

The Creation (Genesis 1)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Genesis

I. Introduction to the Book of Genesis

- a. Last two classes I have taught: Intro to the OT
 - i. Part 1 – Why it's so important for Christians to study the OT today (8 reasons, including: examples for us, background for the NT, understand character of God, prophecies about Jesus, the Christ)
 - ii. Part 2 – Showing an example of importance/reasons by looking at one day in history: Lessons from Mt. Sinai
- b. Book of Genesis is foundation for everything else in Scripture
 - i. Some look at Bible in three parts:
 - 1. God creates man (**Genesis 1-2**)
 - 2. Man rebels against God (**Genesis 3**)
 - 3. God working with man to redeem mankind (**Genesis 4-Revelation 22**)
 - ii. Concepts that we are introduced to in Genesis
 - 1. Who is God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
 - 2. Creation of the universe and mankind
 - 3. Nature of man (body and spirit; tendencies toward good and evil)
 - 4. Satan, temptation and sin
 - 5. Final judgment of the whole world
 - 6. Free choice / free will vs. predestination
 - 7. What it means to be living by faith
 - 8. 'Eastern' (allegorical) and 'Western' (linear) style prophecies
 - 9. Foreshadows of: kingdom of God, baptism, crucifixion of Jesus, priesthood of Jesus, resurrection
 - 10. Significance of marriage; relationships between men and women

11. We are introduced to: Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Lot's wife, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, 12 sons/tribes, Joseph and others (significant as good and bad examples for us in the NT)

c. Approach I plan to use going forward through Genesis

- i. View this as the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit as Peter and Paul said. And mindful of what Jesus said in **John 10:34** when he quoted from the OT (**Psalms**) and reinforced it by saying, "and the Scripture cannot be broken".
- ii. We will ask hard questions of the text, and then try to seek out the answers from the author, using 'reason and the Scriptures'.
- iii. First try to understand what it is saying in context, THEN
 1. Any points Jesus or the apostles (or inspired NT writers) made from the same text; moral lessons for us.
 2. Observations by early Christian writers (not inspired, but close to the source and worth considering).
 3. Any prophecies or foreshadowing of Christ and the gospel.

d. **Question:** Who is the author of Genesis? **Answer:** Moses

- i. 'Law of Moses' = 5 Books of Moses = Pentateuch
- ii. I once made the mistake of asking this question when teaching Genesis in Hungary (Genesis is called '1 Moses' there)!
- iii. Jesus, the apostles and Jews of Jesus' time all considered Moses to be the principal author of the 5 Books of Moses, a/k/a "The Law of Moses" (**Luke 24:44**), or just "Moses" (**Luke 24:27**).
 1. In **John 7:22-23** Jesus says, "Moses gave you circumcision" (referring to **Genesis 17**).
 2. Other references to Mosaic authorship of the 5 Books include: **Mark 5:2-5, Mark 7:10, Luke 20:37, Matthew 8:4, John 1:17, John 5:46-47, Acts 3:22-23, Acts 15:21, Romans 10:5, Romans 10:19** and **2 Cor. 3:15**.
 3. Moses lived c. 1400 BC

e. Translations I will be using:

- i. NKJV (OT based on Hebrew Masoretic Text)

- ii. Sometimes also will use the Septuagint (“the LXX”) for the OT (Orthodox Study Bible and others). This highly respected OT version predominantly used by Jesus and apostles in the NT, and by early church. LXX was translated by Jewish scholars, 200-250 BC.

