



# UNIT

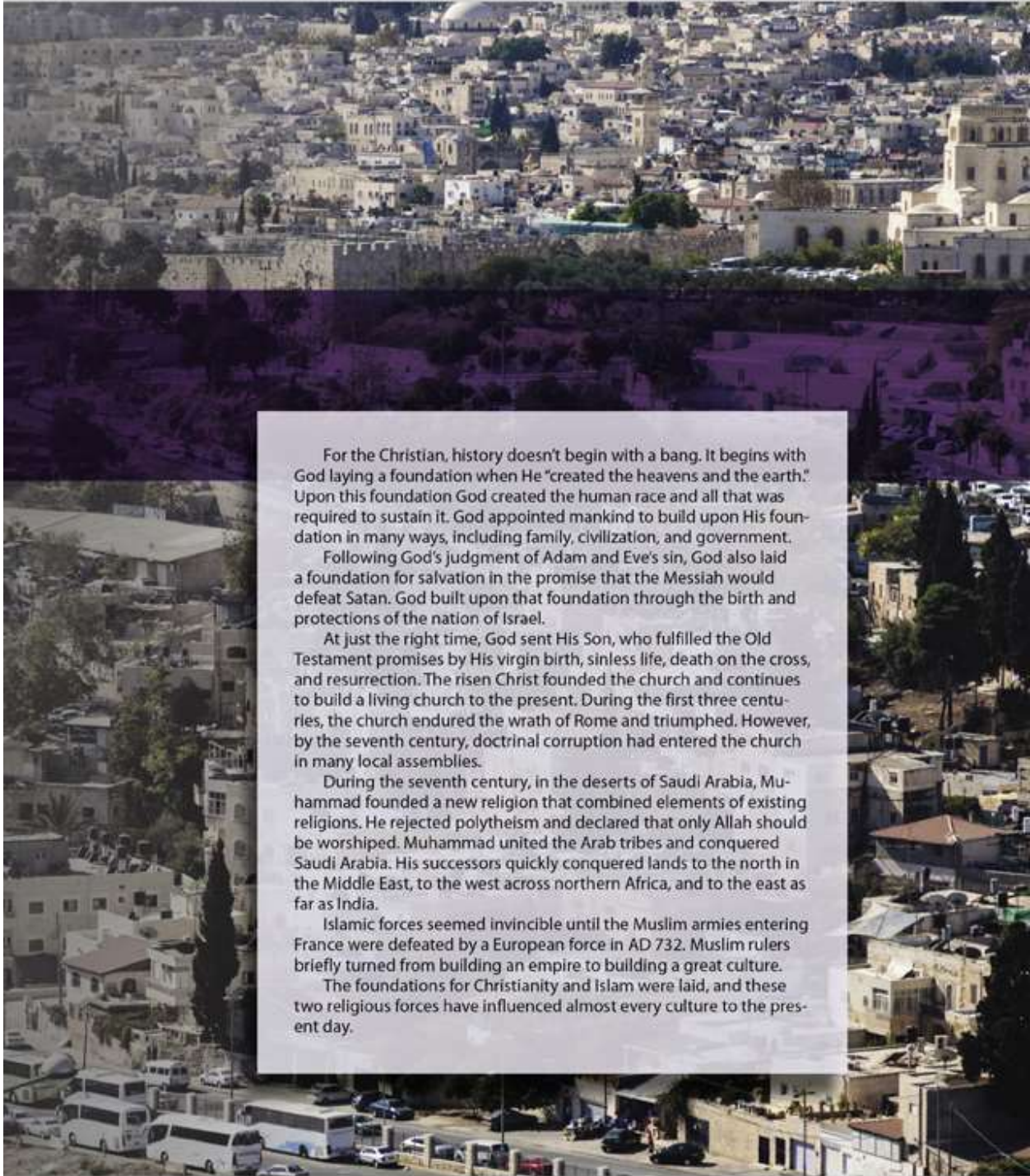
## Foundations

Creation – AD 800



# 1

- 1 Turning Points in World History
- 2 The Rise of Islam



For the Christian, history doesn't begin with a bang. It begins with God laying a foundation when He "created the heavens and the earth." Upon this foundation God created the human race and all that was required to sustain it. God appointed mankind to build upon His foundation in many ways, including family, civilization, and government.

