

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be looking at how the scriptures have inspired the modern world.

I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter. The primary criteria for inclusion are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include the references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

In addition, if you have a testimony to share, please send that to me as well and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

Also, if you have particular subjects that you would like me to cover in the Newsletter, please let me know.

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Judges 15

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast and deliver thee into their hand; but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords and brought him up from the rock.

14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire; and his bands loosed from off his hands.

Matthew 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for, verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Acts 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

Exodus 14

26 And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

In our modern world we see things every day that are pretty incredible when you think about it. Instant power to provide light at the flip of a switch, communications via telephone or internet, satellites, airplanes and helicopters, engines that can pull thousands of tons of cargo, manufacturing of steels that are super strong, etc. etc. These are things that many of us have known since ... well, since the time we were born.

We also have a legacy of stories that have been handed down by hundreds of different cultures – with mythologies, legends, superstitions and so on, each inserting themselves into our lives in various ways. We have sayings, idiomatic expressions, and cultural icons unique to even small regions that are completely unfamiliar to those that may live just a few miles away.

Here in the Ozarks region of the midwestern United States, we have a culture that has in the past involved the Baldknobbers (roving, murderous gangs from the 1800's), while in the western United States there were somewhat institutionalized kidnappers that would “shanghai” people in various ways – taking them captive and sending them back to China as slaves, also during the 1800's and early 1900's.

Though the United States began as a Christian colony and nation, it has experienced times when the society and culture of the nation has diverged from those original cultural norms to something else, bringing us to the modern era of largely non-Christian idealism. Some would even call it a post-Christian culture.

This is not unique to the United States. Most European countries began with a devout idealism of Christian or Jewish culture that has since become cluttered with pagan cultural influences. Nations that, long ago, would have made the claim to having been Christian now have a varied mix of Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, pagan and other religious beliefs.

If you think of all the different mythologies that have been introduced to the common vernacular it is simply amazing. When you think of the Grimm brothers, you are introduced to strange creatures, spiritual influences of objects and beings, and if you think of Norse,

Roman, Greek, and other mythologies there are multitudinous hosts of various gods, goddesses, demi-gods, etc.

We are also introduced to the Druids – a pagan society and religion found in early European countries, Gypsies – roaming ethnic groups with their own unique brand of religion, and the list goes on. It is not my intention to list them all, and I am not ignoring African, Asian, or other cultures, but it is my intention to show that these have all in their own way infiltrated into our culture over the course of hundreds upon hundreds of years.

Each of these societies, cultures and religions has had their own stories of quite fanciful beings having great power and using it for the benefit or detriment of man, of men who had great power given to them or that could accomplish great things using the power of the gods or having the power of themselves.

Anthropologists and archeologists are quick to point out that the Christian religion has adapted many of these ideas into its own set of stories and mythologies. They say this because they view the Christian religion has just the modern culmination of thought introduced by these other religions. There is just one problem with this idea: they have got it completely backwards.

For example: modern anthropologists (people who study the behaviors and cultures of societies from a theoretically neutral perspective) make the claim that the original flood narrative provided by the bible is just a secondhand copy of the epic of Gilgamesh, re-purposed for the Jewish/Christian belief system. Their determination of this is based on clay or stone tablets found in ancient Babylonian ruins, which they consistently claim to be much older than similar writings of Israelite authors. How they make this determination of age is a subject for another article perhaps, but suffice it to say that the so-called unbiased scientific explanation is anything but unbiased.

If, as Christians, we make the bold claim that the biblical account is the more accurate representation of the truth, it becomes necessary to claim that any other narrative must either borrow from or outright steal the idea for its own purposes. I say this entirely because it cannot be true that both have claim to the true origin: one must be true and the other must copy elements of the one that is true.

As Christians, we should ask ourselves, “Why would the epic of Gilgamesh borrow elements of the biblical account of Noah?” The answer is two-fold. The first part of the answer is that, when you look through most mythologies concerning spiritual beings, there is at the very least a small nugget of truth interspersed throughout the different religions of the world. It may be very small, but they invariably talk about a creator or creators, beings that are highly intelligent, beings that created man for some purpose, beings that have some special interest in man, etc. Those religions have many variations on a theme, and they may even use the terms “jealous” to describe them, though they may take it to the extreme of being “petty.”

The second is the question of how you determine which came first.

So you need to start asking yourself if it makes sense for a bunch of different religions to spontaneously develop their own concept of a deity or deities, or whether it makes sense for them to borrow one concept and adapt it to their own purposes?

It is the claim of anthropologists that these may all have originated in the so-called “cradle of civilization” which is a term used to describe the area of Mesopotamia, or modern-day Iraq in the middle-east.

