

An Apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model:

A Companion to Orthodox Theological Reflections on Adam and Eve

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ABSTRACT

This paper serves as a companion to “*Adam and Eve in Christian Orthodoxy: Evaluating Theological Models and Their Boundaries*,” providing a detailed apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model. Rooted in Psalm 19’s dual revelation of Scripture and Nature, this model posits that God imparted the *Imago Dei*, a trichotomous capacity of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23), to Adam and Eve ~70,000 years ago during the Last Ice Age, situating them in the Persian Gulf valley. Drawing from existing orthodox frameworks, it integrates the historicity of the Historical-Literal view, the covenantal descent of the Genealogical Adam and Eve model, and the representative role of the Historical-Representative approach, while offering a unique synthesis through a deep historical timeline tied to *behavioral modernity*, a specific Edenic location, and a spiritual anthropology distinguishing humanity.

This apologetic defends these elements against anticipated critiques, including the model’s early dating, geographical specificity, and theological novelty, demonstrating coherence with Genesis 2–3, Romans 5:12, and anthropological evidence such as Blombos Cave findings. It also compares the model to its counterparts, arguing its necessity as a robust bridge between ancient faith and modern science, enhancing the church’s engagement with contemporary challenges. By complementing rather than competing with other orthodox perspectives, this paper reaffirms the Fall, *Imago Dei*, universal sin, and Christ’s redemption, fostering unity within theological diversity.

I. INTRODUCTION

This companion to “*Adam and Eve in Christian Orthodoxy*”¹ defends the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model, clarifying why I propose it. Psalm 19 reveals God’s glory in Scripture and Nature, united books that ancient minds grasped differently from our scientific age. Galileo used science to inform theology, not oppose it; tensions arise between science and human theology or philosophy, not God’s revelation. My model seeks fidelity to both, placing Adam and Eve ~70,000 years ago in the Persian Gulf valley, bearers of a trichotomous *Imago Dei* whose Fall spread covenantally.

It builds on orthodox models, offering a synthesis for today’s dialogue. Here, I restate the model, explain its necessity, defend its claims, and honor other views charitably. Readers may disagree, but my reasoning will be plain: this bridges faith and science without compromise, echoing Augustine’s call for unity in essentials and charity in non-essentials.

II. RESTATING THE COVENANTAL IMAGE-BEARING MODEL

The Covenantal Image-Bearing Model begins with a foundational claim: God imparted the *Imago Dei* to Adam and Eve ~70,000 years ago during the Last Ice Age, placing them in the Persian Gulf valley. I see this *Imago Dei* as a trichotomous capacity, encompassing body, soul, and spirit, as suggested by 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. Scripture, specifically Genesis 2:7, describes God breathing life into Adam’s

¹ D. Gene Williams Jr., *An Apologetic for the Covenantal Image-Bearing Model: A Companion to Orthodox Theological Reflections on Adam and Eve*, accessed April 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

nostrils, making him a living being. This could mean a *de novo* creation from dust or a selection from an existing *Homo sapiens* population; either way, that divine breath marked them as spiritually alive, distinct from others alive at the time. The Persian Gulf valley, a fertile oasis above sea level during the Ice Age due to water locked in glaciers, aligns with the rivers of Eden listed in Genesis 2:10–14. Geological evidence supports this location, showing it submerged around 6000 BC as Ice Age waters rose (Rose 2010). In my work “*Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Naturalism*,” I argue the *Imago Dei* includes rationality, moral awareness, and covenantal communion with God, a spiritual gift beyond mere biological existence.

When Adam and Eve fell, as recounted in Genesis 3:7–10, they introduced spiritual death, a state of alienation from God, not an immediate physical end. Genesis 2:17 warns of death “*in the day*” they ate, yet Genesis 5:5 records Adam living 930 years after. This spiritual death spread covenantally, not through genetics, as their descendants interbred with pre-Adamic humans, making the *Imago Dei* and fallen nature universal by Jesus’ time, as Paul affirms in Romans 5:12. Anthropology bolsters this timeline: *Homo sapiens* emerged 300,000 years ago with fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco, but a shift called *behavioral modernity*—evidenced by symbolic art at Blombos Cave, South Africa, and ritual burials at Qafzeh, Israel—began ~70,000 years ago. I see this as God’s act aligning with Genesis 2:7.

