

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Introduction To Genesis”

Genesis 1:1

2002

Introduction

The book of Genesis is the most important book ever written and has had a greater influence on history than any other book ever produced.

As a result, no other book of the Bible is quoted more often or referred to so frequently as the book of Genesis.

There are at least 165 passages in Genesis that are either directly quoted or clearly referred to in the NT. Over 100 of these quotations are taken from the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

The book of Genesis answers the most basic and yet profound questions of life:

1. Who am I?
2. Where did I come from?
3. Is there a God?
4. And if there is a God:
 - a. How can I know him?
 - b. What is His purpose for my life?

If a person believes he originated from cosmic goo or is a descendent of apes, that will have a profound effect on his worldview – essentially reducing mankind to little more than a cosmic accident.

On the other had, if a person believes that we were divinely created in the image of an all-powerful, holy, and loving God, that will have a dramatic impact in elevating mankind to a place of great significance in the vast arena of God’s creation.

I The Importance Of Genesis

A. The meaning of Genesis

Genesis = “**Origin** or beginnings”

The title “Genesis” is a transliteration of the Greek word, “*Geneseos*”, which is the book’s title in the Septuagint.

The Hebrew title, *Bereshith*, is the first word of the Hebrew text, and is translated, “in the beginning.”

B. The book of Genesis records:

1. The origin of the **universe**
 - a. Its order and complexity

- b. The solar system
- c. The atmosphere and hydrosphere
- 2. The origin of life
 - a. The creation of plants
 - b. The creation of animals
 - b. The creation of man
- 3. The origin of **sin** and redemption
 - a. The entrance of evil into the world
 - b. The fall of man
 - b. The promise of a future redeemer
- 4. The origin of human institutions
 - a. Marriage and family
 - b. Diversification of language
 - c. Government
 - d. Culture and society
 - e. Nations and people groups
- 5. The origin of God's **redemptive** plan
 - a. God's chosen people – the nation of Israel

J. Sidlow Baxter has written:

“The other writings of the Bible are inseparably bound up with [Genesis] inasmuch as it gives us the origin and initial explanation of all that follows. The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as they flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis. Or, to use an equally appropriate figure, as the massive trunk and wide-spreading branches of the oak are in the acorn, so, by implication and anticipation, all Scripture is in Genesis. It has been truly said, “the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.” J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), I, p. 23.

II The Background Of Genesis

A. Who wrote Genesis?

1. The biblical evidence: **Moses**

Historically, Jews and Christians alike have held that Moses was the author/compiler of the first five books of the OT, also known as the Pentateuch.

a. The support of Mosaic authorship

- 1. The OT describes Moses as the author - Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27
- 2. Jesus attributes the Pentateuch to Moses - Matt 8:4; 19:7,8; Mk 1:44; 7:10; 10:3,4; Lk 5:14; 16:29,31; John 5:45,46; 7:22,23
- 3. Peter attributes the Pentateuch to Moses - Acts 3:22
- 4. Paul attributes the Pentateuch to Moses - Acts 13:39; Rom 10:5,19; I Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15

b. The method of Mosaic authorship

1. Documentation of oral tradition

Moses recorded the oral traditions handed down from the time of Adam and Eve.

2. Compilation of written history

Moses gathered together and compiled existing writings of others who had previously recorded a history of the world.

3. Divine revelation

The book of Genesis, like the other 65 books of the Old and New Testament were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21 “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

It is just as easy for God to reveal history past as it is for him to reveal history future.

2. The documentary hypothesis: J, E, D, P

Some critics have not been content with the conclusion of Mosaic authorship.

Beginning with J. Astruc (1753), “scholars” have attributed this book to the work of an unknown editor who compiled the writings of four primary writers.

These presumed documents (which don’t exist), allegedly date from the 10th to the 5th centuries B.C. and are referred to as J, E, D, and P

J - for Jahweh/Yawheh, the personal OT name for God - 850 B.C.

E - for Elohim, a generic name for God - 750 B.C.

D - for Deuteronomic - 620 B.C.

A further editorial expansion of the first two.

P - for Priestly - 500 B.C.

No doubt their real reason for attempting to discount Mosaic authorship was to support the evolutionary concept of man’s development.

The Pentateuch is thus depicted as a patchwork of stories, poems and laws.

However, this view is not supported by conclusive evidence, and intensive archeological and literary research has undercut many of the arguments used to challenge Mosaic authorship.

B. When was Genesis written?

We don’t know exactly when Genesis was written, but most scholars agree that it was probably written during the wilderness wanderings from 1,446 to 1406 B.C.

C. What is the key verse in Genesis?

All scripture unfolds from one seminal verse found in Genesis 3:15. The narrative of the fall found in the opening verses of Genesis 3 is followed immediately by the promise of a future redeemer in Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

From this point on, all of Old Testament revelation looks forward and eagerly awaits the promised redeemer.

So Genesis sets the stage, not just for the progression of history, but also for God’s great program of delivering the human race from sin.