It is not without merit to make this claim – Abram began his life in Ur or the Chaldees, as we see below. And with a fair dose of warning: What follows is a somewhat detailed examination of the scriptures, but there is a reason for it, and that reason is related to how we can use the scriptures to find answers that anthropologists are unable to accept.

As I said, the origin of civilization, as suggested by anthropologists, may indeed begin in the region of Iraq, but their understanding of how it progressed is rather lacking, causing them to draw some incorrect conclusions about the origin of the true account (anthropologists only count it as a story, not as a record). Abram had his start in the region of Mesopotamia.

Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, **when he was in Mesopotamia**, before he dwelt in Charran,

If we review the genealogy of Abram (his name before being renamed by God to Abraham), we see this:

Noah > Shem > Arphaxad > Salah > Eber > Peleg > Reu > Serug > Nahor > Terah > Abram

From the time of Arphaxad, who was born 2 years after the flood, we find that the generations from Arphaxad to Abram consisted of a very calculable number of years. Each of Abram’s forefathers have their age recorded at the time their sons were born, so we can do this:

Arphaxad > Salah > Eber > Peleg > Reu > Serug > Nahor > Terah > Abram

35 > 30 > 34 > 30 > 32 > 30 > 29 > 70 > Abram

These total to 290 years. If we add the 2 to the number of years after the flood that Arphaxad was born, this tells us that Abram was born 292 years after the flood. If we do some further examination, we learn that the “incident” with the tower at Babel took place some time in the life of Nimrod, who was a great-grandson of Noah:

Noah > Ham (youngest of the three sons) > Cush > Nimrod

As it turns out, Nimrod could have lived almost any time in those 292 years, but as the ages of the children of Ham are not recorded, it is left up to some speculation. For reasons that can be deduced, though not confirmed, it may well be worth considering that when the Jaredites left the city of Babel, it was likely in the days of Eber’s grandchildren. You see, Eber had two sons, Peleg (listed above), and Joktan. Joktan had several sons, with one of them having a name that may be a bit of a phonetic likeness to the Jared in the Book of Mormon:

Genesis 10:17 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and **Jerah**, and Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah, and Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba, and Ophar, and Havilah, and Jobab; and these were the sons of Joktan.

This likewise suggests that the name of the brother of Jared is one of these others that are listed, but that is a subject for another day.

Let's keep in mind that the spellings of some of these names may simply be phonetic representations of the way the name was pronounced. We see this in other scriptures:

1 Chronicles 1

1 **Adam, Sheth, Enosh,**

2 **Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered,**

3 **Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech,**

We note that in Genesis these names are spelled as such:

Genesis 6 (Inspired Version)

11 And the days of **Adam**, after he had begotten **Seth**, were eight hundred years. And he begat many sons and daughters. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.

12 Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat **Enos**, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God. Wherefore, Enos prophesied also. And Seth lived after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat many sons and daughters.

15 And Enos lived ninety years and begat **Cainan**. And Enos and the residue of the people of God came out from the land which was called Shulon and dwelt in a land of promise, which he called after his own son, whom he had named Cainan.

17 And Cainan lived seventy years and begat **Mahalaleel**.

19 And Mahalaleel lived sixty-five years and begat **Jared**.

21 And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years and begat **Enoch**.

26 And Enoch lived sixty-five years and begat **Methuselah**. And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land among the people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven and abode upon him;

Genesis 7 (Inspired Version)

82 And it came to pass that Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years and begat **Lamech**; and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech, seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

Thus,

Adam > Adam

Seth > **Sheth**

Enos > **Enosh**

Cainan > **Kenan**

Mahalaleel > Mahalaleel

Jared > **Jered**

Enoch > **Henoch**

Methuselah > Methuselah

Lamech > Lamech

The point here is to show that at different times, and by different authors, the spelling of these names may have been simply a way to phonetically represent the sound of the vowels and consonants. That being said, if we return to Genesis 10:17, the name of one of Joktan's sons is **Jerah**, which may be the same, phonetically, as the "Jared" in the Book of Mormon. That being my assumption – which may possibly be incorrect – it would place the time of the events of the tower at Babel in the lifetime of Abram's great-great-grandfather, Peleg, who lived some 162 years before Abram was born.

Arphaxad > Salah > Eber > Peleg/Joktan > Reu > Serug > Nahor > Terah > Abram
(A)35 > (S)30 > (E)34 > (P)30/(J)? > (R)32 > (S)30 > (N)29 > (T)70 > Abram

Genesis 11

7 And these were the generations of Shem. And **Shem**, being a hundred years old, begat **Arphaxad** two years after the flood; and Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

8 And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years and begat **Salah**; and Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

9 And Salah lived thirty years and begat **Eber**; and Salah lived after he begat Eber, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

10 And Eber lived four and thirty years and begat **Peleg**; and Eber lived after he begat Peleg, four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters.

