



PREPARING *the* WORLD for
JESUS
A Survey of the World Before Christ

Kevin Swanson

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PASSING ON THE FAITH

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CHAPTER II



The Whole Pagan World: Darkness Prevails (2518 BC - AD 33)

*The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

*Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.
For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
The Gentiles shall come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)*

The condition of the world before Jesus came in the flesh was one of darkness, despair, hopelessness, idolatry, and the fear of demons and death. For 4,000 years the world experienced an oppressive darkness until the

Light came. The great and crying need for a Redeemer was felt for thousands of years. Nothing else could satisfy man's deepest needs. All of man's false religions would prove futile and hopeless. All of his great kings and empires could never bring salvation to the world. Indeed, history would establish beyond any doubt that only the Messiah of God could address man's true needs.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, He came as the Truth to a world of deception and lies. He came as the Light to a world of darkness. He came to bring life where death reigned, and joy and hope where despair remained.

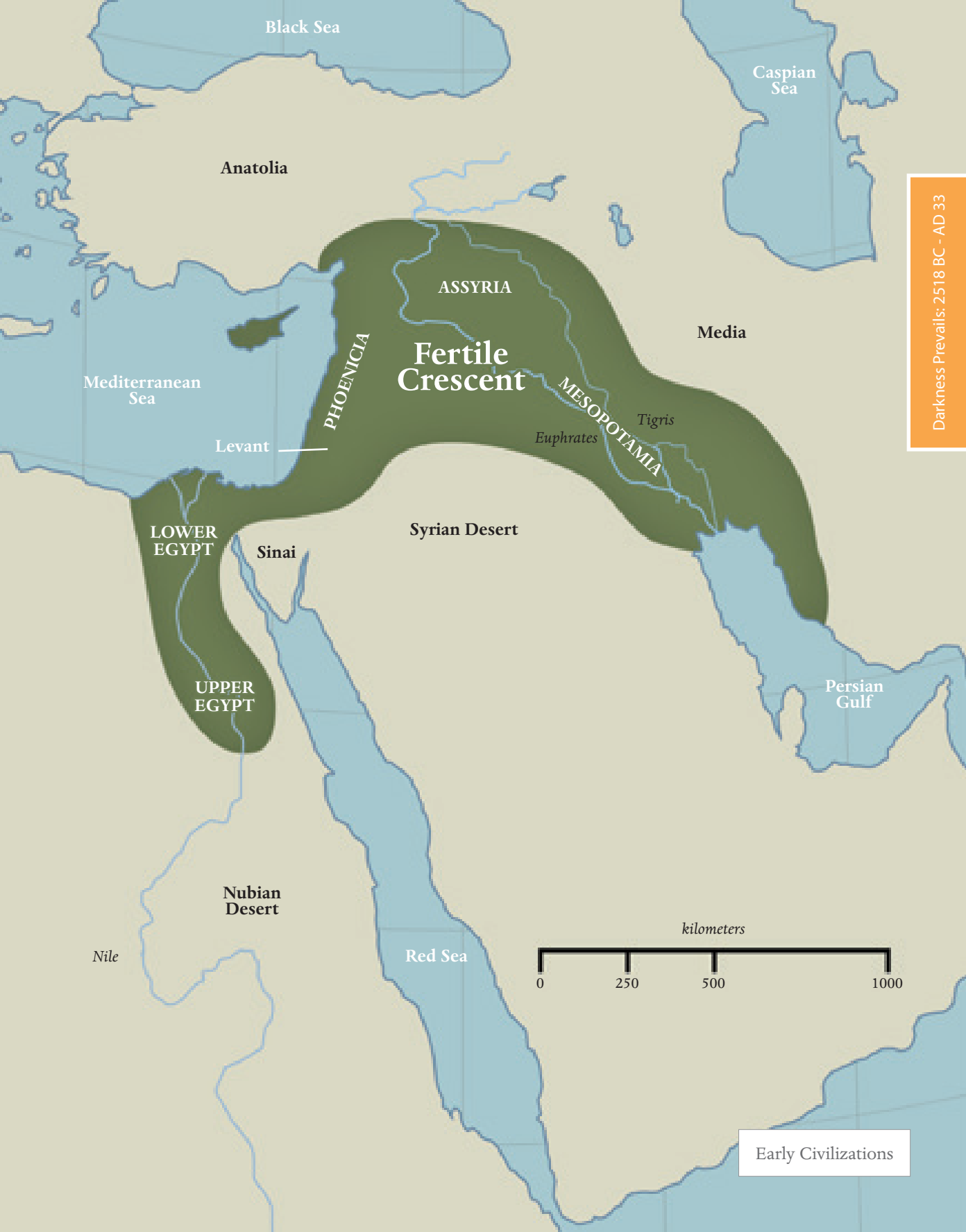
Any treatment of ancient history ignoring the darkness which utterly enveloped the pre-Christ world perpetuates the greatest lie of all. This was a time in which mankind lived in the very shadow of death. During the long millennia before the coming of Christ, a deep darkness had fallen upon the whole earth.

