

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 1



GENESIS: AN OVERVIEW

A. Why Study? CREDIBILITY in CONTROVERSY

The Goliath Principle: Accuracy, not stones, kills giants (do you know Goliath's soft spots?)

There can scarcely be another part of Scripture over which so many battles, theological, scientific, historical and literary, have been fought, or so many strong opinions cherished. This very fact is a sign of the greatness and power of the book, and of the narrow limits of both our factual knowledge and our spiritual grasp. -- Derek Kidner, *Genesis* p. 9 (emphasis added)

Commenting on Genesis, I have found my mood oscillating between elation and despair. I have been elated at the privilege of writing a commentary on such a central biblical text. I have been driven to despair by the impossibility of doing it justice, let alone dealing adequately with all that others have written about it. -- Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* p. ix

B. The Structure: A MATTER of EMPHASIS

The Goal -- Proportion of the two basic divisions. W. Graham Scroggie divides after ch. 11 (Primitive History/Patriarchal History; from chaos to creation to chaos; the beginning of the new creation). Parallel G. Campbell Morgan's 3 segments (generation/degeneration/regeneration).

The Generations

1. Introduction. -- The Creation. (1:1 to 2:3)
2. The Generations of the Heaven and the Earth. (2:4 to 4:26)
3. The Generations of Adam. (5:1 to 6:8)
4. The Generations of Noah. (6:9 to 9:29)
5. The Generations of the Sons of Noah. (10:1 to 11:9)
6. The Generations of Shem. (11:10-26)
7. The Generations of Terah. (11:27 to 25:11)
8. The Generations of Ishmael. (25:12-18)

9. The Generations of Isaac. (25:19 to 35:29)

10. The Generations of Esau. (36:1 to 37:1)

11. The Generations of Jacob. (37:2 to 50:26)

The Order -- ... with reference to the special arrangement of the "generations" recorded throughout the book of Genesis, it will be noticed that, so to speak, the side branches are always cut off before the main branch is carried onwards. Thus the history of Cain and of his race precedes that of Seth and his race; the genealogy of Japheth and of Ham that of Shem ... For the principle of election and selection, of separation and of grace, underlies from the first the whole history of the Covenant. -- Alfred Edersheim, *The World Before the Flood* p. xvi

The Larger Goal -- Finally, in reflecting on the contents of Genesis, it must never be forgotten that it is the first of a five- (or six-) volume work, the Pentateuch (Hexateuch). It gives the background to the history of the exodus from Egypt and the lawgiving at Sinai which are dealt with in great detail in Exodus-Deuteronomy. Whereas according to Genesis' own chronology the first book of the Pentateuch spans some two thousand years, the next four cover a mere one hundred and twenty. This helps to put Genesis into perspective. It does not stand on its own, but rather contains essential background for understanding those events which constituted the nation of Israel as the LORD's covenant people. It would therefore not be surprising to find adumbrations of the later national history in the story of the patriarchs. In turn, too, the primeval history (chaps. 1-11) must be seen in this perspective. It is also essentially preparatory in function and puts the patriarchs into their cosmic context. The God who called Abraham was no local divinity but the creator of the whole universe. The succession of catastrophes that befell humanity prior to Abraham's call show just why the election of Abraham, and in him, Israel, was necessary. -- Gordon J. Wenham, *op.cit.*, p. xxii

C. The Purpose: IS THAT WORD HOW, or WHO? IS GENESIS SCIENCE, or THEOLOGY?

God's Grace -- Divine electing grace dominates the book of GENESIS. Of Adam's sons, Cain drops out, and Seth is taken; of Noah's sons, Ham and Japheth drop out, and Shem is taken; of Terah's sons, Nahor and Haran drop out, and Abram is taken; of Abram's sons, Ishmael drops out, and Isaac is taken; of Isaac's sons, Esau drops out, and Jacob is taken; and of Jacob's sons, Judah is elected to be the line of the Messiah (chapter 49:10). Beneath and behind the historic redemption is the eternal election (Eph. 1:4). -- W.G. Scroggie, *Know Your Bible* Vol. 1, p. 22 (emphasis added)

Therefore, we ought not to doubt that The Creation of the World, as here described, was already known through the ancient and perpetual tradition of the Fathers. Yet, since nothing is more easy than that the truth of God should be so corrupted by men, that, in a long succession of time, it should, as it were, degenerate from itself, it pleased the Lord to commit the history to writing, for the purpose of preserving its purity. -- John Calvin, *Genesis* p. 59

God's Truth -- As the title clearly indicates, it is essentially and pre-eminently a book of origins; it deals with a number of characteristic "beginnings." It records the beginning of creation, of man, of woman, of the Sabbath, of marriage, of home, of childhood, of sin, of murder, of sacrifice, of grace, of trade, of agriculture, of city life, of races, of languages, and of the chosen people. In the light of its title and evident purpose it is worthy of notice that there are in particular seven important "beginnings" recorded and dealt with in this book:--

1. The beginning of the material universe, or the Sphere of the Divine revelation of grace.
2. The beginning of the human race, or the Subject of the Divine revelation of grace.
3. The beginning of human sin, or the Cause of the Divine revelation of grace.
4. The beginning of the divine redemption, or the Character of the Divine revelation of grace.
5. The beginning of the nations of the earth, or the Scope of the Divine revelation of grace.
6. The beginning of the Hebrew nation, or the Channel of the Divine revelation of grace.
7. The beginning of the life of faith and consecration, or the Outcome of the Divine revelation of grace.

The first four words form the keynote of the book, which is struck again and again through-out the record -- "In the beginning God." It is essentially a book where God is prominent and predominant, notwithstanding human wilfulness, wandering and wretchedness through sin. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis*, Vol. 1 pp. 6,7

Morgan finds beginnings of 7 sciences in Genesis: 1. theology 2. cosmology 3. anthropology 4. sociology 5. hamartiology 6. ethnology 7. soteriology -- *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible* p. 12

For a careful examination of the Biblical genealogies (Gen. 5 and 11) reveals that Adam lived till the time of Lamech; Lamech to the time of Shem; Shem to the time of Jacob; Jacob would, without a doubt, transmit what he knew to Joseph ... it seems utterly impossible that these men should have refrained from committing this valuable and reliable tradition to writing. -- **H.C. Leupold**, *Exposition of Genesis* Vol. 1 p. 8

God's faithfulness -- At the heart of this biblical history was God's **covenant**. It began with election -- God chose Israel through Abram. God's people could look back and see what God had done, and on the basis of that they could look forward to the fulfillment of the promises. -- **Allen P. Ross**, *Genesis* (in *BKC*) p. 20

The real theme of the Pentateuch is the selection of Israel from the nations and its consecration to the service of God and His laws in a divinely appointed land. The central event in the development of this theme is the divine covenant with Abraham and its ... promise to make his offspring into the people of God and to

give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance. -- **Moses Segal**, *The Pentateuch* p. 23

D. Confronting Unbelief: The "SIMPLE" TRUTH?

5 "stones" you'll need for Goliath (*Hard* ones):

1. Were the Genesis 1 days literally 24 hours?
2. How old are the earth and man?
3. What is the "Christian view" of evolution?
4. Do the various divine names in Genesis indicate multiple authorship?
5. Is the flood global, local or mythical?