11 And Peleg lived thirty years and begat **Reu**; and Peleg lived after he begat Reu, two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.

12 And Reu lived two and thirty years and begat **Serug**; and Reu lived after he begat Serug, two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.

13 And Serug lived thirty years and begat **Nahor**; and Serug lived after he begat Nahor, two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

14 And Nahor lived nine and twenty years and begat **Terah**; and Nahor lived after he begat Terah, a hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.

15 And Terah lived seventy years and begat **Abram**, Nahor, and Haran.

Adding together the generations from the Babel incident we find Serug, Nahor, and Terah until the birth of Abram, or in other words

$(S)30 + (N)29 + (T)70 = 129$ years

Assuming that Jared was not an infant when he and his brother departed Babel, we can easily subtract 30 years from his father's age and his own age to call it 129 years at the very most before the days of Abram.

This makes it only about 162 years after the flood.

$(\text{Flood})2 + (\text{Arphaxad})35 + (\text{Salah})30 + (\text{Eber})34 + (\text{Joktan})?31 + (\text{Jared})30(?) = 162$ years after the flood

Let us not forget that Noah lived 350 years after the flood, and his son Shem lived 500 years after the flood:

Genesis 9:32 And Noah lived after the flood, **three hundred and fifty years**. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

Genesis 11:7 And these were the generations of Shem. And Shem, being a hundred years old, begat Arphaxad two years after the flood; and Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad **five hundred years**, and begat sons and daughters.

This makes it pretty clear that Shem lived 502 years after the flood, so he would have been alive during the lifetime of Jacob, later renamed to Israel. Indeed, he would have lived long enough to hear news about some of the twelve sons of Jacob.

$\text{Flood}(292) > \text{Abram}(100 \text{ at Isaac's birth}) > \text{Isaac}(40+2? \text{ at Jacob's birth}) > \text{Jacob}(\text{died at } 147) = 581$ years after the flood

Or in other words, Shem died when Jacob was probably about 75 years old.

The reason for going through all of this genealogy stuff is to show that the Israelite record had a component of living memory inscribed by the people present during the flood. Had it been necessary, Jacob (Israel) could have gone to see his 10th-great grandfather Shem and asked him what the world was like before the flood since he (Shem) had been a hundred years old at the time of the flood.

It seems remarkable to think of the lives of people in these terms, but there we have it. The incident at Babel with the tower occurred long before there was a Babylonian nation to record an epic of Gilgamesh, and both Noah and Shem were alive at the time to dispute it if the epic had been in development when the tower was being built.

It is also possible that the reason there is an epic of Gilgamesh story is because the confounding of the languages at the time that the tower was being built may have mixed up the account of the real flood, causing it to become a corrupted version of the real thing. One of the differences between the Gilgamesh mythology and the biblical account is the specificity of detail. Mythologies tend to be much lighter in these kinds of details - the details you are more likely to find in the accounts of records kept by a historian than a person that is inventing his own religion.

This is just one example of how the real account has been usurped for other purposes and made into a story.

This is still happening today. We read about miraculous things that took place in scriptural history and modern authors invent variations on this to make it interesting for story writing today. We read of Samson in the Old Testament, whose great strength was given to him from the Lord so that he might be a judge for Israel. He had a weakness though – he was to live as a Nazarite, meaning that he was to abstain from strong drinks like alcoholic wines or whiskeys, he was not to approach near dead (human) bodies that might be laying around, and he was to let his hair grow long. It was the latter item that was his ultimate weakness as time would prove.

The account of Samson is remarkable in its own way. The record of his strength in battle is unmatched in any other scriptures, but the account has been borrowed by later writers.

The mythology of Hercules is perhaps one of the first to borrow from the record of Samson. In modern times it has been borrowed by comic book writers when they developed the idea of Superman, who (not surprisingly) has a weakness – Kryptonite.

The idea of angels having wings, and indeed of Philip's seemingly being whisked away from the baptism of the Eunuch, may each have contributed to the modern fandom of superheroes that can fly.

Indeed, you can find many instances where people have borrowed from biblical records to make a new mythology even in modern times, from ideas of telekinetic (mind moving) powers to magical instruments possessing great power, these each can be traced to a corruption of scriptural records. From Jesus declaring that the disciples could, given sufficient faith, move mountains or trees, to Moses stretching out his hand so that the Red Sea could be parted – these are all original source materials that have been used in creating new mythologies to eliminate the original causative force behind the events they are borrowed from.