The Isolated Pagan World

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:11-13)

During the Old Testament era, the Gentile world was very far away from the covenants of promise given by God to the Jews. Two things would contribute to the degradation and destruction of human society throughout the millennia before Christ.

1. The removal of some degree of God's common grace in a society that rejected God's most basic moral laws. Although God writes His law upon men's hearts, they will tend to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. When they reject those basic moral principles which would preserve human society relating to marriage and sexuality, honor of parents and authority, respect for private property, as well as the value of human life, that society is doomed.
2. The further away from the godly line of Noah, Shem, and Abraham the tribes wandered, the more human society would descend into a primitive



Black Sea

Caspian Sea

Anatolia

ASSYRIA

Media

Mediterranean Sea

Fertile Crescent

Levant

PHOENICIA

MESOPOTAMIA

Tigris

Euphrates

Syrian Desert

LOWER EGYPT

Sinai

UPPER EGYPT

Persian Gulf

Nubian Desert

Nile

Red Sea

kilometers

0 250 500 1000

Darkness Prevails: 2518 BC - AD 33

Early Civilizations

and morally degraded state. The first significant civilizations on earth arose in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Placed directly between these major kingdoms by God's ordination was the land of Canaan and the influence of one man of faith—Abraham. Throughout his life this one man would travel from Ur of the Chaldees into Egypt and thereby influence both these major cultures with the faith of the true and living God. Other civilizations would have less access to this trade route through Canaan and thus would have far less opportunity to come into contact with the oracles of Yahweh God.

Descending into Deep Darkness

No doubt, some little memory of the Creator, the all-powerful, sovereign God over heaven and earth continued to exist in the hearts and minds of Noah's descendants. Yet over the centuries the god of this world blinded the eyes of all cultures around the world. Indeed, as the Apostle Paul put it, the nations "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

Charles Darwin and other unbelieving evolutionists would later teach that mankind arose from an animal state and developed primitive polytheism. After that, he proceeded to a more "civilized" monotheism, until he realized himself to be a god, and finally arrived at a "superior" humanism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Actually, man started out with a right conception of the true and living God and then degenerated as he abandoned the revelation that had come to Adam and Noah.



Shang Dynasty Oracle Bone, c. AD 1200



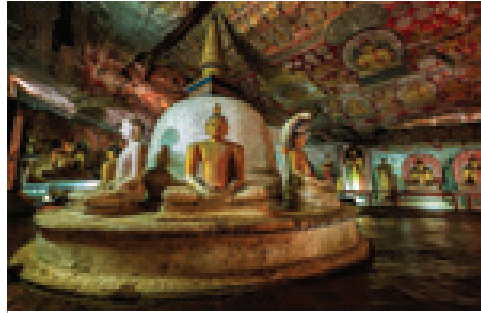
Moreover, pagan peoples were often pantheists, who believed that god is in all. They did not distinguish between God, man, and other things. They attributed a soul to everything and claimed that a personality or life was in everything around them.

Sinful man looks around for something that has an appearance of permanence, such as a mountain, the sun, or the moon, and he worships that. The ancient Gauls (who lived in what is now France) worshiped trees and the Druid priests considered the mistletoe of the oak tree to be sacred. The pagans worshiped the earth itself as a goddess, giving it such names as Ishtar, Cybele, Ceres, Aphrodite, and Venus. Whenever the earth quaked, the Samoan islanders would gnaw the ground and plead with the god Mafuie to stop the shaking.

