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Genesis 1: 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the water.

The earliest civilization began

In Mesopotamia’s fertile farmland.

Euphrates and Tigris flowed richly to nourish

Sumerian cities, where culture did flourish.

Cuneiform was the world’s first written word;

The Epic of Gilgamesh still can be heard.

In three thousand BC Pharaoh Menes united

All Egypt, where river Nile waters provided

Rich farmland to feed a great civilization;

The Old Kingdom pharaohs sought mummification.

Pyramids were these kings’ burial tombs,

Their creed, carved in Hieroglyphs, filled every room.

For hundreds of years Egypt’s pharaohs presided;

The middle kingdom saw their power divided.

The Hyksos ruled o’er the Egyptians a while,

Their weapons and chariots were the new style.

Thutmose the third and Hatshepsut commanded

An army, their fighting the kingdom expanded.

Ahmenhotep the fourth became Akhenaten,

But by Tutankhamen “one god” was forgotten.

New Kingdom pharaohs brought back Egypt’s glory,

The Rosetta Stone helps us know Egypt’s story

The Lord spoke to Abram, and bid him to go

From Mesopotamia to a place He would show.

Abraham settled in Canaan afar,

His progeny numbered as so many stars.

Descended through Isaac, then Jacob, twelve tribes

Of Israel flourished, as the bible describes.

Joseph to slavery in Egypt was sold,

The meaning of Pharoah’s dreams soon he foretold.

A famine drove Jacob and sons into Egypt;

There they found Joseph; their fortunes had flipped.

Four hundred years later God let Moses know

It was time to tell Pharaoh, “LET MY PEOPLE GO.”

The Israelites journeyed to Canaan again;

The Commandments God gave them on Sinai count TEN.

Joshua led the Jews in Canaan’s conquest,

Chosen by God, Israel’s Judges knew best.

Anointed by Samuel, Saul became king;

The giant Goliath fell to David’s sling.

Solomon’s wisdom kept Israel united;

After his death, the kingdom divided.

Under Sargon (the second) Assyria grew;

They enslaved Israel in seven twenty-two.

Sennacherib and his warriors clip-clopped

To Jerusalem’s walls, but there they were stopped.

From Babylon, Nabopolassar fought well,

And in six-twelve BC the Assyrians fell

In five eighty-six BC Nebuchadnezzar

Destroyed the great Temple – Jerusalem’s treasure.

Captive in Babylon, Israel grieved;

Its sufferings King Cyrus of Persia relieved.

The Empire of Persia stretched far and wide;

In this largest of Empires all faiths could abide.

The tales of the Iliad and Odyssey

Were recited by Homer in 8th Century BC.

These Archaic Greek poems, retold without cease,

Are why Homer is known as “the man who taught Greece.”

Against Persia Ionian Greeks took a stand,

And in 499 BC conflict began:

To conquer all Greece was king Darius' aim,

But Marathon brought brave Pheidippides fame.

At Thermopylae Xerxes thought victory complete,

But at Salamis Greek ships destroyed Persia's fleet.

In Classical Greece great philosophers pondered,

And schoolboys all knew where Odysseus wandered.

In Athens democracy gave men a vote,

And poets recited great epics by rote.

Pythagoras figured and Socrates queried,

And over their sculptures the Greek masters tarried.

Greek thought from the 4th and 5th centuries BC

Has been cherished by scholars throughout history.

Athens and Sparta were Greek city states;

The difference between these two places was great.

The Spartans were strict, and they fought without fear,

Ruled by two kings, they held honor quite dear.

In Athens democracy was more in fashion,

And Athenians, too, could fight with great passion.

By four hundred five BC Athens felt bleak.

But the Peloponnesian Wars left both sides weak.

Philip the second of Macedon’s son

Alexander was crowned when not yet twenty-one.

Bucephalus carried him east with his troops,

His sword cut the Gordian knot’s famous loops.

The Balkans and Egypt, then Persia all fell,

His Empire with each year continued to swell.

At death the young conqueror was thirty-three,

A Hellenized world was his life’s legacy.

On the banks of the Tiber a wolf shared her home

With Remus and Romulus: founders of Rome.

Descended from Troy, rumored partly divine,

Romulus started a new royal line.

By five hundred BC a king ruled no more,

And consuls and senators came to the fore.

*Res publica* set forth a balance of power,

Cincinnatus’ service was Rome’s finest hour.

The Roman Republic and Carthage were rivals,

In three Punic Wars, they fought for survival.

Phoenician-built Carthage was king of the seas,

But on land Roman legions beat Carthage with ease.

Though Hannibal’s elephants o’er the Alps crossed,

Without reinforcements his gains were soon lost.

Victory at Zama earned Scipio praise,

And in one forty six BC Carthage was razed.

Julius Caesar commanded in Gaul,

And with the triumvirate sought to rule all.

The Rubicon crossed, civil war soon broke out,

But Pompey's defeat gave the Dictator clout.

Nobles and senators feared his great power,

The Ides of March brought the first Caesar's last hour.

Octavian triumphed, Mark Antony fell,

And Actium killed the Republic as well.

The first Roman Emperor took a new name:

Octavian Caesar Augustus became.

Pax Romana prevailed in the Empire of Rome

One fifth of the souls in the world called it home.

Aqueducts, bridges, and roads intersected,

And arches and domes Roman buildings perfected.

Over Bethlehem town hosts of angels did sing,

Proclaiming the birth of a new baby King.

In catacombs, worshipers blessed and broke bread.

Though outlawed by Emperors, Christian faith spread.