Later, a regional flood around 5600 BC, possibly preserved in oral tradition until written in Genesis, affected their line without wiping out all humanity; Genesis 8:5 notes mountain tops visible as waters receded, and Genesis 7:19–20’s claim that “*all the high mountains under the heavens were covered*” reflects Noah’s perspective, not a global

reality. Ancient clonal systems like Pando in Utah, dated to 80,000 years, show life continued elsewhere. For further details on this non-literal reading, see my paper *Genesis: Hyperbole and History in the Flood, Lifespans, and Language of the Ancient World*.²

This model also reframes the long lifespans in Genesis 5, like Methuselah's 969 years, as symbolic, not literal—an interpretation often resisted by Young Earth Creationist views tying them to a recent, uncorrupted world. I argue these ages reflect theological truths—God's patience or humanity's early closeness to Him—rather than biological reality, a stance supported by my Genesis paper where such numbers align with ancient Near Eastern hyperbole.

For instance, Genesis genealogies use symbolic patterns, akin to Matthew 1:1–17's fourteen-generation sets, to convey divine purpose over chronology; my *Genesis* paper³ explores this further, noting the 12,600 years from Adam to Moses echo Revelation 11:3 and 12:6's 12,600 days, linking judgment and redemption. Anthropology dates *Homo sapiens* to 300,000 years, far beyond Young Earth timelines, yet *behavioral modernity* at 70,000 years fits my model's spiritual shift. This holds to orthodoxy's essentials: a real Fall, the *Imago Dei*, universal sin, and Christ's redemption, as stated in 1 Corinthians 15:22, weaving Scripture and Nature into a coherent whole.

² D. Gene Williams Jr., *Genesis: Hyperbole and History in the Flood, Lifespans, and Language of the Ancient World*, accessed April 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

³ Ibid.

III. WHY THE MODEL IS NEEDED

Ancient writers of Scripture saw the world through covenant and purpose, not clocks and microscopes, while modern science insists on evidence and timelines. My Covenantal Image-Bearing Model reconciles these perspectives, staying true to Genesis's intent and Nature's record. Galileo taught us that science refines theology, not Scripture itself, and I follow that lead. Other orthodox models stumble in this balance. The Historical-Literal view holds to a 6,000-year timeline, clashing with fossils of *Homo sapiens* from 300,000 years ago. The Genealogical Adam and Eve model suggests 6,000 to 10,000 years, missing earlier behavioral shifts in human history. The Historical-Representative approach leaves timing and place vague, and the Archetypal-Historical view risks losing history to symbolism. My model takes the best from these—historicity, covenantal spread, and representation—and adds precision with an Ice Age setting, a Persian Gulf Eden, and a trichotomous *Imago Dei*.

This precision meets a real need. Christians today wrestle with skepticism about Adam's relevance when science points to a deep human past. My model offers an answer: Adam and Eve fit within 300,000 years of humanity, their spiritual role affirmed by Romans 5:12, not tied to a biological bottleneck. The trichotomy—body, soul, spirit—mirrors God's triune nature, deepening our theology beyond simpler views of the *Imago Dei*. It equips the church to face science with confidence, not retreat, fostering unity rather than division, as I urge in the Section "*Theological And Pastoral Implications*" of the main paper. By honoring both Scripture and Nature, without bending ancient words to modern molds, this model serves believers seeking truth in a complex world

IV. A DEFENSE OF THE MODEL

Critics might question the claims of my Covenantal Image-Bearing Model, so I address four potential challenges with clarity, ensuring my reasoning stands plain for all to see, whether they agree or not.

The first critique targets the timeline: placing Adam and Eve ~70,000 years ago seems to clash with Genesis 5, where descendants like Seth and Enosh unfold in a list suggesting a shorter span. The ~70,000 BC date aligns with the first major migration wave into Asia ~60,000 BC, as evidenced by fossils from Niah Cave, Malaysia, and Tam Pa Ling, Laos, facilitating the rapid spread of Adam's covenantal lineage through interbreeding with pre-Adamic populations.

I respond by noting a known fact in biblical scholarship: Hebrew and Greek, the languages of the Old Testament and New Testament, focus on aspect rather than time. Unlike modern English, which ties verbs to precise moments, Hebrew and Greek emphasize the nature of action—completed, ongoing, or habitual—over a strict chronological sequence. In the Old Testament, Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 from Shem to Abraham compress time, as Gordon Wenham confirms in his 1987 commentary; gaps appear when cross-referencing other Old Testament data, such as Abraham's era, showing these genealogies prioritize covenantal succession over every generation.

The New Testament follows suit. Matthew 1:1–17 shapes Jesus' lineage into three sets of fourteen generations, omitting kings like Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah from 2 Kings 8–14 and 2 Chronicles 22–25 to highlight messianic purpose. Luke 3:23–38 adds Cainan in verse 36, absent in Genesis 11, proving flexibility serves theology, not error.