Man also began to worship himself, especially his kings, emperors, and governments. The Japanese emperor was regarded as a “descendant” of the gods. The Egyptian Pharaoh was considered the incarnation of a god named Horus who was supposed to have been the son of Osiris (the god of the afterlife).

Beginning with the Zhou and Qin dynasties from 1046 BC through 206 BC, Chinese emperors referred to themselves as “the sons of heaven.” The Qin dynasty would become the most despotic empire of the ancient world.

As already mentioned, the spirits of dead men were revered and worshiped as if they possessed some power over the earth. For the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Japanese, this institutionalized a respect for the social order—such that honor for the elders of the community helped to preserve their civilizations. Although God has hardwired a blessing to families and communities that honor parents and grandparents, these societies took the principle too far when they worshiped the dead spirits of departed relatives.



Buddhist Temple

The pagan tribes of the world truly came under the absolute “control of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). Throughout recorded history demons demonstrated supernatural activity through men such as tribal witchdoctors or the magicians of Egypt (Ex. 7:10-13). By inspiring awe among the populace, such demonic activity instilled a fearful respect for magic and the demon “gods.” Among the Buddhists and Hindus, a little levitation or treading over a few coals is usually enough to keep the masses believing in demonic power (instead of fearing the true and living God who made heaven and earth). The witchdoctors would cast spells over people—or, more accurately, they would appeal to demons to injure or kill people. The Australian Aborigines thought these witchdoctors could kill a person at a hundred miles’ distance. This kept native populations in abject fear of the evil, demonic world, instead of worshiping the true and living, sovereign God over all.

Writing his epistle to the Romans around AD 60, the Apostle Paul explains the horrible state of the pagan tribes as they turned against God:

. . . because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-



Fragment from the Temple of Inanna

footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:21-25)

Pagan Worship

Human behavior reaches its lowest levels of sin and shame in pagan forms of worship practiced among primitive tribes. The demon gods worshiped by these peoples encouraged them to the most degrading activities imaginable.

A missionary to Africa, H. Rowley, reported on the Bantu tribe's worship: "It is impossible to witness them without being ashamed. . . any visitor attending the festival is encouraged to indulge in licentiousness."⁵ Babylonian pagan worship included temple prostitution until AD 325 when Constantine put an end to it. This same kind of demonically inspired "religious" practice continued until AD 1988 in southern India when the government banned it—although it still continues illegally in some parts of the country.⁶

Perverved forms of idolatrous worship began very early, dating to just 150 years after the flood. As early as 2360 BC, Sargon's mother was a priestess in the temple of Inanna, the goddess of sexual sin. The religious state would employ male priests who violated Deuteronomy 22:5 and 1 Corinthians 6:9 in their service in the temple.

Human sacrifice was extremely common in the pagan world—in the words of one historian, the practice "seems to have been honored at some time or another by almost every people."⁷ The Phoenicians, the Canaanites, the Druids, the Etruscans, and the Carthaginians took part in it. In the Americas,

the practice flourished among the North American Pawnee, Taensa, and Natchez tribes, and the South American Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans. When Julius Caesar fought the Gallic Wars around 58 BC, he encountered the Celt's sacrifice of "Wicker Man." The religious practice involved a gigantic wooden man filled with live humans which was set aflame as a sacrifice to the gods. Recently, archaeologists have uncovered evidence of child sacrifice among the Thracians (in modern-day Bulgaria) dating from the 9th century BC.

When missionaries finally arrived on the Pacific island of Tahiti in 1797, after Satan had ruled there for a millennium or more, they found human sacrifice to be a common occurrence. King Pomare boasted of offering some 2,000 of such sacrifices.⁸ In almost all cases, the worshipers were seeking good crop yields and material prosperity. From the earliest times, sinful man has been quick to abandon natural affection and murder his own children if he thinks he can get more material prosperity for himself. Similarly, in the modern world, parents do not hesitate to kill their own children in the womb if they believe the children will be too expensive or inconvenient for them.