Following God's judgment of Adam and Eve's sin, God also laid a foundation for salvation in the promise that the Messiah would defeat Satan. God built upon that foundation through the birth and protections of the nation of Israel.

At just the right time, God sent His Son, who fulfilled the Old Testament promises by His virgin birth, sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection. The risen Christ founded the church and continues to build a living church to the present. During the first three centuries, the church endured the wrath of Rome and triumphed. However, by the seventh century, doctrinal corruption had entered the church in many local assemblies.

During the seventh century, in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad founded a new religion that combined elements of existing religions. He rejected polytheism and declared that only Allah should be worshiped. Muhammad united the Arab tribes and conquered Saudi Arabia. His successors quickly conquered lands to the north in the Middle East, to the west across northern Africa, and to the east as far as India.

Islamic forces seemed invincible until the Muslim armies entering France were defeated by a European force in AD 732. Muslim rulers briefly turned from building an empire to building a great culture.

The foundations for Christianity and Islam were laid, and these two religious forces have influenced almost every culture to the present day.

# CHAPTER

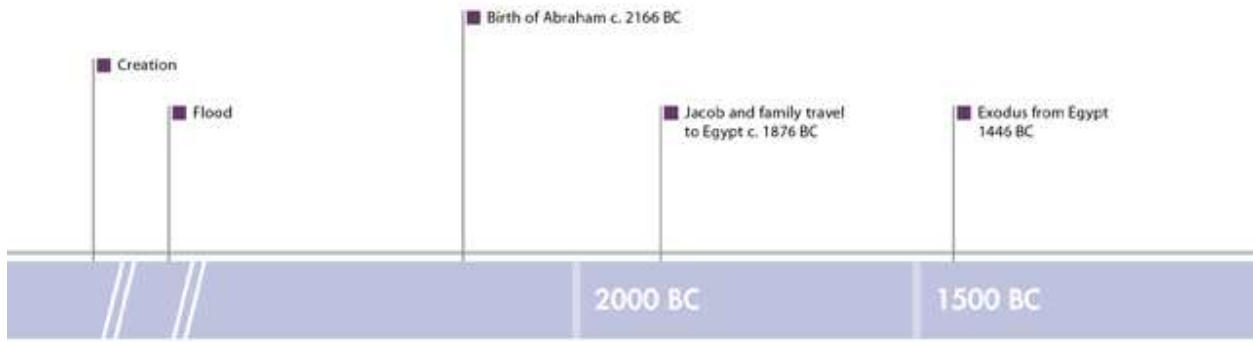
# Turning Points in World History

Creation – AD 476

# 1

- The Beginnings of the Human Race
- The History of Israel
- The Coming of the Christ