Today we see hundreds of thousands, even millions of people that are willing to latch onto these new mythologies because they fascinate and inspire them, not realizing that the source materials they are borrowed from are so much more diverse and inspiring than they could imagine. I have to believe that this is due in some part to the way the scriptures are presented as “dull” or “boring” or “irrelevant.”

But I also know that there is something else involved, because it is not by accident that the attention of these multitudes is drawn away from the truths of the scriptures. Of course the adversary wants to divert us from the truth, and if this can be done, the multitudes can be led in any direction away from God.

This diversity of new mythologies is truly vast, and for some they cannot distinguish between those mythologies and the truth. It is a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States, but the truth is that every country in the world has their own set of stories, their own sets of religions (whether old or new) and every country faces the challenge of new stories that challenge the things that are true with some new gadget, gizmo, game or gnosis.

It is this fallacy that is presented to people today: that Christianity is a new religion. The reality is that Christianity is the oldest of all religions, and that those inspired by the devil are all the new religions. Adam was the first Christian, and Eve his wife. Cain was the first pagan, so his religion came second after Christianity. If you can think of any religion that differs from what Adam received, you know that it is a second-hand religion, and therefore newer than the Christian religion.

What anthropologists are unable to do with any significant degree of accuracy or reliability is to determine what happened thousands of years ago. It is one of the most difficult things to do scientifically – to determine what happened after-the-fact because you cannot just roll back time and watch it happen again. They use the tools they have, but those tools have limits.

Think of it in these terms: weather forecasters may be able to tell you what the weather will be like in a certain area at a certain time within several hours, but their forecasts lose accuracy exponentially the further out in time that they attempt to predict. For the longest forecasts, they base their predictions on what has taken place in history, but even these predictions are unable to take into account current conditions. Similarly, what anthropologists use as a basis for their explanations of past history must necessarily become exponentially less accurate the further back in time that they look, and for the same reasons that weather forecasters must begin to fail: they cannot see how all the variables fit together.

The newest mythology we have today is that science has the answers; that human determination and ingenuity will solve the problems that we have. The twentieth century is evidence enough that the new disciplines of science are not up to the task.

History tells us this: mankind is not capable of solving all of its own problems. It needs help. We can draw this very important conclusion by nature of the existence of miraculous events which have intervened to make the difference. People are sick, so there are healings. People don't understand language, so they can speak in tongues and interpret tongues. People don't know what is coming their way, so they are given prophecy. People are dying in sin, so they are given a Savior to free them from sin and bring them life.

The difference between the spiritual heritage of Christ and mythology is that one leads to one conclusion, and the other leads to another conclusion. Mythologies do not provide power or answers, while Jesus Christ does both. One may keep your interest for a while, but the other will make you alive forever.

Much of the challenge we face as Christians today is not that we have a knowledge of the truth, but that we have a very noisy room in which to declare it. We also need to recognize that what we have is not a “story” but a “record.” The modern world is a place not very different than Greece in the days of the apostle Paul:

Acts 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

Today is a day where it is not just that people are interested in hearing or telling new things, but in which they have the capacity to do it instantly and to a far larger audience.

When was the last time that you heard someone tell you something fascinating about the scriptures? Can you count it on one hand? Have you ever found it difficult to get people interested in understanding something about the scriptures or about your faith in Christ? It may be tempting to say, “Well, that’s just the way people are today.” But is it really that, or is it because you don’t know enough about it to make the facts interesting for them, or are you really not that interested in it yourself? That is the challenge that we face today – not to alter the facts to make it interesting, but to truly find it interesting enough to elaborate upon to others.

Part of the reason people have developed a mythology or even superstition about something is because they have not been able to figure something out for themselves, and the only way to keep life interesting (in their view) is to create a variation on the truth to make it interesting. But we have the riches, the treasures which can inspire us and motivate us. Not least of which is the fact that we must understand that the God worshipped by and written about by the Israelites of old is still alive today. He is a God of the living, and what we lack in understanding we can ask for directly.

One thing that many religions are lacking is the living nature of God. They may have rituals or practices which do diverse things, but none of them knows why they need to do them or whether there is any power present in the doing. God has answers; it is his nature to reveal himself to us if we truly want to know him.

Just as Jacob **could** have gone to visit his 10th great-grandfather Shem, we can meet with our creator and get the truth. There is no reason to believe in mythologies or other made-up stories when we can find out from the source. But are you willing to work for it?

Luke 16

17 Then said Jesus unto them, The law and the prophets testify of me; yea, and all the prophets who have written, even until John, have foretold of these days.

18 Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and **every man who seeketh truth presseth into it.**

