah as mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25,

thereby placing its historical timeframe under the rule of Jeroboam II between 785-753 BCE.[549]

Significant questions surrounding the historicity of the book have resulted in a wide range of

defensible dating from 800-200 BCE.[550] Those questions include *Jonah*'s canonical placement,

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[549] Sheri L. Klouda, "Jonah," in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), NP, "Authorship and Date." Klouda relies on "Jewish and Christian tradition" to identify the author as the same character of Jonah mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.

[550] George Adam Smith, *Expositor's Bible: The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (SI: Outlook Verlag, 2020), accessed April 15, 2020, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/50747/50747-h/50747-h.htm#Jonah, 496. Smith takes issue with Jonah as the author of the book by taking into consideration the chronological order of the Hebrew Bible; consequently, Smith suggests a date around 300 BCE claiming that a date around 780 BCE is implausible calling into questions its place in the canon; with the earlier date the book, it would have been placed as 'first of all the Twelve [of the Prophets], [occurring] nearly a generation before that of Amos.'

David W. Baker et al., eds., *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), accessed April 15, 2020), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4442612&ppg=58, 58. Baker et al suggest that an eighth century date is defendable, and also holds that any timeframe prior to 200 BCE is equally as defendable.

grammatical syntax, and linguistic indicators. Though a full treatment of the research behind

these answers is beyond the periscope of this research, it is necessary to provide a brief survey of

modern scholarship in the areas of intertextuality and linguistics to make the case for an early

dating of *Jonah* as theodicy and its didactic nature in the milieu of ancient mythology and

ancient Israelite exclusivism; both factors set the foundation for understanding ANE history,

culture, geography, and archaeological data surrounding the book. The late date forms the

foundation of the research which presumes a fourth century authorship account of the book of

Jonah.

A late date for *Jonah* starts to become plausible when readers can reconcile canonical,

intertextual, and linguistic indicators that are indicative of the same era while also considering

that the writer referenced the eighth century reign of Jeroboam II on purpose.[551] In this way, the

book of *Jonah* is actually not from a prophet, rather it is about a prophet. Canonically and

intertextually, Kim employs a rhetorical criticism to compare *Jonah* and Nahum, and *Jonah* and

Joel, and addresses the canonical placement of *Jonah* in the Twelve Prophets; the author assigns

the writing of *Jonah* to the Second Temple period.[552] Goswell also makes the connection of

Jonah to Nahum in light of its canonical context, "it is the positive portrayal of the possibility of

the God's salvific action among the nations, in specific contrast to Nahum's blanket

condemnation of Nineveh in the context of cosmic judgment, that explains Jonah's inclusion

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Douglas Stuart, "Jonah," in *Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea-Jonah*, ed. Baker et al (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989). Stuart concurs that the author "could be" Jonah but calls the theory "highly unlikely in that the story is so consistently critical of Jonah," since ardent self-deprecation is not a feature that is consistent with Scripture nor is the style seen in extra-biblical literature between 800-200 BCE.

[551] The purposeful reference to Jeroboam II and an eighth century lens is discussed further in this research under "Historic-Geographical Context and Archaeological Data: Jeroboam II in Context."

[552] Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 497-528.

among the Twelve."[553] Thematically, Kim posits that "a diachronic reading of the Twelve *visa-a-vis* Jonah reveals that the redactor of Jonah picked up the name of the prophet from the account of Jeroboam II in 2 Kings 14, thereby constructing various comparative and didactic correlations of key characters and plots."[554] Modern scholarship considering canonical placement and intertextual readings seem to make an early date for *Jonah* less likely; this is also supported by a contemporary understanding of ancient Hebrew linguistics.