Creation – AD 500

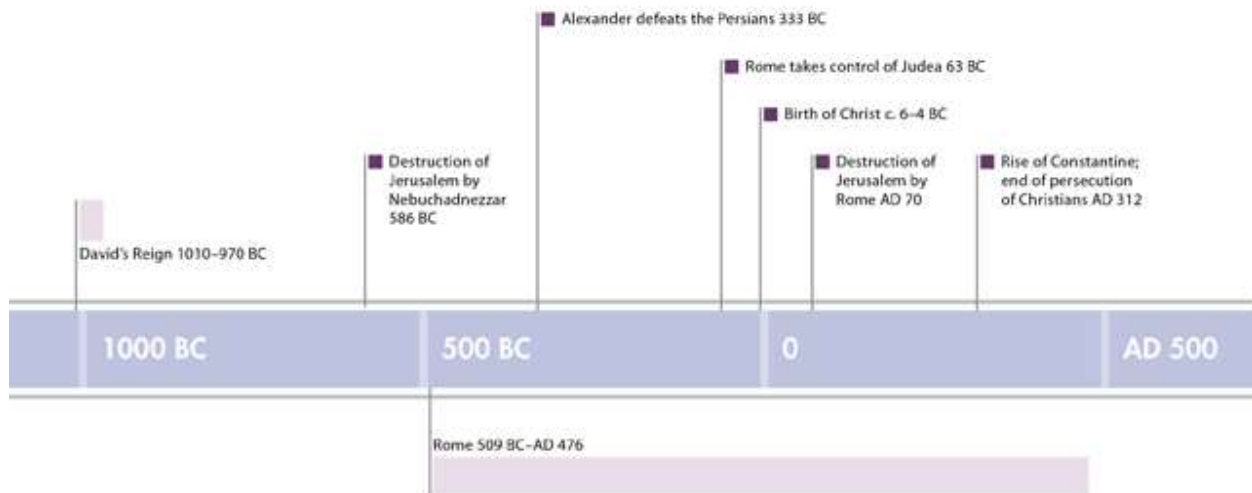


## Big Ideas

1. How does the Bible's teaching about Creation, the Fall, and Redemption shape your thinking about culture and civilization?
2. Why are covenants God made with Israel important for understanding world history?
3. In what way was the incarnation of Christ the turning point of world history?

A turning point is a moment when great change happens. In world history a turning point may be the outbreak of a war, the migration of a large group of people, or the birth of a very important person. Before the turning point, things are one way. After the turning point, things are very different.

Some turning points change the lives of thousands of people. But some turning points are so great that they bring change to all people everywhere. This chapter is about turning points that have changed the entire world.



Guiding Questions

1. How do the image of God in man and the Creation Mandate form the foundations for civilization?
2. How does the Fall affect the natural world and civilizations?
3. What is the thesis statement of human history?



I. The Beginnings of the Human Race

"In the beginning God—" The Bible's first four words make a very important point. God (or **Yahweh** as He is often called in the Hebrew Bible) existed when nothing else did, and all that has come into being was made by Him. For this reason, God owns every galaxy, every planet, and every human. All should honor and obey the one who has graciously chosen to let them exist.

The Creation of the World

God created His world simply by speaking. In six days the earth went from being a dark, water-covered planet to a beautiful place that God Himself said was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). God accomplished this amazing work with only a series of commands.

The events of this world's first week teach **divine sovereignty**, God's complete and permanent control over this world. The words of Yahweh are powerful. They determine what is and what will be. Whatever opposition He has faced in history, He has chosen to face it so that He may use it for His own purposes. Jehovah is indeed the Supreme Being, the one who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

God's work of creation came to its climax after He made the animals on the sixth day. Up to that point, God had created by using the impersonal command, "Let there be." But just before His final creation, He said, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26).

Made in God's Image

The reason for this special interest was that humans were to be God's great masterpiece. Unlike the other creatures, humans would be made in God's own image (Gen. 1:27).

The **image of God** in man is a set of qualities possessed by all humans that reflect God. Because humans are made in God's image, they are like God in many important ways. Like God, they have the ability to think, love, use language, create complex structures, know right and wrong, enjoy relationships, and more. Because all humans are made in God's image, all humans are precious in God's sight. They are far more precious than the other creatures. Also, because humans are made in God's image, they are religious beings. They know that they have not made themselves, and they sense that to





know themselves, they must know their Creator. This is the reason that all human societies have been religious in some way.

### Made to Rule

Yahweh created humans with a job to do. He created humans in His image so that they would “be fruitful and multiply” and exercise dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26, 28). This command, often called the **Creation Mandate**, reveals why God made humans.

The central command of Genesis 1:28 is to “subdue” the earth by having “dominion” over it. The growth of the human population is essential to fulfilling the Creation Mandate. When people work together to subdue the earth and make it useful, **civilization** happens. The word *civilization* refers to human **culture** as it is lived in cities or under the influence of cities. Historically, a **city** is more than a place where many people live. It is a cultural institution in which humans who share certain core values work together to improve their quality of life. They work together by dividing their labor. In a city, individuals specialize in certain tasks necessary for human life. Some specialize in producing food, some in building houses, and some in making tools. The benefit of this division of labor is that individuals no longer need to do everything themselves. Also, because individuals focus on a few tasks, those tasks tend to be done with great skill. The result is progress in science, technology, language, art, and many other things. You can see now why filling the earth with people and ruling over the earth go hand in hand.

Central to the study of world history is the study of civilization. The city is not just a human idea. Civilization comes from the Creation Mandate. The foundation of world history is built on God’s purpose for humans found in Genesis 1.

