



Introduction to Genesis

OUTLINE

- I. The Beginning of All Things**
- II. Bedrock Foundation**
- III. The Instructional Word of God**
- IV. The Everlasting God**
- V. The Author of Genesis**
- VI. Organization of the Book**

I. The Beginning of All Things

A. Deep Concerns

Over the centuries, many have pondered how the world and life began. Many have wrestled with such questions as:

- “Was there some kind of major cosmological event that brought forth the heavens and earth?”
- “Did life evolve from one cell by the process of ‘natural selection’ and ‘survival of the fittest’?”
- “Is there really a Supreme Being or Spirit who created, governs, and sustains the universe?”
- “Is there any purpose or meaning to life?”

B. Unsatisfactory Theories

1. Evolution

Most people are unable to find satisfactory answers to these questions. Scientists, philosophers, historians and liberal theologians continue to hypothesize theories about the origin of the universe and mankind. These theories are based primarily on Darwin's theory presented in Origin of Species which suggests that all living species have evolved through natural selection rather than God's creative design. Most of these “learned” people are atheists, agnostics, or non-believers concerning the sovereignty and supremacy of God.

2. Naturalism

Naturalism is the belief that every universal law and force is natural rather than moral, spiritual or supernatural. Sadly, evolution and naturalism have gained wide acceptance in America's media and educational systems.

C. The Only Solution

1. Our Creator and Lawgiver

The only solution to mankind's concerns and questions

about the beginning of all things lies with our eternal, transcendent Creator and Lawgiver. “*I am the First and the Last*” (Isaiah 44:6), “*Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me*” (Isaiah 43:10). God is the one and only source of all existence, vitality and form. His self-revelation manifests clear evidence of His eternality, invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature. “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*” (Romans 1:20).

2. Our Blessed Hope

God alone provides a sense of wholeness, inner stability, hope and peace to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. But, how can we know these truths about God when the first book of the Bible, Genesis, does not reveal them? The answer is that these truths are learned over time through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and diligent, prayerful, Spirit-guided study of God's Word. We will review these foundational truths in Sections III and IV.

II. Bedrock Foundation

All authentic and authoritative information about God's existence, nature, perfections and purposes derive from His self-revelation in Scripture. Therefore, the bedrock foundation for understanding the reality of God and His Son is complete faith and trust in the Holy Bible. Only then is one able to comprehend “*the deep things of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

We will start our study by reviewing the highlights of God's unique self-disclosure about His Word. Following that, we will review the nature, attributes and characteristics of our everlasting God.

III. The Instructional, Infallible Word of God

A. The Holy Spirit and the Word

The Bible is God's special, self-revelation of truth to the world of mankind. It is: (1) “*living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*” and “*a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12); and (2) “*the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*” (Romans 1:16). It can be trusted completely because it was inspired by God, i.e. breathed into the minds of His human authors (2 Timothy 3:16) and moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

B. The Power of God's Word

Through enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, the Bible has a dynamic, life-giving, life-changing ability to convict, convert, sanctify, strengthen, guide and sustain all who believe in God and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God's word pierces with penetrating precision the depths of one's inner being and unveils the false dirty rags of self-righteousness. The Bible declares God as the only reliable source of His communicable attributes. Thus, He is:

- The source of holiness (1 Peter 1:16)
- The source of truth (John 17:17)
- The source of righteousness (1 John 3:7)
- The source of love (1 John 4:16)
- The source of mercy (Ephesians 2:4-7)
- The source of grace (Ephesians 2:4-9)
- The source of longsuffering (Romans 2:4)
- The source of goodness (Psalm 23:6)
- The source of peace (John 14:27)

These communicable attributes of God can, to a degree, be communicated to or shared by mankind. On the other hand, His incommunicable attributes cannot be communicated to or shared by mankind. These are: omniscience (knows all of the past, present and future); omnipotence (has power over all things); omnipresence (is present everywhere at the same time); and immutability (cannot change in any way).

Application

Will you quietly consider God's communicable attributes as listed above? Do your day-to-day attitudes, actions and relationships reflect each of these virtues that God shares with you? Which ones do you need to pray about and focus on?

C. The Importance of the Bible

The Bible is the most valuable physical possession you have because it contains God's mind and will for your life. Here is one commentator's summary of the unique features of the original manuscripts of the Bible:

- It is infallible in its totality (Psalm 19:7).
- It is inerrant in its parts (Proverbs 30:5-6).
- It is complete (Revelation 22:18-19).
- It is authoritative and final (Psalm 119:89).
- It is totally sufficient for all needs (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- It will accomplish what it promises (Isaiah 55:11).
- It gives assurance of salvation (1 John 5:11-13).

The convincing, triumphant Word of God comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. "*The Word of the Lord endures forever*" (Isaiah 40:8).

Application

Do you have doubts about the veracity and integrity of the Bible because: (1) everything is not clear to your understanding; or (2) evangelical scholars, pastors and other Christians do not always agree on difficult issues; or (3) modern scientific discoveries and theories do not corroborate with everything in Scripture; or (4) some verses and passages seem to be in conflict with others?