Believing they would receive the life force or the powers of whatever creature they ate, pagans were particularly drawn to consuming the blood and body of whatever was sacrificed to the gods. Scripture strictly rejected this pagan tendency. To eat the blood would desecrate the life God created.

Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, "You shall not eat the blood of



King Pomare of Tahiti

*any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.”
(Leviticus 17:13-14)*

The idolatrous worship of pagan peoples inevitably tended towards bowing before images and revering inanimate statues and pictures. In Exodus 20 this bowing down before idols was strictly forbidden by the true and living God:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

Pagan man also turned to fetishes in hopes that these objects would themselves offer power, protection, or “good luck.” Such beliefs attributed divine characteristics to that which is not God. All such superstition is part of man’s revolt against the true God and is a blind, idolatrous, foolish acceptance of false deities. Forsaking the only true God, man invents gods for himself. Because these gods are constructed by his own imagination, they are by necessity of far less value than man himself.

*O LORD, my strength and my fortress,
My refuge in the day of affliction,
The Gentiles shall come to You
From the ends of the earth and say,
“Surely our fathers have inherited lies,
Worthlessness and unprofitable things.”
Will a man make gods for himself,
Which are not gods?
“Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know,
I will cause them to know
My hand and My might;
And they shall know that My name is the LORD.” (Jeremiah 16:19-21)*

Man has also always sought ways to deal with his sense of guilt and contamination arising from sin. It is impossible for men and women who have sinned before God to deny their guilt. Thus, extreme standards for ceremonial cleanliness were established in many cultures around the world. Although Old Testament Israel was held to a certain standard of external, ceremonial cleanliness, Scripture clearly notes that these things were never sufficient to purify the heart (Proverbs 20:9; Hebrews 9:13-14). Polynesian peoples would forbid touching certain foods and things related to the dead, sometimes on pain of death. Women were treated as unclean by many cultures, particularly at certain times of the month. The Persians treated nail clippings and hair clippings as unclean. They would avoid eating or drinking anything on the street and would never blow their noses in public. The Zoroastrian holy book fills page after page with detailed requirements of various ceremonial cleansings. The Japanese Shinto religion requires purification with *temizu* (pure water), *haraigushi* (a purification wand waved by a priest), and *shubatsu* (salt).

To this day, Hindus place great importance on ritual baths, bathing in sacred (usually filthy) rivers, ritual cleansing with smoke (*dhupa*), light (*dipam*), and water (*achamanam*). They sprinkle with ritual water (*abhisheka*) and further purify to ward off the evil eye. They are fastidious about their sacraments (*Samskaras*), sacrificial ceremonies (*homas* and *yajnas*), expiation ceremonies (*prayascitta*), wearing of charms, amulets, and sacred objects, and abstaining from certain foods (*upavasa*).

These laws are external attempts to cleanse guilty consciences and befouled hearts—but it is all in vain. The Apostle Paul speaks of these futile systems of religion in Colossians 2:

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Gross Immorality among the Nations

Before Jesus Christ came to redeem, to sanctify, and to restore, and to pour out His Spirit upon the nations, the moral flimsiness of mankind was readily apparent throughout the world. Divorce was provided for the Old Testament Jews because of the “hardness of their hearts” (Matt. 19:8). When Marco Polo encountered the Uyghur tribe in modern-day western China, he found a typical example of the state of marriage in the pagan world. He wrote that, “If a married man goes to a distance from home to be absent twenty days, his wife has a right, if she is so inclined, to take another husband. . . .”⁹ Fraternal

polyandry was common in Tibet. Among the Baila tribe (in modern-day Zambia), young women in their early 20s frequently had “four or five husbands, all still living.”¹⁰ Polygamy marked most pagan nations. Young people were encouraged to commit sexual sin in tribes all over the world, including the Papuans of New Guinea, the Soyots of Siberia, the Igorots of the Philippines, the Kaffirs of Africa, the tribes of Uganda and Niger, and the Pacific Islanders. Cherokee men would in some cases exchange their wives three to four times a year. As the 19th century minister John Angell James once wrote: “Woman’s virtue, dignity, honor, and happiness are nowhere safe but under the protection of the Word of God.”¹¹