This telescoping, a standard feature of aspect-driven languages, means Genesis 5's years aren't a rigid clock.

Context further refines this. Scripture applies "*spirit*" or "*breath of life*" to animals in Genesis 1:20–21 and Genesis 7:15, not just humans in Genesis 2:7. A plain reading might blur them, presuming a uniform biological essence, but context reveals distinct meanings—biological vitality for animals, spiritual distinction for Adam, bearing the Imago Dei of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). I argue for this contextual reading over a plain one in my paper *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading*,⁴ where I show that ancient texts demand cultural and literary nuance to uncover their intent. This alignment allows a ~70,000-year placement, matching *behavioral modernity*'s rise, evidenced by symbolic art at Blombos Cave and ritual burials at Qafzeh around that time (Henshilwood 2011).

God's act in Genesis 2:7 sets Adam apart, not as humanity's biological origin, traced to 300,000 years ago at Jebel Irhoud. Sin spreads covenantally, as Romans 5:12 states, reaching all by Jesus' time through interbreeding, needing no short timeline or genetic bottleneck. Ancient writers told God's story through action, not our time-bound lens, and my model reflects this, faithful to Scripture and Nature.

A second objection might label the Persian Gulf Eden speculative, since Genesis names no such place. I point to Genesis 2:10–14, which describes rivers flowing from

⁴ D. Gene Williams Jr., *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading: An Apologetic Framework Rooted in Ancient Contexts and Prima Scriptura*, accessed April 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

Eden. During the Ice Age, sea levels dropped 50 to 80 meters, exposing a fertile Gulf valley, as Jeffrey Rose documents in 2010. Fed by rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates, this oasis thrived until glaciers melted, submerging it by 6000 BC—a shift oral tradition could preserve until Moses’ writing. When viewed from satellite, ancient riverbeds of lost rivers can be seen beneath the Gulf’s waters, tracing paths that align with this once-lush region. This builds on Hugh Ross’s 2014 Eden hypothesis, offering a plausible match to the text’s geography, not a leap beyond it. Critics may prefer ambiguity, but I see this as grounding Scripture’s clues in Nature’s record, visible even today from above.

Some might argue my model relies too much on science, overshadowing Scripture’s voice. I counter that by appealing to Psalm 19 which unites Scripture and Nature as God’s revelation. Genesis 2:7’s “*breath of life*” is spiritual, not biological, set within Homo sapiens’ 300,000-year history from Jebel Irhoud. Pre-Adamic humans lived, as Genesis 1:20–21 suggests with their “*breath of life*,” but unlike the Pre-Adamic man, Adam was the first to receive the *Imago Dei*, a shift Ephesians 2:1 underscores with spiritual death. Science informs, not dictates, my reading. *Behavioral modernity*, with its art and burials ~70,000 years ago, marks this spiritual moment, not a biological start. My model honors both, letting Nature clarify Scripture’s intent without rivalry.

Finally, critics could challenge the trichotomy of body, soul, and spirit, suggesting dichotomy—body and soul alone—holds as orthodoxy’s standard. I note 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 distinguish soul and spirit, and my work “*Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Naturalism*” argues this mirrors God’s triune image. In Genesis 2:7, the “*breath of life*” elevates Adam beyond animal vitality (Genesis 1:20–21) to a spiritual capacity, a distinction context reveals. Dichotomy streamlines, but trichotomy fits

Scripture's cues and enriches theology without breaking orthodoxy. I present it as a valid option, not a mandate, open to discussion.

My model stands coherent, rooted in Scripture's aspect-driven narrative and Nature's testimony, faithful to both without forcing modern frames on ancient words.

V. CHARITABLE HANDLING OF OTHER MODELS

I approach other orthodox models with respect, drawing from their strengths to shape my own, not to overshadow them. Each offers light: I weave it into a broader picture.

The Historical-Literal view insists on a real Adam and Eve, created as Genesis 2:7 describes, with their Fall in Genesis 3 impacting all humanity. I share this commitment to historicity, adjusting only the timeline and population to fit science, not to dismiss its foundation. Its focus on Scripture's truth inspires me.

The Genealogical Adam and Eve model, from S. Joshua Swamidass, brilliantly uses covenantal descent to make Adam and Eve ancestors of all by Jesus' time, alongside pre-Adamic humans. The Tower of Babel (~4000 BC, Genesis 11) marks a significant diffusion of Adam's covenantal lineage, accelerating its genealogical spread as humanity dispersed linguistically and culturally, consistent with the gradual universal ancestry posited by the Genealogical Adam and Eve model

I adopt this mechanism, stretching it to the Ice Age with added place and anthropology, building on its insight, not breaking it.