Linguistic indicators and grammatical syntax are considered by scholars to be one of the more reliable mechanisms to dating an ancient text. The book of *Jonah* has expressions consistent with late-biblical Hebrew and contains lexical and grammatical forms of Aramaic origin supporting a Post-Exilic dating.[555] Syntactical features indicate a late date in three ways: 1) The attaching of the direct object pronoun as a suffix to the verb, 2) the use of a plural noun where in the pre-exilic timeframe Hebrew the singular would have been used (הֲלִיכָה) and 3) the implied past tense reference to Nineveh's greatness in 3:3.[556] Contemporarily, Muraoka finds that the particle - שֶׁ as used in Jonah 1:7, 8, and 12 is a characteristic of Late Biblical Hebrew.[557] The sociolinguist specifically calls out the use of בזי- "because" is "consistent with Official Aramaic of the fifth century BCE.'[558] Based on modern scholarship in the fields of

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[553] Gregory Goswell, "Jonah among the Twelve Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135, no. 2 (2016): 283-299, 293.

[554] Ibid, 527.

[555] Ibid, Baker et al, 58-59

[556] As a matter of brevity and relevance the grammatical considerations are not fully treated here, though the *Tyndale Commentary* previously cited, provides some notes on the matter.

[557] Takamitsu Muraoka, "A Case of Diglossia in the Book of Jonah?" *Vetus Testamentum* 62, no. 1 (2012): 129-131.

[558] Ibid. In a later article, Holmstedt and Kirk take issue with Muraoka's formal assertion of digglosia, but not necessarily the dating of the language. The authors take an approach that is more theological in nature proposing a type of dialectic code-switching that reveals the "book's message of theological subversion." The research

intertextuality and linguistics, a late date for *Jonah* is plausible and defendable. Intra-biblical

analysis supports the findings of this extra-biblical research and makes a solid case for the book

of *Jonah* as a written dialogue correlated by the intertextual and linguistic comparisons which

'give expression to thematic emphases of the post-exilic communities in the Second Temple

Period.'[559] The section that follows, on historic-geographical context and archaeological data,

addresses the past-tense reference to Nineveh's greatness and further provides evidence for the

message of *Jonah* as theodicy and didactic toward salvific inclusivity in the contextual fourth

century.

Historic-Geographical Context and Archaeological Data

Geography and Archaeology

Jonah reflects the exclusionist point of view of the Israelites that salvation belongs only

to the nation while reflecting the hermeneutical tension of Hellenism and the plight of Diaspora

Jews. Exploring the historic-geographical context and archaeological data reveals the didactive

nature of Jonah against exclusion and in favor of salvific inclusion of the diaspora Jewish "other"

and ANE "others." This a motif in Jonah that is contrasted by Jonah's stubbornness to go to the

foreign, "enemy" city of Nineveh and warn ANE pagans of impending disaster. Similarly, the

pagan sailors on the boat from Joppa hesitate to toss Jonah over in the terrible storm, begging the

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considers the use of - שׁ in the case of Psalms 122:3, 4; 123:2; 124:1, 2, 6; 129:6, 7; 133:2, 3; 135:2, 8, 10; 136:23; 137:8, 9; 144:15; 146:3, 5 as, "either dialectical or late," use in Genesis 6:4 as a post-exilic addition of the chapter. "The nearly even use of שׁ alongside אשׁר in Ecclesiastes represents the mid-point of the diffusion of a new, distinct borrowing of Akkadian *ša* during the post-exilic period by the community in eastern diaspora. Song of Songs, excluding the superscription, bears witness to the completed diffusion of שׁ (and thus displacement of אשׁר) in Hellenistic Hebrew." The authors research, while taking issue with Muraoka's digglosia formality, still provide support for a linguistic late date for *Jonah*. See, Robert D. Holmstedt and Alexander T. Kirk, "Subversive Boundary Drawing in Jonah: The Variation of אשׁר and שׁ as Literary Code-Switching," *Vetus Testamentum* 66, no. 4 (December 2016): 542-555. (Direct quotes are included from the source in this footnote as indicated by quotation marks.

