

Introduction to Genesis 1 – 11. KYB

Welcome to the Introduction to the study of Genesis Part 1. I trust you will find it rewarding and that you will look forward to studying this part of God's word which begins "in the beginning".

There is a hymn by George Wallace Briggs – (you may have sung it) –

*God hath spoken – by his prophets
Spoken his unchanging word,
Each from age to age proclaiming
God the One, the righteous Lord!*

"God hath spoken..."

What I find amazing is that the God of an infinite universe should not only speak, but give to us his **written** word of revelation and grace, to the inhabitants of this tiny earth, a word which we have readily available and from which we can all learn.

Over three millennia ago, when people had almost lost the knowledge of the true God, God called a nation-family out of Egypt under Moses' leadership. These people would be trained and entrusted with the word of God, commissioned to proclaim it to the ignorant world, and to preserve that word for the generations to come.

Moses, through the power and inspiration of the Spirit of God, wrote down God's word – the first 5 books of the Bible called the Pentateuch – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

When Jesus came, he gave confirmation of the truth of this word. Indeed, in Luke 24:27 and 44, Jesus said that Moses prophesied about *him*.

Many people scoff at God's word. Of course they can disbelieve it, but they cannot disprove it.

We may (and do) put much faith in secular science – and wonderful things have been discovered – but ongoing, new discoveries change previous scientific belief. On the other hand, God has given us the Bible, and with it the assurance that "All scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim.3:16), that "the word of

our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8), that it is the **truth**, and that “God...does not lie” (Titus 1:2).

Here we find the answers to our human condition, to death and to suffering – and to life, and blessing, and hope.

Even as churchgoers, we may see great validity in the New Testament teachings of Christ, but think that the Old Testament has little relevance for us today.

It was suggested at a local church bible study that Genesis 1- 11 should be skipped “because these chapters are mythical”.

On the contrary, Genesis 1 – 11 is the **foundation** for understanding God, and heaven and earth and our relationship with God, and for understanding God’s plan of redemption and the necessity of Jesus’ coming.

The Genesis chapters show us what is in our genes and enable us to understand ourselves better - why we can have very good intentions, but that there are also things that we say and do that we do not want the world and our friends to see.

As one person said – “If all our thoughts were written on our foreheads, we would never take our hats off!”

Genesis begins at the beginning.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...”.

Our finite minds do not fully understand an infinite God. But what we **do** need to know, God has shown us – and he has opened up relationship so that we might know him more and more.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are in agreement regarding God as the creator of the universe, creating out of what was not visible (Hebrews 11:3 and 2 Peter 3:5). Colossians 1:17 tells us that in Christ, who is the Son of God, all things hold together.

Genesis 1 – 11 is generally divided into 4 parts –

Creation

The Fall (into sin and death through Adam's and Eve's disobedience)

The Flood (of Noah's day), and

Babel (where pagan worship took root in human minds and behaviour).

Genesis 1 gives us the sequence of God's creating.

Day 1. Creation of light and separation of light and darkness.

Day 2. Creation of the earth's atmosphere.

Day 3. Separation of the sea and dry land and creation of vegetation – (and God said it was good)

Day 4. Creation of the heavenly lights – the sun, moon and stars.

Day 5. Creation of the sea creatures and birds.

And on the 6th day – animals. Whereupon God (in Hebrew, *Elohim*, which is plural) said (Genesis 1:26) "Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness", and the triune God made man – male and female - and gave them dominion over the earth.

And God looked upon all he had made, and saw that it was "very good".

Then God rested on the 7th day from his work of creating.

The pinnacle of his creating was "man". Human beings are the only creatures in heaven and earth made in God's image – made to be his beloved family.

Genesis 2 gives more detail about the creation of human beings. God made the male Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed his life into Adam's nostrils. He took the female Eve out of Adam's side. They began as one flesh, and come together again for procreation. She was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (Genesis 2:23), and God said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" Regarding marriage, Jesus confirmed these definitive words in Mark 10:6-10.

Adam and Eve were placed in Eden, a perfect home – like a little piece of heaven – with food and beauty and comfort and the joy of God's presence.

They could feed from the Tree of Life. But there was one prohibition. Of all the fruitful trees in the garden, there was one they were **not** to eat from, or they would lose the life God had given them. This was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You will read more about these trees in the study.

Why such prohibition?

Humans were given the freedom to love and please God, or to disobey him. For love must be freely given. It cannot be programmed.

You will see how Satan deceived Eve into disobeying in order that she might “be as God”, and how Adam wilfully followed suit. Sin entered the Paradise of Eden, and with sin came death, just as God had warned.

Adam had been given dominion over creation. When he sinned, the whole world fell. And all of us have had passed on to us that rebellious fallen nature which says, “Don’t tell me what to do. I want to do what I want to do.”

One teacher has said that when Adam rebelled, we all stood up in his loins and applauded – meaning that in Adam’s place, we too would have disobeyed.

I know that we have a song made famous by Frank Sinatra - *“I Did It My Way”*. From babyhood we have little desire to come under authority. We have the same fallen nature of the Pharisees who chose the hated Caesar rather the kingship of Jesus Christ, saying in effect, “We will **not** have this person to rule over us”.

The world was changed. Adam and Eve were sent from the garden, away from the Tree of Life into a world that now included labour and pain and death. Nakedness became an issue in their fallen state, but God made coverings of animal skin for Adam, and Eve. This would appear to be the first blood shed to cover man’s sin.