Consider the fact of your finite mind with definable limits trying to understand God's infinite mind that has no limitations (Isaiah 55:8-9). Do you think you would have an intense desire to know God more and more if He made all of His mysteries perfectly clear to you? Would faith, trust and dependence on Him be essential qualities in your life?

IV. The Everlasting God

A. Who Is God?

God is an infinite, eternal Spirit, perfect in all His attributes, and unchanging in His *being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, righteousness, grace, love, goodness and truth*. He is present everywhere, knows the past, present and future, and is infinitely powerful. As the sovereign ruler and judge over the universe, He reigns with unrivaled majesty and unchallenged authority. He has infinite intelligence, perfect values and standards and an eternal love for His creation.

B. The Trinity

God is one God in essence but exists and subsists eternally as three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God. The Trinity means that within the unified, indivisible essence of God there are three distinct Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are co-equal, co-eternal, and of the same substance. The Trinity of God is a humanly unfathomable mystery, but is clearly presented throughout the Bible as reality (Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14, and 1 Peter 1:2). The three Persons are one God in their basic nature, but they have distinct functions and are equally deserving of the same worship and obedience. We must recognize that God is both incomprehensible and knowable. He is incomprehensible in that the finite human mind cannot grasp or understand His infinite eternal Being in His entirety (Job 36:26; Isaiah 55:8-9). At the same time, God is knowable in the sense that we can know Him and have knowledge about Him as He has revealed Himself in Scripture (1 John 5:18-21) and in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3).

1. God the Father

God the Father is the first Person of the Trinity, the absolute and highest ruler in the universe. He is sovereign over creation, providence and redemption. As Creator and moral Lawgiver, He orders and disposes all things according to His will. His Fatherhood denotes a spiritual relationship, first within the Trinity, and second with mankind. Creatively, He is in relationship with all men and women, but spiritually, His relationship is only with believers.

2. Jesus Christ the Son

Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity. He possesses divine excellence and is self-existent and pre-existent. In His incarnation, He temporarily laid aside some of the prerogatives of deity to assume the place of an obedient, sacrificing servant. Through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, He made our justification complete. He is now ascended to the right hand of God where He ministers as our Advocate and High Priest. Mankind's needs are only resolved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:12-13).

3. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He, too, is divine and eternal and possesses all prerogatives of deity. He executes the divine will with relation to the world of men and women. As the divine teacher, he guided and directed the men who wrote the Scriptures. He is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ, indwelling, sanctifying, instructing, empowering them for service and sealing them unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14).

V. The Author of Genesis

A. Genesis and the Pentateuch

The name, Pentateuch, means "five scrolls" and is comprised of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Pentateuch is the Greek word for Torah, the Book of the Law. It forms a continuous, unified, historical, literary unit of: (a) God's spectacular introduction of time and space into eternity with the creation of the universe, earth and mankind (Genesis 1:1-11:9); and (b) the beginning of nations and a particular race of people (Israel) through whom God's Son would be prophesied and revealed (Genesis 11:10 - Deuteronomy 34:12).

B. Evidence of Mosaic Authorship

Although Genesis ended with the story of Joseph over three hundred years before Moses was born, most

historians and evangelical scholars agree that Moses authored Genesis and the Pentateuch. The continuity and literary style from Genesis through Deuteronomy strongly suggest one major author. In addition, both Bible Testaments provide direct and indirect testimonies of this conclusion. See Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:1-2 and Deuteronomy 31:9. In the New Testament, Christ clearly affirmed Moses as author, *"Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?"* (Mark 12:26). See also John 5:46.

Further evidence is revealed in the Book of Joshua where God instructed Joshua to meditate on the "Book of the Law" day and night (Joshua 1:7-8). This indicates that the Torah had already been written at that time.

C. Moses' Qualifications

In God's providential wisdom and power, Moses was given the intellectual capacity, training, and personal experience to be the primary author of the Pentateuch. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had a good education and valuable experiences as a boy and young man in Egypt (Exodus 2:10). During his Egypt-to-Canaan leadership, he interacted with God conversationally and received direct guidance and power to carry out His instructions. Most likely Moses wrote Genesis at some time during the forty years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness (1446-1406 B.C.).

The question remains: "how did Moses obtain the information concerning the events which took place centuries and even millenniums before his time"? In view of God's inspiration in the writing of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), it is reasonable to conclude that the information came to Moses from his forebears in oral and written form. The Spirit of God then guided him in compiling and authoring this pre-existent material into the original Genesis scrolls.

VI. Organization of the Book

A. Main Themes

Genesis is a credible, descriptive, foundational record of God's "beginnings". Its themes include:

- The creation of the universe and mankind;
- The fallen nature of men and women;
- The promise of redemption through the Seed;
- The destruction of the original race except righteous Noah and his family;
- The spreading of people over the face of the earth;
- God's elect people – the Hebrews;
- The development and growth of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

B. Two Main Divisions of Genesis

As the book of beginnings, Genesis records the origin of creation, man, woman, marriage, sin, family, childhood, sacrifice, trade, agriculture, races, nations, languages, cities and God's chosen people. The book consists of two major parts: primeval history and patriarchal history. These two historical records are separated by genealogical gap(s) which will be described in a later lesson.