Without the example and the Spirit of Christ, protection of the weak was never much of a value among the pagan tribes. Abortion and infanticide (the killing of a newborn child) was common almost everywhere. The Maori tribes in New Zealand used herbs to induce abortion. In many primitive tribes, infanticide was permitted for deformed children (or if the mother died giving birth). Strange superstitions also resulted in much child murder. For example, the Kamchadal tribe



Marco Polo (1254-1324)

*For I have killed a man for wounding me,
Even a young man for hurting me.
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” (Genesis 4:23-25)*

Treatment of the Elderly

You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13)

Before Christ came, the treatment of the elderly was similarly terrible. The Chinook Indians abandoned their elderly who could no longer hunt.²⁴ With the Inuit in northern Canada, the elderly were encouraged to commit suicide. These events were often advertised and celebrated. The Greeks were particularly enthusiastic about “euthanasia,” from whom we borrow the word, directly translated “the good death.” Aelius Theon, a Greek orator living around the time of the Apostle Paul, described the blessings of life as including: “education, friendship, respect, political position, richness, being blessed with children, and . . . euthanasia.”²⁵

Suicide was regarded as honorable by the Inuit and the Japanese. In one famous historical account, three Japanese brothers—a 24-year-old, a 17-year-old, and an 8-year-old—are ordered to commit suicide by the tyrannical shogun Iyeyasu. The three obeyed and thus became folk heroes in Japan. That nation’s suicide rate is still among the highest in the world.²⁶

Treatment of Women in the Darkness Before Christ

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

One of the most distinguishing marks of a pre-Christ society is its treatment of women. When Meriwether Lewis encountered the Shoshone Indian tribe on the explorers’ trek across America in 1805, he recorded that “the man is the sole

proprietor of his wives and daughters, and can barter or dispose of either as he thinks proper.”²⁷ Women were required to perform most of the work while “the man does little else except attend his horses, hunt, and fish.”²⁸ Lewis noted that the men would rent out their wives for a night or two for financial gain. The Chinookan men would “prostitute their daughters for a fishing hook,”²⁹ in violation of Leviticus 19:29. One could hardly think of a more degraded manner of treating women.



Widow-Burning (Sati)

The Code of Manu from India (dating from the 3rd century BC) states that “A faithful wife must serve . . . her lord as if he were a god.”³⁰ To this day, women in some parts of India and Nepal are forbidden to eat until after the men have eaten.

The tradition of burning widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands dates back millennia. The ancient Scythians (in modern-day Ukraine) and Thracians (in modern-day Bulgaria) practiced this horrible rite. The pagan mind apparently considered that the husband would need a wife to care for him in the afterworld. The Indonesians in Bali and the Fijians were also known to have participated in this wicked practice. A missionary report from India counted 600 instances of widow-burning in one province each year through the 1820s. The British banned the practice in 1829 by Regulation XVII. Missionary William Carey was asked to translate the English legislation on a Sunday morning. His response came: “No church for me to-day. . . . If I delay an hour to translate and publish this, many a widow’s life may be sacrificed,’ he said. By evening the task was finished.”³¹

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. (Deuteronomy 10:16-18)

In stark contrast with the pagan laws and traditions of the ancient world, God's law given to Israel provided a just standard to protect women and the weaker members of society, including the disabled, the widow, and the orphan (Leviticus 19:14; Deuteronomy 24:17; 27:19). When Jesus came, He modeled this standard by always treating women with compassion, mercy, and grace. A new day dawned with the coming of the Savior of the world.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

(John 8:10-11)

Postscript

After Jesus Christ came and died on the cross around AD 33, the world would never be the same. While not every person in the world would follow Christ, He came to change lives in the most fundamental way. He came to make a new creation, where the "old things would pass away and all things would become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He called his followers "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" because they would have a preserving and a transforming effect on the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