[559] Muraoka, "A Case of Diglossia in the Book of Jonah?" 499.

prophet to invoke the ancient Hebrew God; Jonah's refusal to take heed to the foreign sailor's advice finds the character in the depths of the sea, figuratively or literally dead before finally repenting. In literary and thematic inversion, the pagan sailors repent to Jonah's God without question, likewise the "wicked" Ninevites are penitent without question, fasting, and praying to *Yahweh* in stark contrast to any ANE polytheistic worldview. In this way, Jonah reads as didactive instructing towards the universality of salvation, reticent to the character and the divine providence of *Yahweh* despite chaos and existent evil. This background is set upon three cities mentioned first three verses of the book of *Jonah* prior to the book's primary setting upon the primordial sea.[560] The cities are Joppa, Tarshish, and Nineveh; this paper explores the geography and archaeology of Joppa and Nineveh due to the relevance of the mythological historio-geographic understandings that prevailed in ancient Israel and in an ANE in fourth century context.

Joppa

Joppa is where the journey begins. The city "is located on a low hill overlooking a small harbor on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. It is about [thirty-five] miles northwest of Jerusalem—within the modern city of Tel Aviv—on the Mediterranean coast of Israel.[561] The port city is ancient; its existence is recorded as early as fifteenth century BCE in the reports of King Thutmose II and the *Armana Letters*. Archaeological excavations by the Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project show a likelihood of Egyptian occupation from the Late Bronze Age to around

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[560] Discussed later in this research.

[561] R. L. Drouhard, "Joppa," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

800 BCE.[562] Joppa was mentioned in the list of cities that "Sennacharib took during his retributive invasion campaign against the rebel alliance in 701 BCE." [563] The historical background of Joppa provides context for the rooted influence of Egyptian cosmology and mythology that continued to influence the culture of the area well into the fourth century and in the book of *Jonah*.

A fourth century dating for *Jonah* places the history of Joppa around the same time of the writings and in the context of the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the city was under the political control of Sidon.[564] When Artaxerxes III destroyed Sidon, Joppa became a free city until Alexander the Great's Middle Eastern invasion in 332 BCE. "Excavators have found structures displaying Sidonian influence from this period, as well as imported Greek objects, a stone anchor, and coins."[565] These archaeological findings are consistent with the seafaring traditions of Joppa, the terminology in *Jonah*, and the rise of Hellenism that pervaded culture in the ANE/Levant regions from ca. 330-30 BCE. This research adds to the case of *Jonah* as instructional toward salvific inclusivity considering cultural tensions pursuant to the fourth century while tying together maritime terminology and iconography that lend to a discussion of theodicy as a primary theme.

Further, in contemporary scholarship, John Day offers one more compelling motivation for a fourth century date of *Jonah*. The OT scholar uses geography and a late date for *Jonah* in correlation with the myth of Perseus and Andromeda. 'The story of Perseus and Andromeda also

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[562] Aaron Burke, "The Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project," *The Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project* (UCLA, September 1, 2015), last modified September 1, 2015, accessed March 4, 2021, http://jaffa.nelc.ucla.edu/.

[563] R. L. Drouhard, "Joppa," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary.*

[564] The King of Persia gave Joppa to the king of Sidon in treatise as part of a larger land grant.

[565] R. L. Drouhard, "Joppa," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary.*

originated in Joppa,' the theologian writes, placing both stories in the same historic and geographical stream.[566] The parallel between the myth of Perseus and Andromeda and the story of Jonah are connected by the chaos of the sea and heroic miraculous intervention, a motif that persists in ANE mythology and is explored further in this research under the heading of "Literary Comparison" and in specific evaluation of sea-monster perspectives. For relevance here, it is enough to make the association of the stories in similarity regarding timeframe and location of origination in the geographic area.

Nineveh

When Jonah 1:2 refers to Nineveh as a "great city," the passage gives another context clue toward a fourth century dating of the book. Situated in the outskirts of modern Mosul, Nineveh is located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River "some six hundred miles upriver from the Persian Gulf in north Iraq."[567] When biblical commentators attempt describe Nineveh in traditional eighth century context, the size of the city does not correlate with biblical reference or historical circumstance. Eighth century Nineveh was a 'small, walled city that spanned no more than three miles or cubits long and was no more than a mile wide.'[568] While in Jonah 4:1, the writer refers Nineveh's population as "more than a hundred twenty thousand. The tiny eighth century city of Nineveh does not fit the timeline or population reference, however a later date for the book can resolve this issue.

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[566] John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 104.

[567] John H. Walton, Victor Harold Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Genesis--Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), "Jonah:1:1-17."