II. “In the Beginning God Created the Heavens and the Earth”

- a. Read **Genesis 1:1-5** (the first day of Creation).
- b. **Genesis 1:2** in the LXX reads, “the earth was invisible and unfinished”.
- c. Three options for where an orderly universe came from:
 - i. It always existed; OR
 - ii. It spontaneously arose from nothing at some point in time, by chance or accident; OR
 - iii. It was designed, and created by a Creator at some point in time.
- d. Example of finding a watch in the woods (ticking, correct time, crystal, hands moving, ‘Rolex’ or ‘Bulova’ logo, watchband, etc.). Three observers find it and wonder where it came from.
 - i. First one concludes, “I believe it was always here, from the beginning of time!” (Yet ticking and has not yet run down)
 - ii. Second one states, “No; happened by chance. I can imagine that lightning struck some sand, then wind came, then squirrel, tree fell, etc. and ultimately by chance created this watch!”
 - iii. Third one states, “Although we can’t see the designer, nevertheless there is clear evidence that someone with intelligence designed this for a purpose. No way this could have happened by chance!”
- e. Things left to their own tend to decay into randomness; entropy. We see that everywhere. Mice running across typewriter won’t write ‘Romeo and Juliette’. Tornado in a junkyard will not assemble a new, fully functional automobile from the parts. And one cell of a plant or animal is much more elegantly constructed than anything man-made! (My own experience as an engineer designing water and wastewater treatment facilities, etc.)
- f. Theophilus (bishop of Antioch, c. 180) in his Letter to Autolytus said, “Any person who sees a ship on the sea, rigged and in sail, and heading for the harbor will no doubt infer that there is a pilot in her who is steering her. Likewise, we must perceive that God is the Pilot of the whole universe, although He is not visible to the eyes of the flesh. For He is incomprehensible.” (*ANF v.2, p.90*).

- g. Read **Psalm 19:1-4**. Creation testifies to the existence of God, the creator of the universe all around us!
- h. Read **Romans 1:18-25**. Paul's argument regarding the decline of mankind.
 - i. God's nature is manifest from observing His creation.
 - ii. Moral degradation of mankind starts with suppressing truth about God's existence.
 - iii. Denying God's existence (rejecting truth for a lie) led to idolatry, worshiping created things.
 - iv. Ultimately that slide led to rampant ethical decline (more detail in **Romans 1:26-32**): immorality, violence, murder, envy, unloving, unmerciful and unforgiving, etc.
 - v. We worship the creator, not created things (not 'New Age' pantheism)
 - 1. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) said, "I have been in the habit of walking on the earth, not of worshipping it" (*ANF v.2, p.188*)
 - 2. God said that the world he created was good, and it was created for us. We are entrusted with taking care of it. It didn't create us, and we don't worship it!
- i. Q: Why this is important for us? A1: Evangelism. Paul uses the creation account of **Genesis 1:1** as his starting place when preaching the gospel to philosophers and others in Athens. Read **Acts 17:16-31**.
 - i. Athens like Boston today? Center for learning, many different philosophies, skeptical about the Bible and Christian faith, but some who are interested!
 - ii. One God who made the world and everything in it.
 - iii. He gave us life
 - iv. He made all men from one
 - v. He is not far off
 - vi. We are his offspring; we are created to seek Him
 - vii. Not recognizing the Divine Nature is ignorance; God calling us to repent!
- j. Q: Why is this important for us? A2: It gives us humility and proper perspective when we are tempted to question God's wisdom or goodness.

- i. **Job 38:1-7** “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?”
 - ii. **Romans 9:20-21** Who am I to challenge God? He is the potter, I am the clay. (Similar to illustration used in **Jeremiah 18**.)
- k. **Psalm 14:1** says “the fool says in his heart, “There is no God””. Why so many intelligent ‘fools’ then and now, who do not believe in God, if it is so obvious?
- i. One reason: problems, suffering, injustices. Some Greek philosophers like Epicurus assumed there is no God based on problems they saw in the world (good people suffering, injustices). Could not imagine there could be a Providence who made this world, who cares about individuals.
 - 1. Epicurus, starting on this false first assumption, concluded (unlike Plato) no life after death. Therefore, goal in life is to maximize pleasure here.
 - 2. Lots of people lived that way then, and do so today. Even in many modern churches! In **1 Corinthians 15:19** Paul confronts this kind of thinking head-on: “if only for this life we have hope, we are of all men the most pitiable”.
 - ii. The other reason people don’t believe in God (maybe the biggest one): they don’t want to repent.
 - 1. **In John 3:19** Jesus says, “This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”
 - 2. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215AD) rebuked the unbelieving philosophers of his day, saying “you disbelieve everything that you may indulge your passions, and that you may believe in idols because you have a craving after their licentiousness, but disbelieve God, because you cannot bear a life of self-restraint.” (*Exhortation to the Heathen, ANF v.2, p.189*)