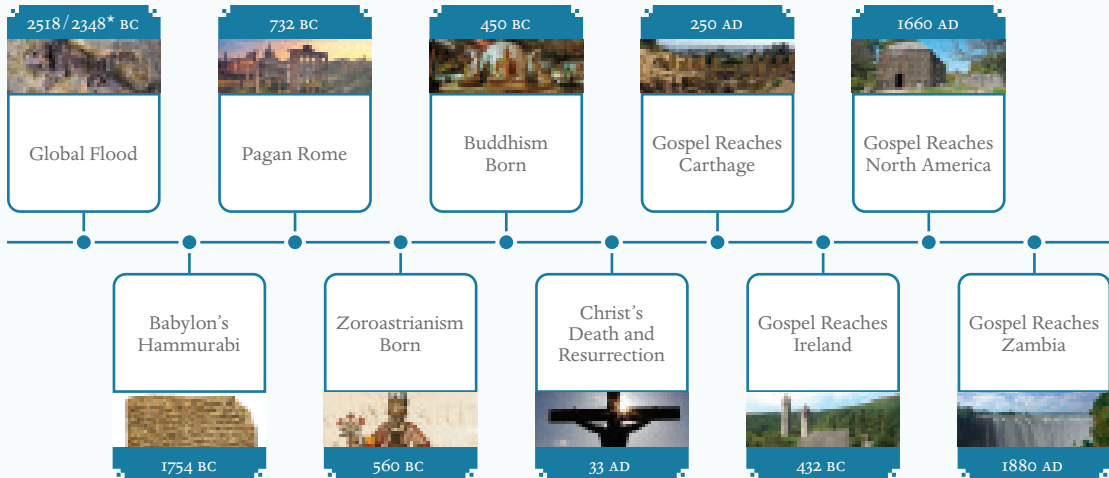
Transparency International conducts its Corruptions Perception Index annually, surveying over one hundred nations on matters concerning honesty and integrity in government and trade. Cross referencing the sixteen least corrupt nations on the list with the predominant religion of each country, the results show that religion or worldview truly matters. Of the sixteen least corrupt nations in the world, fourteen were predominantly Protestant nations and two were Buddhist nations with strong influence from the West. Of the twenty-one most corrupt nations in the world, seven were Roman Catholic, five were Muslim, five were Animist, and four were communist (or post-Christian and atheistic) or ex-communist nations.³²

These are good indications as to the influence of God's people in the far off regions of the world, once terribly corrupted by sin and held in bondage by the devil.

The following table shows the improvement of prosperity for a nation as the corruption rating decreases. As the influence of Christianity penetrates the nation, there is also some indication of the improvement on corruption ratings, freedom ratings, and the blessing of prosperity upon the nation. This is especially evident in Africa and the South Pacific.

Nation	Corruption ³³ Rating	Freedom ³⁴ Rating	Prosperity ³⁵ Rating	Percent ³⁶ Christian
South America				
Uruguay	#23	#40	#47	10% Protestant
Chile	#27	#18	#51	15.5% Protestant
Costa Rica	#38	#61	#58	25% Protestant
Argentina	#85	#148	#59	10% Protestant
Colombia	#99	n/a	#85	10% Protestant
Brazil	#105	#150	#73	23% Protestant
Ecuador	#114	#170	#87	10% Protestant
Mexico	#138	#66	#72	10% Protestant
Venezuela	#168	#179	#122	10% Protestant
Africa				
Botswana	#34	#36	#76	66% Protestant
Namibia	#52	#99	#94	65% Protestant
South Africa	#73	#102	#91	68% Protestant
Uganda	#149	#95	#179	44% Protestant
Kenya	#144	#130	#141	47% Protestant
Sudan	#172	#166	#171	1.5% Christian
Somalia	#180	n/a	#177	0%
South Pacific				
Vanuatu	#64	#116	#126	70% Protestant
Solomon Islands	#70	#133	#142	73% Protestant
Indonesia	#89	#56	#118	7% Protestant
Philippines	#99	#70	#121	3% Protestant

Timeline Review



Chapter II Prayer

Our Father in Heaven,

Indeed, the lands that lay in darkness have seen a great light! We are thankful this day for the billions of lives that have been touched by the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What darkness dominated before the coming of your Son! There is no other Name by which we can be saved from our sin, from the captivity of the devil, and from the fear of death. What contrast we have seen between the lands that lay in darkness and this great Kingdom of light! May this kingdom of righteousness, truth, and life prevail today and forever.

Amen.