Though Nineveh is not a major oceanic port-city like Joppa, this research notes its situation as pertaining to water, fishing, and seafaring/maritime terminology that exists in the book of *Jonah*, pervades ancient "fish stories," and aligns ancient cosmologies that are further discussed in "Literary Comparisons" and "Iconography," herein.

[568] Baker *et al*., eds., *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah.*

By accepting that the writing of *Jonah* occurred in the fourth century, readers can reconcile the size of the city and its biblical populace, because the author is referring to a time in the past, when Nineveh had already reached its greatness. The author of *Jonah* uses only vague references of the historic eighth century, so it should come as no surprise that Jeroboam II's reign is in the eighth century, while Nineveh reached its greatness in the seventh; the author, then, is recalling history from a fourth century present understanding. Chandler's work on urban populations in the ANE and Levant show that Nineveh demonstrates this finding, making it plausible that Nineveh's population could have reached 120,000 as recorded in *Jonah*.[569] The difficulty for calculating pre-census population growth notwithstanding, Chandler's picture of urban populations in the ANE is supported by the modern research of Matt Rosenberg and places Nineveh, Assyria the eighth in highest population achieved chronologically in 668 BCE shortly before the cities destruction in 612 BCE.[570] This dating is also archaeologically supported.

Austen Henry Layard's findings in Nineveh reveals the wealth and glory of Nineveh under Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal in the seventh century.[571] Laynard discovered Sennacherib's "Palace Without Rival," and Ashurbanipal's library of over 20,000 tablets among thousands of other smaller, but contributive archaeological findings, one of which is worth mentioning here: the low relief carving of a "fish" god Dagon in Nineveh. The history of Dagon goes back to the third millennium BCE; "The earliest reference to the worship of this god is in

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[569] Tertius Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987).

[570] Matt Rosenberg, "What Were the Largest Cities Throughout History?" *ThoughtCo*, last modified 2015, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.thoughtco.com/largest-cities-throughout-history-4068071.

[571] For a fuller treatment, see: Austen Henry Layard, "Discoveries at Nineveh," ed. Bruce J. Butterfield, *Discoveries At Nineveh* (Marquette University, 1997), accessed March 5, 2021, https://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Layard/.

the inscriptions of Sargon of Akkad."[572] According to Freedman, "As divine ruler of his land, Dagon was responsible for king and people; this is well attested in spheres of military expansion, fertility, living and deceased human rulers, and divine advice."[573] Though some scholars have discredited the understanding of Dagon as a fish-man deific character, the arguments for Dagon as a fish-god have been revived in modernity.[574]

Dagon and the deity's relevance to *Jonah* is discussed later in this work, but for now the existence of a fish like deity, archaeologically uncovered in the city of Nineveh is intriguing. Perhaps, even more importantly within this scope of this research, is that the image and worship of Dagon as a deity persists from the third millennium to well after the fourth century dating of *Jonah* even into the second century BCE. While some scholarship has relegated Dagon to a patron deity, the god's importance permeates seafaring cultures and maritime port areas of the ANE, like Joppa and Nineveh at the time of *Jonah*'s writing further revealing that the nature and presence of a fish-god was critical to ANE thought, particularly in a maritime environment. Freedman agrees, "Several place names also include Dagon's name thus confirming the deity's importance for the area. This importance may also be assumed from the use of Dagon in biblical texts through the end of the [second] century BCE."[575] Dagon as fish-god iconography is also

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[572] David Noel Freedman, "Dagon," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

[573] Freedman, "Dagon," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary.*

[574] These modern resources are discussed later in this research. For immediate fuller treatment, see the works of: Bradley Crowell, "The Development of Dagan: A Sketch," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 32-83; Allan Dyssel, "Jonah's Dag Gadol, a Sea-Monster Associated with the Primeval Sea?" *Journal for Semitics* 28, no. 2 (February 2019): 1-18.

[575] Freedman, "Dagon," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary.*

relevant to understanding the message of *Jonah* as theodicy and is discussed further in literary comparison and iconography presented later in this research.