### The Fall

The account of world history in subsequent chapters is not a story of all humans working together. It is not a story of civilizations built to benefit everybody. It is not a story of cities and nations that glorify God in all they do. In fact, many civilizations rise through bloodshed and injustice.

The reason for this is found in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve chose to trust Satan rather than God, their sin changed the world.



Everyone is made in the image of God to reflect His glory.

### Culture

Describe the role of each of the following in creating culture.

Image of God	<i>Creativity</i>
Be fruitful and multiply	<i>Humans work together</i>
Subdue	<i>Humans make creation useful</i>
<b>Result</b>	<b>Culture</b>

They did not lose the abilities they had as God's image bearers. They did not lose the drive to subdue the world. But from that moment on, sin would twist all human endeavors.

### The Results of Sin

The consequences of this sin affected both the inner being of Adam and Eve as well as their physical existence. And, as the apostle Paul explained centuries later, the consequences of that choice have been passed on to all humans (Rom. 5:12).

Since God had made the man and the woman good, they originally loved God with their entire being (Mark 12:30). They also loved each other as much as themselves (v. 31). But when they sinned, their love became twisted. When God asked Adam about what he had done, Adam blamed Eve when he should have blamed himself (Gen. 3:12). And in blaming her, he blamed God too.

Love for self rather than for God and others twists all that mankind does. This is the reason that the achievements of human cities—achievements in science, art, politics, and philosophy—all bear the tragic marks of selfishness and pride. Even religion has been twisted. Humans have instead been making a god (or gods) in their own image (Rom. 1:23).

The Fall also twisted the natural world. God had made humans to subdue the earth. But when humans rebelled against God's rule, God changed the earth so that it rebelled against their rule (Gen. 3:17). Though humans were to subdue the earth, each human would in the end be subdued by it. They would return to the ground in death (v. 19).

This curse has affected the growth of human civilization. In a civilization, humans work together to improve their quality of life. To do this they work at changing their natural environment. Farmers till the ground, engineers build roads, and carpenters turn trees into houses. But in a fallen world, nature fights against mankind's attempts at dominion. The ground stops producing food, rain causes flooding, and tornadoes destroy houses. And one by one every farmer, engineer, and carpenter is taken away by death. The task of the Creation Mandate is frustrated by the Fall.

### God's Plan for Redemption

In the midst of the tragic account of Adam's sin, God gave hope to the human race. While pronouncing His curse on Satan, God briefly showed His plan for redeeming this world: "I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The human race had chosen its own destruction. But only moments after confronting the first sin, God revealed that those made in His image would have the hope of victory.

Genesis 3:15 is the thesis statement for all human history. Mankind had been called to have dominion over God's world. But now the human race would be divided into the **seed of the serpent** and the **seed of the woman**. God predicted that these two seeds would be in conflict. Each would attempt to exercise dominion according to its own core values. Through the long centuries ahead, Satan's seed (the seed of the serpent) would harm God's people (the seed of the woman) many times. But in the end, God would give victory to His people.

### The Earliest Human History

The earliest history of civilization is found in Genesis 4–11. If you read these chapters carefully, you see the beginnings of civilization occurring. Cain, one of Adam and Eve's sons, moved to the land of Nod. There he became the father of a group of people who were possibly the first to live in civilization. The first city mentioned in the Bible was built by Cain (Gen. 4:17). The division of labor that is always part of city life was carried on by Cain's descendants. Jabal worked in agriculture as a herdsman. Jubal labored in the arts, making musical instruments. And Tubal-Cain worked in industry, producing tools.

Civilization was happening. But it was a civilization twisted by the Fall. Cain was a religious man, but he wanted to worship God on his own terms. In anger over God's rejection of his sacrifice, he killed his brother Abel. His civilization was built away from the presence of the Lord. It was civilization apart from God. It was the first example of the seed of the serpent harming the seed of the woman.

The seed of the woman, those loyal to God, was at first maintained in the line of Seth, another of Adam and Eve's sons. But the Sethites did not remain true to God. Even righteous people die. Therefore, a godly culture cannot remain godly unless it passes on its love for God to each new generation. At some point in their history, the Sethites allowed their children to marry Cainites (Gen. 6:2). Eventually the Sethites were no different from the Cainites (6:5).