1. Primeval History (1:1-11:26)

Under the broad heading of primeval history, Genesis covers:

- The origin of the universe and Adam as head of the human race;
- The origin of sin and the fall of mankind;
- The origin of the new head of the human race under Noah;
- The origin of nations and dispersal of peoples on earth.

2. Patriarchal History (11:27 -50:26)

Under the heading of patriarchal history, Genesis covers;

- The beginning of the Hebrew nation under Abraham;
- The beginning of faith and consecration to God;
- The life and family of Abraham;
- The life and family of Isaac;
- The life and family of Jacob;
- The life of Joseph.

C. Significance and Value

In addition to clearly and effectively demonstrating the pre-eminence and predominance of God's sovereignty, the Bible includes many other valuable features.

Though not the most prominent theme, the promise of redemption recorded in Genesis 3:15 is carefully developed through a long line from Seth through Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. After the Old Testament history, the Bible brings redemption to its full meaning, vividness and glory in the New Testament.

Genesis also points the careful reader to the instructional connection between the essential and vital elements of Divine revelation and the variety of individual human responses to that revelation. We see God's love and spiritual guidance, His holiness and mercy, His justice and judgment, His grace and encouragement and His blessings and joy. As one commentator said, "We become more and more convinced of the truth of the Apostolic word, that 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning'."

Being grounded in these basic themes is essential for understanding God's redemptive purpose and plans for mankind. Moses was inspired to write this providential history to show the connection between Adam, the progenitor of the human race, and Abraham, the man whose descendants would institute the Divine will and purpose. The Old and New Testaments build on this Genesis foundation and meaningfully record the magnificent truths of God's holiness, love, justice, mercy, grace and redemption.

Application

As you launch into the study of this special book, consider the following basic essentials of the Christian faith:

- There is one true, living God eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19).
- Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary and is fully man and fully God (Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1, 14).
- The Bible is the complete, inspired Word of God without error in its original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- Man was created in the image of God, then sinned and thereby incurred physical and spiritual death. Since then all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and become guilty sinners in thought, word and deed (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:23, 5:12).
- The Lord Jesus died for our sins as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice. He arose victoriously on the third day from the grave. All who believe in Him are justified on the basis of faith in His shed blood (Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- All who come by grace through faith to accept the Lord Jesus Christ are born again and become children of God (John 1:12-13).
- All human beings will be bodily resurrected: believers at the first resurrection to be with God forever; unbelievers after their second death and judgment to be separated from God in everlasting conscious punishment (Revelation 20:6, 15).

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read Notes and References.

1. Concerning the beginning of all things, what has gained acceptance in most of America's media and educational systems?
2. a. Who can provide the only solution to mankind's concerns and questions about the beginning of all things?

b. Since Genesis does not explain the foundational facts about God, how can we know them?
3. How do we secure our bedrock faith in God and His Word?
4. What is the difference between communicable attributes and incommunicable attributes?

DAY TWO: Re-read Notes and References.

5. Describe the Bible's importance to you in your own words.
6. In terms of order and function, what are the relationships within the Trinity?
7. What are the two major parts of Genesis? Approximately when did they occur?

DAY THREE: Read Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:10-11; Peter 3:8; Psalm 19:1-6 and Luke 21:25.

8. What does the phrase "*In the beginning*" mean?
9. After creating the heavens and earth, God created what main things each day?
Day 1 – light

Day 2 –

Day 3 –

Day 4 –

Day 5 –

Day 6 –
10. What were the purposes of the "*lights in the firmament of the heavens*"?
11. After God created and blessed the man and woman in His own image, what command did He give them about the earth?

DAY FOUR: Read Genesis 2:1-17; Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:1-10; Job 32:8 and Proverbs 4:23, 20:27

12. What did man become when God formed him from dust and breathed life into his nostrils?
13. What clear commands did God give the first man in the Garden of Eden (Quote Scripture)?
14. ? (Thought Question). Do you think God's words, "*you shall surely die*", meant physical death or spiritual death or both? Explain.

DAY FIVE: Read Genesis 2:18-23.

15. After God saw the man's need for a helper, and noted that the animals would not suffice, what did He do?
16. What does the creation account in Chapter 1 say about the man's and woman's identity with God?
17. What was the role of the woman in God's plan?
18. When God brought the woman to the man, what did Adam recognize about her?

DAY SIX: Read Genesis 2:24-25.

19. a. What are God's requirements and pattern for a godly marriage?

b. How do these compare with the situation in our current culture?
20. Did the man and woman have any knowledge or understanding of shame and guilt before the Fall?
21. ♥ (Heart Questions) How would you describe your expectations and motivations toward this study of Genesis? Do you come to this class trusting in the Lord "*with all your heart*" and putting your trust "*under the shadow of God's wings*?"