<p style="text-align:center">Sociohistorical Background of The Diaspora</p>

The sociohistorical background of Hellenism and the Diaspora Jews demonstrates the didactic purpose of *Jonah* considering the nation of Israel and its context in the fourth century. As Kim succinctly summarizes: "[When read] as an inner-biblical exegesis and allusion to these correlated books from the sociohistorical background of the Diaspora in the Persian period, the book of *Jonah* demonstrates a religio-hermeneutical tension and struggle for survival, depicted in the relationships of the prophet to the people of Yehud and outsiders."[576] Outsiders of the nation of ancient Israel existed in the scattering of diaspora Jews and among ANE others and was evidenced in the rise of Hellenism that pervaded the ANE regions. "The problems of Hellenism for the Jews lie in its distinctions. Hellenism purported a polytheistic, humanistic, syncretic, pagan, Greek speaking culture, which was in direct opposition to the Jew's monotheistic, ethical, isolationist, Hebrew-speaking society."[577]

Prior to and during the rise of Hellenism, the Jewish people viewed their individual culture from the perspective of the OT Covenant, heeding the advice from prophets that warned against national destruction, a motif present in *Jonah,* a matter contrasted in the book by the motif of salvific inclusivity. Hellenism was challenging the "very existence of the Hebrew identity" and Jonah challenged Hebrew nationalism.[578] Indeed, the era of the prophetic was ending as many Jewish prophets and high priests aligned with the secular ruling class; this

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[576] Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 497-528, 527.

[577] J. Julius Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 116.

[578] Ibid, 119.

religio-political fusion created a sense confusion among the Jewish people, as it were.

Referencing the Second Temple Period, Matthias Henze notes that "…the second temple in

Jerusalem never had the same significance as the first temple, and it certainly never enjoyed the

same theological, unifying authority."[579] The disunity complicated the matters of Hellenization

as some Jewish groups sought life in the Judean desert in "self-imposed" exile rather than

Roman conformance and others embraced Greek culture. The exiled Jews then became an

audience considered "other." Almost simultaneously, Hellenism brought with it the advantages

of open trade routes and economic increase via *Pax Romana*; speaking the Greek language was a

sign of the progression of the age, and its knowledge brought to its bearers legal and economic

advantage.[580] Even Israeli rabbis of Babylonian, Jewish descent, and Aramaic-speaking migrants

(*Ha-Bavli*) were inclined to learn Greek language and philosophy as a matter of intellect and

relevance.

First and Second Maccabees presents Hellenism as a threat of assimilation, diametrically

opposed to Jewish tradition, however the books themselves are written in Koine Greek, in

pseudo-ironical fashion showing a linguistic conformance. The daily life in Judea and the lives

diaspora Jews was directly influenced by Hellenism, with the main dividing issue between

Hellenized Jews and traditional Judaism being the application of biblical law. Neal writes of this

cultural shift:

> Within a generation of Alexander's conquest of Palestine, the entire
> ancient East throbbed with new life—new ideas, new names for old gods,
> new methods of administration, a new language, and new markets for

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[579] Matthias Henze, *Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), Kindle, np.

[580] Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 62.

trade—all of which led to the awakening of the East from the quiet lethargy of easygoing Persian rule.[581]

It is distinctly noted that the process of Hellenization took over one hundred years for Jewish societal indoctrination. Pottery from Athens reached Judea in the seventh century and Greek money was in common circulation as early as the fourth and fifth centuries. Alexander's conquests opened borders between Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean, and Roman culture that were previously physically and geographically separate. To wit, ancient Greek mythologies alongside Greek names permeated early diaspora Jewish communities. Vehement rejection to ethnic and religious conversion gave rise to Hasmonean Jews, who later formed as Pharisees and explains the group's strict adherence to the Jewish Law even unto the days of Jesus. Those Jews within the borders of Israel and in larger cities felt emergence in the political and economic pressure to conform with the regime of Hellenism, while the spread to the smaller, rural cities took a bit longer.