III The Structure Of Genesis

A. The major **themes** of Genesis

1. The origin of our world, and of mankind - Gen 1 and 2
2. The origin of human depravity and sin in the “fall of man” - Gen 3
3. Sin’s devastating effects and consequences for man - Gen 3 and 4
4. The judgment of God in the flood - Gen 6-9
5. The confusion of languages at Babel - Gen 11
6. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen 18 and 19
7. The grace of God in His provisions for man’s salvation - Gen 3:15
 - a. Evidenced in the ark and God’s covenant with Noah - Gen 6-9
 - b. Evidenced in the covenant with Abraham - Gen 12:1-3
 - c. Evidenced in the rescue of Lot and his family - Gen 19
 - d. Evidenced in God’s blessing of Israel in Egypt - Gen 37-50

But the most important theme is found in God’s provision for man’s redemption from the power and penalty of sin through simple faith in God’s promises.

Genesis 15:6 “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

B. The major **divisions** of Genesis

Genesis is divided into ten main sections, each beginning with the word “account”

1. The account of the heavens and earth - Gen 2:4
2. The account of Adam - Gen 5:1
3. The account of Noah - Gen 6:9
4. The account of the sons of Noah - Gen 10:1
5. The account of Shem - Gen 11:10
6. The account of Terah - Gen 11:27
7. The account of Ishmael - Gen 25:12
8. The account of Isaac - Gen 25:19
9. The account of Esau - Gen 36:1, 9
10. The account of Jacob - Gen 37:2

C. The major **outline** of Genesis

1. Chapters 1-11

- a. **Creation** - Gen 1-2
- b. Fall - Gen 3-5
- c. **Flood** - Gen 6-9
- d. Nations - Gen 10-11

2. Chapters 12-50

Chapters 12-50 describe God's plan for man's redemption.

- a. **Abraham** - Gen 12:1-25:18
- b. Isaac - Gen 25:19-26:35
- c. **Jacob** - Gen 27-36
- d. Joseph - Gen 37-50

IV The Interpretation Of Genesis

How one approaches the book of Genesis, or any book of the Bible for that matter, largely determines the accuracy of not only our interpretation but also our application.

A. **Mythical** interpretation

This approach to the book of Genesis puts it on the same level as a variety of other superstitious, mythical accounts of creation.

Gilgamesh: 2,000 B.C. -- A legendary Babylonian king who is the hero of a mythical epic that recounts the story of the flood narrative.

B. Allegorical interpretation

An allegory is a story in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning, but are not necessarily factual. According to this approach, what's really important is the "spiritual" message conveyed by the passage. People who hold to this interpretive method are willing to grant that the Bible contains truth, but will not go so far as to accept it as the truth. They suspect that throughout its transmission down through the ages the Bible has become something less than inspired and inerrant and is full of contradictions.

But as we discovered in our study of the veracity and reliability of the Bible, "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them."

C. **Literal** interpretation

There is never even the slightest inference that the events or people of Genesis are fictional or mythical. To the contrary, Jesus and the NT writers considered the book of Genesis as absolutely historical, true and authoritative.

If Genesis isn't true:

Then the testimony of the prophets is a lie.

Then the testimony of Jesus is fraudulent.
 Then the testimony of the disciples was corrupt.
 Then the historicity and authority of the entire Bible is called into question.

Genesis was either it was a product of human imagination, or it is divinely revealed truth. If it is mere imagination, we should value it only as a work of antiquity, on the same level as other mythological epics. On the other hand, if it is divinely inspired, we must come on bended knee, willing to hear and obey it as an authoritative word from God.

“This account either explains it all or it does not explain it at all.”

As Billy Graham once said, “What we all need to do is return to the Bible afresh – not going to it to prove a point, but seeing what it says as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes.”

Conclusion

What kind of questions are you wrestling with?
 Do you know who you are?
 Do you know why you are here?
 Do you know where you came from and where you are going?
 Do you know your purpose in life?

The Book of Genesis answers these significant life questions. It answers them simply, clearly and authoritatively.

As Ronald Reagan once said, “Within the covers of one single book, the Bible, are all the answers to all the problems that face us today -- if only we would read and believe.”

The Mind of God

An unknown writer said, “This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.

Invitation:

1. If you have never accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, I want to encourage you to do so today!

- a. What if you were to face God today and give an account for yourself? Are you ready?

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 10:9-10 “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

If you would like to begin a new life in Christ and be forgiven of your sins and receive God’s promise of eternal life, I want you to raise your hand right where you are:

All you need to do is to ask Him for a new beginning:

“Dear Lord Jesus, please come into my life and be my Savior and Lord. Please forgive my sins, and give me the gift of eternal life. I believe in my heart that Christ died for my sins and was buried and raised up from the dead. And now I surrender my life to you. Thank you for hearing my prayer and thank you for saving me!”

Resources in Genesis series:

Morris, H. *The Genesis Record*. Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976.

Stedman, R. <https://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/genesis>

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