III. The Seven Days of Creation

- a. Read **Genesis 1:6-2:3**
- b. Creation in an orderly way, “seven days”
 - i. Day 1 – light; Spirit of God hovering over the water; evening/morning
 - ii. Day 2 – firmament (heaven/sky)
 - iii. Day 3 – dry land appears in the sea; plants, trees

- iv. Day 4 – sun, moon and stars
 - v. Day 5 – creatures of the water and birds
 - vi. Day 6 – land animals and humans
- c. I have several questions related to 7-day Creation account!
- i. Q1: Light and dark, evening and morning on the first day; yet sun not made until day 4. How does that work?
 - ii. Q2: How are we supposed to take the “seven days”?
 1. Three options:
 - a. Literal seven 24-hour days? OR
 - b. Seven longer periods of time? OR
 - c. Figurative account, expressing spiritual truths?
 2. There are some places in Scripture where something should to be taken literally that most take figuratively. Peter provides an example of this in **Acts 3** when he quotes from **Deuteronomy 18:15**, “God will raise up a Prophet”. Yet sometimes goes the other way; a statement should be taken figuratively that is mistakenly taken literally! For example, in **John 2:19** where Jesus says, “destroy this temple in two days and I will raise it up”. Or when Jesus says, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up!” (**John 11:11**)
 3. Consider the ‘apparent age’ argument. If God creates a full grown tree 5 minutes ago that is 6 inches in diameter and has 10 rings inside, is it 5 minutes old, or 10 years old? God can create things (Adam created as an adult, not a baby) with apparent age. Could God have done that with the earth also?
 4. Early Christians rejected pagan arguments for man evolving from lower life forms and working his way up, based on Scripture. (See *What the Early Christians Believed about Evolution*, Scroll Publishing, CD lesson by David Bercot)
 5. Most early Christians took the 7 days literally. However, not all did (and not a divisive issue in the church). Justin pointed out that with the Lord a day is like 1,000 years (**2 Peter 3:8**; also Moses in **Psalms 90:4**!)
 - iii. Q3: Why seven? Why not get it all done in one shot? Or why not three (for the Trinity)?

1. The number seven signifies completion, finality in the Scriptures.
 - a. Classic in fall of Jericho in **Joshua 6:4** (7th day, 7 times march around city, 7 priests, 7 trumpets). Foreshadows Final Judgment of the world, the end of it all.
 - b. We are looking forward to rest at the end (not now) in **Hebrews 4**.
- iv. Q4: Why does it say God rested on the seventh day? I know he doesn't get tired out (**Isaiah 40:28** says "he neither hungers nor is weary")
 1. Possible foreshadowing: Consider that Jesus 'rested' in the tomb all day on the seventh day (Sabbath). He was buried late Friday, and rose on Sunday.
- v. Q5: Why does it say in **Genesis 1:26**, "let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness? Only one God, so why plural here?
 1. The Son of God (= the Word of God = the Wisdom of God) also was present and involved.
 - a. **John 1:1-5, 1:10** The Son of God, the Word of God, was with the Father in the beginning. All things were made through him.
 - b. **Hebrews 1:1-2** (Jesus, the Son of God) "through whom also He made the worlds".
 - c. **Proverbs 8:23-31** 'Wisdom' was with God in the beginning, at Creation. **1 Corinthians 1:24** identifies Christ as the Wisdom of God. Cyprian (c. 250) *ANF v. 5, p. 515* and others early writers link this to the Son.
 - d. **Micah 5:1** The Ruler from Bethlehem, his "goings forth were from the beginning, even from everlasting."
 - e. **Colossians 1:16** "By him all things were created that are on heaven and earth, visible and invisible. All things created through him and for him."
 2. Spirit of God was present also in **Genesis 1:2**, hovering over the water at the very beginning.
 3. Early Christians saw the "us/our" statements in **Genesis 1:26** and **3:22** as early references to the Son of God and the trinity. Examples: Irenaeus (c. 180) *ANF v. 1, p. 488*; and Theophilus (c. 180) *ANF v. 2, p. 101*.