The authors of *Story without End* contend that many Jews were *"charmed* by the customs and manners, by the very spirit of the Greeks"[582] as others exiled for cultural preservation. Clearly there were those who conformed to Hellenism due to political and economic advantage while others, like the Hassidic Jews, rebelled against assimilation. Distinctly, the Jewish people were fraught with decisions between religion and state, faced the peril of losing their national and ethnic identity, and endured a sectarianism that some say weakened the faith. The ramifications of Hellenism brought with it both economic and political advantage for some and

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[581] Philip Neal, *Judaism, Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men?* (Hollister, CA: York Publishing Co., 2010), accessed January 20, 2021, https://bit.ly/2Y1ptO1, Chapter Three.

[582] Solomon Landman and Benjamin Efron, *Story without End: An Informal History of the Jewish People* (New York, NY: H. Holt, 1949), 73.

despair for others that were well felt by *Jonah*'s audience. This sociohistorical background undergirds the writing of *Jonah* as a didactive narrative against Israel's ardent nationalism and for the inclusivity of all people in *Yahweh*'s redemptive plan. The prayers of the sailors and of a repentant Nineveh and God's divine providence characterize the nature of the Hebrew God as good, holy, and just contrasting ANE polytheistic mythological context in the same historic stream.

Excurses 3: Modern Technologies and Ethical Considerations

The following information outlines CRISPR, Neurolink, and AI Technologies with respective ethical concerns.

CRISPR Technology

One such technology is CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats). CRISPR technology allows for the precise modification of DNA in living organisms. Such DNA modification has tremendous potential to cure diseases previously rendered incurable, allowing the lame to walk and the blind to see. Still, CRISPR presents with supreme ethical challenges.[583] The challenges and ethical concerns are described in outline form and theological implications are discussed at the conclusion of the section.

1) Germline Editing:
   a) Challenge: Editing the germline (sperm, eggs, or embryos) can result inheritable genetic modifications that will be passed down to future generations.
   b) Ethical Concern: The permanence and inheritability of germline edits raise ethical questions about unintended consequences, potential long-term effects, and the ability to make informed decisions on behalf of future generations.

2) Off-Target Effects:
   a) Challenge: CRISPR technology may sometimes result in unintended changes at locations other than the targeted gene.
   b) Ethical Concern: Unintended genetic modifications could have unpredictable consequences, potentially leading to harmful effects on the organism. Ensuring the precision and safety of CRISPR edits is crucial.

3) Designer Babies and Enhancement:
   a) Challenge: The ability to edit genes opens the door to the possibility of selecting or enhancing specific traits in humans.

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[583] Articles that challenge the ethics behind CRISPR include: Jennifer A. Doudna and Samuel H. Sternberg, *A Crack in Creation: Gene Editing and the Unthinkable Power to Control Evolution* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018); *Human Genome Editing: Science, Ethics, and Governance* (Washington, District of Columbia: National Academies Press, 2017); David Baltimore et al., "A Prudent Path Forward for Genomic Engineering and Germline Gene Modification," *Science* 348, no. 6230 (2015): 36–38, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aab1028; *Gene Drives on the Horizon: Advancing Science, Navigating Uncertainty, and Aligning Research with Public Values* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2016); 1. David James Heslop and Chandini Raina MacIntyre, "Germ Line Genome Editing and the Emerging Struggle for Supremacy in the Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Balance of Power," *Global Biosecurity* 1, no. 1 (2019): 169, https://doi.org/10.31646/gbio.18.

b) Ethical Concern: Ethical debates arise over the concept of "designer babies," where parents might choose genetic traits for their children, potentially leading to societal issues related to inequality, discrimination, and the commodification of life.

4) Informed Consent:
a) Challenge: Ensuring informed consent when applying CRISPR, especially in the context of germline editing, can be challenging.
b) Ethical Concern: There are concerns about the potential for coercion, lack of understanding, or pressure on individuals or couples to undergo gene editing without fully understanding the risks and implications.

5) Equitable Access:
a) Challenge: The availability and affordability of CRISPR-based treatments may not be universally accessible.
b) Ethical Concern: There are concerns about creating disparities between those who can afford gene therapies and those who cannot, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities.

