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Lesson 1

The Book of Genesis

The study of the Bible by individual books is as important as it is fascinating. As we enter into the study of any book of the Bible, questions such as these should come to our minds at the very outset: What is the object of this book? What is its chief theme? Who wrote it? When was it written? How long a period of time does it cover? What relation does it bear to the Bible as a whole, and to the other books of the Bible? In the study of Genesis, answers to some of these questions will be found in the biblical text itself. The other questions are answered in the later comments of this lesson.

GUIDES AND HELPS FOR A SURVEY STUDY OF GENESIS

This is the time in one's study for the "skyscraper" or over-view survey of the book of Genesis. Leaf through the book first for casual observations, reading such things as (1) the first and last verses of each chapter, (2) headings at the top of the pages of your Bible indicating general contents, and (3) headings at the beginning of each chapter. In this process also your eye will fall upon different verses now and then that will give you the feel of the book you are studying. Now take a sheet of paper and list the numbers one through fifty (each representing a chapter of Genesis). For each chapter write down a word or phrase that would represent or suggest something of the contents of that chapter. Choose picturesque words, if possible. At times you may have to read a substantial portion of the chapter itself to get such a chapter title. After doing this for all fifty chapters, you will have a better grasp of the topics covered by the Genesis account.

Now try to answer these questions:

1. Contrast the first and last chapters of Genesis. Genesis goes from where to where?

2. In what chapter do the first names of the human race appear?

3. Name some of the major *characters* of Genesis.

4. Name some of the major *events* of Genesis.

5. From the events themselves, what do we learn of God? Of man?

You have been on your own in the study thus far. Now read the remainder of this lesson for further suggestions. Look up references whenever they are given.

I. *Name.* Genesis is the book of beginnings, as the word indicates. This word describes the relation that Genesis bears to the rest of the Bible. "Here in direct statement, or illustration, or type, all things material or moral are traced to their origin." Genesis has been called the "seed book of the Bible," the rest of the Bible just a blossoming out of the seed truths found there. Hence the importance of the book of Genesis.

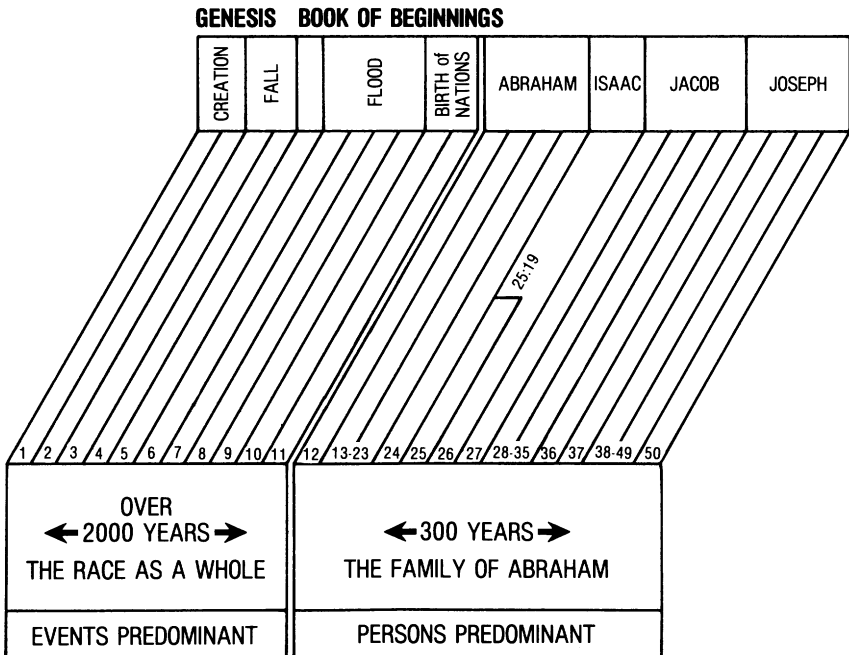
Some of the great beginnings in Genesis are:

1. the beginning of the created universe (Gen. 1:1)
2. the beginning of man (Gen. 1:27)
3. the beginning of the sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3)
4. the beginning of marriage (Gen. 2:22-24)
5. the beginning of sin (Gen. 3:6; cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 1 John 3:4)
6. the beginning of sacrifice or salvation (Gen. 3:21; cf. Isa. 61:10; Gen. 3:15)
7. the beginning of prophecy (Gen. 3:15)
8. the beginning of human government (Gen. 9:1-6)
9. the beginning of nations (Gen. 11)

10. the beginning of Israel, the chosen nation (Gen. 12:1-3).

