

A HOUSE FOR MY NAME

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1		
BOOK OF BEGINNINGS		5
CHAPTER 2		
OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON		19
CHAPTER 3		
FROM SINAI TO SHILOH		33
CHAPTER 4		
THE HOUSE OF DAVID AND THE HOUSE OF YAHWEH		53
CHAPTER 5		
WALKING IN THE CUSTOMS OF THE NATIONS		71
CHAPTER 6		
THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH		83
CHAPTER 7		
EXILE AND NEW EXODUS		91
CHAPTER 8		
ISRAEL DEAD AND REBORN		103

BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

Three-Story House: *Genesis 1:1–2:4*

REVIEW QUESTIONS [pages 43–49]

1. How is the world like a house?

Just like a house, the world has “foundations” (Deut. 32:22; 2 Sam. 22:8, 16; Ps. 104:5) which support the earth and the heavens, which are spread out as the ceiling of a tent (Is. 40:22). Throughout the Bible (Job 38:4–7; 9:6; 26:11; Ps. 77:16–18) this kind of building language is used to describe God’s creation.

2. How do the first three days of creation match the second three days?

God takes six days to build His house. During the first three days, God makes a three-storied house by dividing one thing from another. The first day He divides the light from the darkness; the second day He divides the waters in heaven from the waters on the earth and puts the sky in-between; and the third day He divides the dry land from the sea. The final three days, God fills up the house He made. On the fourth day, God creates the sun, moon, and stars to rule over the day and night. On the fifth day, God creates birds to fly in the open space of heaven and fish to swim in the waters. And finally on the sixth day, God finishes His creation by making animals and man to live on the dry land.

3. What are the stories of God's three-story house?

The Bible mentions this three-story house many times. In the second commandment, God forbids us to bow down to an image of anything in “heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth” (Exod. 20:4). Above is the sky, what the Bible calls the “firmament of heaven,” which is stretched out as “tent curtain” (Is. 40:22). Below are the waters “beneath the earth” (Exod. 20:4). In between is the dry land. Sometimes when the Bible mentions the three-story house, it's not as obvious as it is in the second commandment.

4. What is Psalm 77 talking about? Why does it describe this event as if it were the end of the world?

Psalm 77 is talking about Israel's exodus from Egypt (vv. 19–20). The psalmist describes this event as though it were the end of the world because the Exodus is a world-shaking event. When God shakes the world, it signifies that He is bringing an old world to an end (e.g., Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt) and at the same time, bringing a new “creation” into being (Heb. 12:26–27).

5. How does Hannah's song compare Israel to a house?

First Samuel 2:8 describes the “pillars of the earth” as supporting the “house” of Israel (also see Ps. 75:3). In this passage, Israel as a nation is described as a three-storied universe. Hannah is looking forward to a time when the wicked rulers (i.e., “pillars”) would be replaced by the righteous. Samson does this very thing when he brings down the “house” of Dagon by destroying its “pillars” (Judg. 16:23–31).

6. What do the sun, moon, and stars represent? What is Isaiah talking about when he describes heavenly bodies falling from the sky?

The sun, moon, and stars, which are located in the “upper room” of the universe, often symbolize the kings and rulers of the earth. Thus, cataclysmic language (such as that used in Isaiah 13:9–10) can be used to describe the end of a geopolitical world (i.e., Babylon) rather than the literal end of the entire universe.

7. What does the land often represent? What is the sea?

Often the land represents Israel and the sea represents the Gentile nations (Ps. 46:1–3, 6; 65:7–8; Is. 8:6–8; Jer. 51:34–42).

8. How does Isaiah describe the Assyrian invasion of Judah?

Isaiah 8:6–8 describes the Assyrian invasion of Judah as a river threatening to overflow its banks and flood the land. Because Israel rejected the “river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps. 46:4), God allowed the “Euphrates” to overflow and engulf the land of Judah. This imagery reminds us of Noah’s flood. Judgment is pictured in the collapse of the ordained boundary between land and sea (Gen. 1:9)

9. How does Jeremiah describe Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon?

Jeremiah describes Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor, as a sea monster who devours Israel (Jer. 51:34–35). In the verses following Jeremiah 51:35, the Lord says He will judge Babylon and punish Bel, a Babylonian god, by making him vomit Israel back into the land.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What does Psalm 82:5 mean by “the foundations of the earth”?

Psalm 82 describes God’s judgment upon the rulers of the nations. Throughout the psalm, the rulers are equated with their divinities (vv. 1, 6). The rulers are related to their gods and are the “pillars” of their kingdoms. Therefore, when they are judged, “all the foundations of the earth are shaken.”

2. Compare Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 8:1. Note that the word for “Spirit” is the same as the word for “wind.” In light of this, explain what’s happening in Genesis 8:1.

In Genesis 1:2, the creation of the heavens and the earth is identified with the Spirit of God “moving over the surface of the waters.” The use of this same imagery in Genesis 8:1 shows us that God is recreating the earth after the judgment

of the flood. Genesis 8:1 marks a new beginning for God's creation.

3. Notice the references to the three-story house in Revelation 8:1–13. Notice also that there are seven trumpets being sounded. Explain how this connects to Genesis 1.

Revelation 8:1–13 describes God's judgment on the earth in a way that mirrors the three-story structure of creation in Genesis 1. When the angels sound their trumpets, judgments occur on the earth (v. 7), the sea, (vv. 8–9), the springs of waters (vv. 10–11), and in the heavens (v. 12). This means that God's judgment is a great reversal of creation.

4. Why is it significant that Noah's ark has three levels (Gen. 6:16)?

In the midst of the great flood, Noah's three-leveled ark is a mini universe that preserves creation from destruction. When the flood subsides, a "new" creation is replenished by the world that was saved in Noah's ark.

5. If the land pictures Israel, what do land animals represent? Look at Psalms 77:20 and 80:1.

Both Psalms 77:20 and 80:1 use the imagery of sacrificial land animals (flocks and herds), especially sheep, to picture Israel. Other clean land animals often represent Gentile God-fearers who live within Israel.