Babel and the Futility of the Kingdoms of Men

Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.” And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Genesis 10:8-10)

Genesis 10 presents Ham’s grandson Nimrod as the powerful visionary behind the early empires formed in the Mesopotamian valley. These include Uruk, Babel, and Akkad, as mentioned in the text. Later in the Scriptural narrative we learn that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, an indication that at least some of Shem’s descendants started in the same place as Ham’s descendants. Considering the longevities of Shem’s line, Nimrod would probably have been born about seventy years after the flood (around 2448 BC) and he could have lived about 400 years. Nimrod launched the first major post-flood attempt to centralize power and build a totalitarian empire.

The Hebrew of Genesis 10:9 is better translated, “He [Nimrod] was a mighty hunter in the face of the LORD.” Instead of humbling himself in the presence of the Lord, Nimrod lifted himself up against the Lord as if he were competing with

God. He was the first of the great tyrants of the post-flood world who followed in the footsteps of the pre-flood Nephilim.

The Tower of Babel (2418 BC)

Nimrod's greatest claim to fame was his construction of the Tower of Babel. Shem's great-grandson Peleg was born about 100 years after the flood, and Scripture points out that the dividing of the earth began around the time of his birth (Gen. 10:25). This puts the construction of the Tower of Babel around 2418 BC¹, well within the lifetime of Nimrod, who no doubt was the mastermind behind the city and the tower.

If the flood occurred in the year 2518 BC, the inhabitants of the world could have numbered about 32,000 by 2418 BC and 900,000 by 2318 BC. This assumes that each family had an average of 10.7 children (a number based on the biblical records for Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and that three additional generations would have appeared within 100 years. Such estimates for birth rate and population increase are reasonable considering that men and women continued to live 300-400-year lifespans for several generations after the flood. Suffice it to say that there would have been enough people to build a very large tower and a city by the year 2418 BC.

Some mystery surrounds the location of the original Tower of Babel. Most likely it was built somewhere between modern Syria in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south—along the Mesopotamian valley. There is no archaeological record of the tower, and it is likely that the dispersion of the peoples happened sometime before the reign of King Urukagina and the beginning of the Akkadian empire. It is also possible that the Tower of Babel was built in the far north towards Syria at the same time that the Akkadian empire was developing. This may be why there is no record of the Tower of Babel in Akkadian history. Regardless of where it happened, it is clear from the biblical text that man was building this tower out of a spirit of pride and rebellion against the Lord. This spirit continued in the hearts of countless empire builders for thousands of years of world history.

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

Babel: 2518-2318 BC

This desire to “make a name” for themselves forms the basis of the humanist religious worldview that continues to control many nations to this day. Natural man always seeks to glorify himself, largely by centralizing power, economic wealth, and opportunity for fame through a single city or an institution.



This tower was representative of man's pride. Man in his sin has within himself that insatiable desire to become as god, and to displace God or the gods of his imagination. Such thinking is nothing less than arrogant rebellion, for natural man has no right to ascend to God or to displace God. The unholy cannot approach the holy, nor should the mortal and finite pretend to be otherwise. However, in Jesus Christ, God reverses this wrongheaded approach to life. Instead of man ascending to God, here God descended to man. Instead of taking His place at the highest position, Jesus was born in a stable and then He was crucified on a cross. More than that, He took upon Himself human nature in order that He would restore a right relationship between God and man.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

Babel: 2518-2318 BC

Example of a Ziggurat





Not surprisingly, for thousands of years after Babel, stepped ziggurats and pyramids were built in many empires around the world. Yet, this does demonstrate how man's quest for greatness should result in the dedication of so much time and resources placed in constructing something so impractical, so lacking in beauty, and wasteful. The Mayans, Aztecs, Incas, Egyptians, Sumerians, Elamites, Nubians, Chinese, Indians, Austronesians (Indonesia), and Babylonians all built pyramids and ziggurats from the 24th century BC until after the coming of Christ, when God descended to man.

Yet, these constructions were not simple to build. The design and technology used to assemble the structures must have been spread around the world after the diaspora of Babel. The tower began with Nimrod, and before long the Egyptians and Babylonians also began building these towers. The Egyptians built 135 of them, the tallest of which is 481 feet high. The Great Pyramid of Giza would remain the tallest structure in the world for over three millennia (until AD 1311). By the 14th century AD, man once again began his attempt to build big towers and large empires.