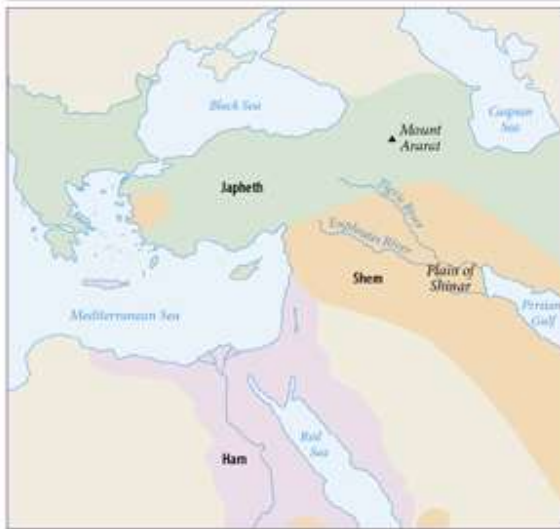
Grieved by the great sinfulness of the human race, God determined to judge His world. He would cover the whole earth with a great flood. But God chose to show favor to one member of the Sethite line (Gen. 6:8). God instructed Noah to build a massive ark. Noah was to take his family and representatives of the animal kingdom into the ark, where they would be safe. God held back His judgment for 120 years (Gen. 6:3). But in the end Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives were the only people to enter the ark. Then the "fountains of the great deep" were broken up, and rain fell (7:11). Eventually the entire earth was under water. The Creator had caused the earth to return to its original state: once again it was "without form, and void" (1:2).



### The Rise of Nations

After the Flood, God repeated the Creation Mandate to Noah and his descendants (Gen. 9:1–7). But instead of spreading out to fill the earth and subdue it, humans gathered to build a great tower (Babel). They were going to build a civilization on their own terms. Fallen man could use civilization-building abilities God gave him for evil. God chose to restrain mankind's ability to do evil by confusing the people's languages. Unable to communicate and work together, the people were forced to scatter and fill the earth.





The Post-Flood World

The human race reorganized itself into groups of people who spoke the same language. It was during this period that the first nations developed. A **nation** is a very large group of people (usually including many cities) who share the same language, family history, land area, and culture.

The nations of this ancient time were different from modern nations. Only a few of them became **nation-states**, nations having their own governments, independent of other nations. Most of these early nations were composed of many **city-states**, cities that had their own governments, independent of those of other cities (even those within their own nation). Genesis 10 is often called the **Table of Nations** because it lists the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth according to the nations that arose from their families. Japheth's descendants developed nations in eastern Europe and modern-day Turkey, Ham's descendants developed nations in eastern Asia and Africa. In particular, Ham's son Canaan settled along the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Shem's descendants formed nations to the east and north of Ham's descendants.

### Section Review Questions

1. How does God's work of creation show divine sovereignty?
  2. Why is the Creation Mandate important for the study of human civilization?
  3. Why is Genesis 3:15 important for the study of world history?
- ★ How does the Fall affect human efforts to develop civilizations?
  - ★ Was God's confusing of the languages at Babel a judgment, a mercy, or both? Why?

### Guiding Questions

1. How do the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants restore the promises of the Creation Mandate?
2. How do the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants advance the promise of redemption given in Genesis 3:15?

## II. The History of Israel

After the fall of Babel, many nations prospered in Asia, Africa, and Europe. These nations built impressive civilizations, and their accomplishments fill books about ancient history. But all these nations attempted to fulfill the Creation Mandate in a sinful way. God, however, had a plan to set the world right again. A key part of His plan was to raise up a new nation.

### God's Covenant with Abraham

Abraham, born around 2166 BC, was a descendant of Shem (Gen. 11:27–32). He grew up in Mesopotamia. Like everyone else in his culture, Abraham initially practiced **polytheism** (PAHL ee thee IZ um), the belief that there are many gods (see Josh. 24:2). But when he was about seventy-five, Yahweh appeared to him and told him to leave all this behind and move to the land of Canaan. Abraham became a believer in the one true God.

Following his conversion, about 2091 BC, God made a covenant (a solemn agreement) with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–7). At the core