The Historical-Representative approach sees Adam and Eve as covenantal heads within a broader population, their disobedience affecting all spiritually. This federal

headship resonates with my view; I specify when and where they stood, enhancing its flexibility, not opposing its core.

The Archetypal-Historical view finds depth in Adam and Eve as real figures whose story reflects humanity's condition. I value this typology and ground it in a historical moment, complementing its narrative richness with concrete detail.

The Augustinian model ties sin's universality to Adam and redemption to Christ, as 1 Corinthians 15:22 declares. This anchors my theology; I add historical context, not contradiction, to its soteriological strength.

These models align with orthodoxy's essentials. I synthesize their best, honoring their contributions while offering my own.

CONCLUSION

The Covenantal Image-Bearing Model bridges Scripture and Nature, presenting a historical Adam and Eve faithful to Genesis and coherent with science. Its need arises from today's science-faith tension, its claims stand defensible, and its stance remains charitable. I seek dialogue, not division, following Augustine's wisdom unity in essentials, charity in non-essentials.

APPENDIX A: INTEGRATED TIMELINE: FROM EARLY HUMANS TO THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Covenantal Image-Bearing Model + Anthropological Data

Timeframe	Scientific / Historical Event	Covenantal Interpretation (Your Model)
~300,000 BC	Anatomically modern <i>Homo sapiens</i> appear (e.g., Jebel Irhoud, Morocco)	Biological humanity begins, without spiritual Imago Dei or divine covenant.
~200,000 BC	Genetic diversification of <i>Homo sapiens</i> across Africa	Reflects natural dispersion, not yet a covenantal population.
~100,000 BC	First attempted migration into the Levant (Skhul and Qafzeh)	Early expansion efforts fail, no divine image or covenant present. No "be fruitful and multiply" command.
~70,000 BC	<i>Behavioral modernity</i> appears (symbolism, burial, art, long-distance trade)	God creates or selects Adam and Eve, imparting Imago Dei (body, soul, spirit; Genesis 2:7). They fall, introducing spiritual death (Genesis 3), spread covenantally (Romans 5:12).
~60,000–20,000 BC	<i>Homo sapiens</i> migrate worldwide (e.g., Asia ~60,000–50,000 BC, Australia ~50,000 BC, Europe ~45,000 BC, Americas ~20,000 BC)	Adam's descendants interbreed with pre-Adamic humans, spreading Imago Dei and fallen nature genealogically, universal by Jesus' time (Genesis 4, Romans 5:12).
~6,000 BC	Persian Gulf region floods due to glacial melt (Eden submerged)	Beginning of the end for the Edenic homeland; remembered later in flood traditions.
~5,600 BC	Noah's Flood (regional, not global)	Divine judgment on Adam's covenantal line; Noah's family preserved (Genesis 6–9).
~5,600–4,000 BC	Noah's family repopulates the region	Adam's covenantal line regrows. Civilization develops around Mesopotamia.

Timeframe	Scientific / Historical Event	Covenantal Interpretation (Your Model)
~4,000 BC	Early linguistic and cultural diversification in Mesopotamia.	God confuses languages at Babel (Genesis 11), forcibly dispersing the covenantal lineage globally. This initiates the global spread of covenantal identity, completing the genealogical reach of Adam. According to the Divine Council Worldview (Deuteronomy 32:8–9, LXX/DSS), this dispersion also marks the assignment of the nations to spiritual rulers (“sons of God”), with Yahweh reserving Israel as His own inheritance. This act explains the rise of distinct religious worldviews and cosmic rebellion outside the covenantal center.
~3,000–2,000 BC	Rise of early civilizations: Sumer, Akkad, Egypt	Cultural growth post-Babel. Covenant line continues through Shem → Abraham (Genesis 11).
~2,000 BC	Rise of Sumer, Akkad, Egypt.	God reestablishes covenant in a new form—Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12)—building on Adam’s legacy.
~1,400–1,000 BC	Exodus, Conquest, and United Monarchy (Moses to David)	Covenant narrows: national focus (Israel) to prepare for the universal Messiah.
~700–400 BC	Prophets foretell a coming Redeemer (Isaiah, Micah, etc.)	Prepares for reversal of the Fall—Adamic curse to be undone by a New Adam.
~5 BC	Historical figure in Roman Judea.	<i>Fulfillment.</i> Birth of Jesus Christ. Second Adam reverses Fall, restoring Imago Dei (Romans 5:12–21, 1 Corinthians 15:22).

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