6) Unintended Consequences for Ecosystems:
a) Challenge: CRISPR applications in agriculture and environmental contexts may have unintended consequences on ecosystems.
b) Ethical Concern: The release of genetically modified organisms into the environment could have ecological impacts, and ethical considerations include the potential for unintended harm to non-target species.

7) Dual-Use Concerns:
a) Challenge: The dual-use nature of CRISPR technology means that it can be used for both beneficial and harmful purposes.
b) Ethical Concern: The potential for CRISPR to be misused for malicious purposes, such as bio-terrorism or the creation of bioweapons, raises ethical and security concerns.

Is it possible that CRISPR technology is reminiscent to the "days of Noah" and the "sons of God" mating with the "daughters of men?" Surely, the idea is speculative, but plausible. If Noah was, indeed, genetically pure, then the enemy's devices pursued a course to genetically modify humankind to make men and women in Noah's age potentially irredeemable. If DNA is God's source code, the building blocks of what makes a human a human, then what does modifying that source code produce? Once the modification occurs, cells replicate with that modification in tact in every generation. The plot could be, indeed, a cyclical occurrence of enemy identity inversion tactics. Another theological implication is that CRISPR could also be seen as a form of idolatry,

a humanly designed editing of DNA, abandoning the form of *imago Dei* for something human

created; the ethical concerns, even of a secular, modern society seem to point in this direction.

Neurological Implants

Neurological implants, which involve the insertion of devices into the brain or nervous

system to monitor or modulate neural activity, have raised serious ethical concerns in the

scientific community; some of which are defined as follows:[584]

1) Informed Consent:
   a) Challenge: Obtaining informed consent for brain implant procedures can be complex due to the intricacies of the technology and potential risks.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ensuring that individuals fully understand the nature of the procedure, potential risks, and long-term implications is crucial. Consent must be voluntary, and individuals should be made aware of any potential unforeseen consequences.

2) Privacy and Security:
   a) Challenge: Neurological implants often involve the collection and transmission of sensitive neural data.
   b) Ethical Concern: Protecting the privacy and security of neural data is essential. Unauthorized access to this data could have significant implications for individuals, including the potential for misuse, discrimination, or loss of personal autonomy.

3) Autonomy and Identity:
   a) Challenge: Neurological interventions may impact an individual's autonomy and sense of identity.
   b) Ethical Concern: There are concerns about the potential for alterations in personality, cognition, or behavior that could affect an individual's identity and decision-making capacity. Ethical considerations include respecting the autonomy and self-determination of individuals undergoing implantation.

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[584] Scientific articles challenging the ethics of neurological implants are representative: Marcello Ienca and Pim Haselager, "Hacking the Brain: Brain–Computer Interfacing Technology and the Ethics of Neurosecurity," *Ethics and Information Technology* 18, no. 2 (2016): 117–129, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-016-9398-9; 1. Frederic Gilbert, Terence O'Brien, and Mark Cook, "The Effects of Closed-Loop Brain Implants on Autonomy and Deliberation: What Are the Risks of Being Kept in the Loop?," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2018): 316–325, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0963180117000640; Frederic Gilbert, Terence O'Brien, and Mark Cook, "The Effects of Closed-Loop Brain Implants on Autonomy and Deliberation: What Are the Risks of Being Kept in the Loop?," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2018): 316–325, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0963180117000640; 1. Fabrice Jotterand, "Personal Identity, Neuroprosthetics, and Alzheimer's Disease," *Intelligent Assistive Technologies for Dementia* (2019): 188–202, https://doi.org/10.1093/med/9780190459802.003.0011; Emmanuel Bloch, "The Ethical Implications of Emerging Technologies in Warfare," *Emerging Military Technologies* (2022): 23–32, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004507951_005; Iris Coates McCall and Veljko Dubljević, "Human Flourishing or Injustice? Social, Political, and Regulatory Implications of Cognitive Enhancement," *The Routledge Handbook of the Ethics of Human Enhancement* (2023): 389–406, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003105596-37.

4) Equity and Access:
   a) Challenge: Access to neurological implants may not be universally available, creating disparities in healthcare access.
   b) Ethical Concern: There are concerns about exacerbating existing social inequalities, with some individuals having access to advanced neural technologies while others do not. Ensuring equitable access to these technologies is an ethical imperative.