God in grace did not abandon them. He promised them a Saviour, born through the woman, who would destroy Satan forever. This is the key message of Genesis 3.

Children were born. And Cain, the very first child born of a man and a woman was a murderer. He murdered his younger brother Abel. And so the descent of mankind continued as many children were born.

There was intermarrying within the family then. In time, as sin affected genetics, this would become dangerous.

God in mercy gave Adam and Eve another particular son, Seth, in the place of his righteous brother Abel. Jesus, the promised seed of the woman and Saviour of the world was born in Seth's line (Luke 3:37).

People lived long years in an, as yet, minimally unpolluted world. They became builders of cities, developing the products of civilization – architecture, and metallurgy and music – as you will see in Genesis 4.

In Genesis 5 you will learn about faithful Enoch, who did not die, “because God took him away”, and Methuselah who lived for the longest time ever recorded.

But sin increased. Satan was always at work, and demonic forces may have been genetically involved with the advent of the strange beings called the Nephilim.

And Chapter 6 makes this frightening pronouncement that man's wickedness was now so great that “every inclination of his heart was only evil all the time”. Judgment was necessary. The earth would be purged with a great flood.

People today look at the suffering caused by cruelty and wickedness and ask why God doesn't do something about it. But not one of us is free of sin and selfishness and nastiness. If God dealt with it all by judgment, it would be “goodbye you and goodbye me”.

But he is a patient God of grace.

As you will see in Genesis 6, there was one man who desired to trust and obey God. “Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord”. Noah and his family together with pairs of animals for preservation were carried through the devastating flood to a new beginning.

Until that time, it is possible that rain had not fallen on earth, but (Genesis 2:6) underground streams came up and watered the earth. What a shock the deluge from above would be to the world's population if this were so!

We are told that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). It was over a year before the rain stopped and the ground dried sufficiently, and Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives were able to disembark.

A different world! A harder world with a new fear between humans and beasts. For the first time, humans were permitted to eat meat.

God established a covenant with Noah – to never again destroy the world by the waters of a flood. The sign of that covenant was the glorious rainbow which God now set in the sky – as you will see in Chapter 9.

How evil the world must have become to earn such judgment. But a warning is given to us by Jesus (Matthew 24:37) –

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man".

The earth will not be destroyed by flood but by fire (2 Peter 3:7). But again God will rescue those who are his, who trust in his name (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Genesis 10 is interesting. We are given the names of the descendants of Noah's sons, and the areas settled by the three main people groups. You might recognise some of the names – Nimrod, Canaan and Job etc. "From these clans of Noah, the nations spread out over the earth after the flood". (Genesis 10:32).

As people, who at this time all spoke one language, moved eastward, settlement was made in the plain of Shinar – that is, Babylonia. And now there entered a new epoch or development. People not only rebelled against God, they created gods of their own. These gods would operate according to the

minds of fallen humanity. People still passionately desired to “do their own thing”.

They built the city of Babel with a great tower reaching towards the sky – an observatory and a temple from which to worship the sun, moon and stars. But God.....Knowing the evil and grief that would be the consequences of such folly, “came down”. He confused the one language, so that instead of one, there were many languages. The building of the tower was abandoned, and the various language groups moved out, as Genesis 11:9 says, “across the face of the whole earth”.

Among the descendants of Shem, one of the sons of Noah, was a man named Abram, living in Babylonia in the city of Ur. (Shem’s descendants were known as Shemites – or Semites. This is the **Semitic** people group – and Jesus was Semitic by birth. This was and is his line humanly speaking).

The calling of Abram by God, and God’s new gracious work in reaching out to the world will be for another study.

But what a privilege to be given God’s word regarding our beginnings – to understand our failures, but to know that God still loves us and offers reconciliation and eternal life with him, our Creator Father, through the One promised in Genesis 3 – the seed of the woman who is the Son of God – Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came, he confirmed for us that Genesis 1-11 is God’s word of truth in every respect. He spoke of Abel and Noah as real people in real circumstances just as is recorded in Genesis.

The word of God the Father and God the Son, conveyed through the Holy Spirit, is the one unchanging word.

In our communities we are being endlessly presented with man-made truths. Atheist Stanley Fish said this – “There is no truth. There is only power, politics and persuasion – and whoever has these determines the truth”.

Indeed, this is the way an unbelieving world operates.

In Romans 1 we read that human beings do know that God exists, for God has made this plain through creation. But people repress that truth and their foolish hearts become darkened.

They are like C. S. Lewis, Oxford don, who claims that though he knew scripture and knew the gospel, he became an atheist because he **didn't like** "the God-system". He wanted self-rule and his own way. He wanted to *think* the way he wanted to think! But the Spirit of grace worked in him until he could not deny the truth any longer. As a most reluctant convert, he was dragged, he says, "kicking and screaming into the kingdom", whereupon he was **surprised by joy** – and he wrote a book with that title. It was after he received the truth, and salvation in Christ that he became the famous author of books that have blessed many.

Jesus Christ makes this promise in John 8:31and32 –
"If you continue in my word, then are you truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free".

We were born in Adam, but have been offered the gift of being "born again" – restored to our Maker and Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

How gracious of our God to preserve his word for us, and to give us the opportunity to study it – to learn from it and to encourage one another – to, "have the eyes of our hearts enlightened" as scripture says, so that we might know him more and more.

GOD BLESS YOU IN THE STUDY OF GENESIS 1 – 11!

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