5) Long-Term Effects and Risks:
   a) Challenge: The long-term effects of neurological implants are not always fully understood.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ethical considerations include the need for ongoing monitoring and research to assess the long-term safety and efficacy of neurological implants. Transparency in communicating potential risks to individuals is essential.

6) Enhancement vs. Treatment:
   a) Challenge: Distinguishing between therapeutic uses of neurological implants and enhancement interventions can be challenging.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ethical debates arise over whether neurological interventions should be limited to treating medical conditions or extended to enhance cognitive or physical abilities. Determining acceptable boundaries for enhancement raises questions about societal values and norms.

7) Dual-Use Concerns:
   a) Challenge: Neurological implants, like other advanced technologies, can have dual-use applications for both beneficial and potentially harmful purposes.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ethical considerations include the potential for misuse, such as unauthorized access to neural interfaces for malicious purposes or coercion.

Is it theologically speculative to infer some revelatory understandings of the "mark of the beast" as related to neurological implants? Certainly, there are factual cognitive effects of the technological devices recognized by scientists. Would it be fair to understand neurological devices as a marring of the "image of God" in humanity? While modern information and theological inference is scant, marring the image of God in humanity is a tool recognized throughout the OT. Why would the enemy not use every man-made device imaginable to break the image of God in humans and cause the chaos of identity crisis?

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The rapid progress and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have

profoundly reshaped various facets of human existence. While AI holds the potential for

significant benefits, it is essential to scrutinize the theological and ethical ramifications it

presents:

1) Bias and Fairness:
   a) Challenge: AI systems can inherit and perpetuate biases present in the data used to train them.
   b) Ethical Concern: The potential for discriminatory outcomes, particularly along racial, gender, or socioeconomic lines, raises ethical issues. Ensuring fairness and mitigating biases in AI algorithms is crucial to prevent unjust consequences.

2) Transparency and Explainability:
   a) Challenge: Many AI algorithms operate as "black boxes," making it difficult to understand their decision-making processes.
   b) Ethical Concern: Lack of transparency and explainability raises issues related to accountability, trust, and the ability to challenge or contest AI decisions. Individuals affected by AI systems should have a right to understand how decisions are made.

3) Privacy:
   a) Challenge: AI systems often process large amounts of personal data, leading to privacy concerns.
   b) Ethical Concern: Protecting individuals' privacy and ensuring that AI applications adhere to data protection regulations is crucial. Striking a balance between the benefits of AI and the protection of personal information is an ongoing ethical challenge.

4) Autonomy and Decision-Making:
   a) Challenge: As AI systems take on decision-making roles, questions arise about the autonomy and agency of individuals.
   b) Ethical Concern: Decisions made by AI systems may impact individuals' lives, from job opportunities to healthcare. Ensuring that individuals retain control over significant decisions and understand the influence of AI is an ethical imperative.

5) Job Displacement and Economic Inequality:
   a) Challenge: Automation driven by AI has the potential to displace jobs, leading to economic and social challenges.
   b) Ethical Concern: Addressing the potential impact of AI on employment and economic inequality requires ethical considerations, including the development of policies and strategies to mitigate negative consequences and ensure a just transition.

6) Security and Safety:
   a) Challenge: The use of AI in critical systems, such as autonomous vehicles or healthcare, raises concerns about the potential for accidents or intentional misuse.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ensuring the safety and security of AI systems is an ethical imperative to prevent harm to individuals, communities, or the broader society.

7) Accountability and Responsibility:
   a) Challenge: Determining responsibility when AI systems cause harm can be challenging.
   b) Ethical Concern: Establishing clear lines of accountability and defining legal and ethical responsibilities for the actions of AI systems is essential. This includes addressing questions of liability and culpability in the event of adverse outcomes.

8) Ethical AI Research:
   a) Challenge: The rapid development of AI raises questions about responsible research practices.
   b) Ethical Concern: Ensuring that AI research adheres to ethical principles, including avoiding the creation of technologies that could be used for harm or unethical purposes, is essential.

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