In these days there are many theories as to the beginning of the universe, man, sin, nations, and so forth, but in Genesis we have God's account of their origin.

II. *The Structure of Genesis.* Use the accompanying chart of Genesis for a survey of its major structure, noting the following points:



1. Genesis has fifty chapters. Most of the numbered spaces in the accompanying chart represent a chapter each. Draw your own chart and fill in a title for each chapter.

2. The first eleven chapters of the book cover a period of a few millennia and give the history of the human race from Adam to Abraham (see history chart, p. 8). This period includes the first three dispensations of Innocence, Conscience, and Human Government (see chart of dispensations, p. 9).

3. Chapters 12 to 50 cover a period of about three hundred years and record the history of four of the great men of the nation of Israel, that is, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

4. Observe that there are two main sections in Genesis, the first dealing with the race as a whole (chaps. 1-11) and the second

dealing with the family of Abraham (chaps. 12-50). In the first section, *events* are the key subjects to remember. They are the creation, Fall, Flood, birth of nations. In the second section, *persons* are the key subjects to remember. They are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Learn the general chapter outline for these eight subjects. (Chap. 5, omitted from this outline, serves as a connector between the stories of the Fall and the Flood. Also note from the chart that the biographies of Abraham and Isaac meet in the middle of chap. 25.)

Events		Chapters	Persons		Chapters
1.	Creation	1-2	5.	Abraham	12-25
2.	Fall	3-4	6.	Isaac	25-26
3.	Flood	6-9	7.	Jacob	27-36
4.	Nations	10-11	8.	Joseph	37-50

III. *Writer.* Jewish tradition ascribes authorship of the first five books of the Bible to Moses. Christ explicitly ascribes the Pentateuch to Moses (Luke 24:44). The Jews divided the Old Testament into three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. See also how Christ frequently referred to different books as being written by Moses. (Cf. Matt. 8:3-4 with Lev. 14:3-4; Mark 12:26 with Ex. 3:26; Matt. 19:7-8 with Deut. 24:1-4).

IV. *Date.* Moses probably wrote Genesis during the latter half of the fifteenth century B.C. This date is based on two assumptions: (1) that he wrote the book after the Exodus from Egypt, and (2) that the Exodus took place around 1445 B.C.

V. *Geography.* In the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which record the history of the human race for the first two thousand years, the geographical location of places mentioned is not well defined; but beginning with the life of Abraham in chapter 12, every place mentioned should be located on the map (pp. 48-49). Do not neglect this. It will greatly enhance your interest in Bible study.

VI. *Prophecies.* There are three distinct prophecies of Christ in Genesis. They are as follows:

1. The Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15)
2. The Seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3)
3. The Seed of Judah (Gen. 49:10)

Observe that the first of these prophecies is general. It simply states that the coming Saviour of the world was to belong to the human family. The third prophecy is more explicit and points out the tribe from which Christ was to come. As we read on through the other books of the Old Testament, other prophecies tell the details of Christ's person and work so minutely that when Christ came and fulfilled exactly all these prophecies, there was abso-

lutely no excuse for failing to recognize Him as the Saviour, promised from the day sin entered the world.

VII. *Types of Christ*. "A type is a divinely purposed illustration of some truth. It may be (1) a person (Rom. 5:14); (2) an event (1 Cor. 10:11); (3) a thing (Heb. 10:20); (4) an institution (Heb. 9:11); (5) a ceremonial (1 Cor. 5:7). Types occur most frequently in the Pentateuch, but are found, more sparingly, elsewhere. The antitype, or fulfillment of the type, is found usually in the New Testament" (C.I. Scofield).

SOME OF THE GREAT TYPES IN GENESIS

Things as Types	Persons as Types
1. Light	1. Adam
2. Coats of skin	2. Melchizedek
3. Ark	3. Isaac
4. Ladder	4. Joseph

VIII. *Progressive revelation in Genesis*. The Bible as one book is a progressive revelation, each book taking the reader one step further in the unfolding of God's character, His plans and purposes, His will and desires. Likewise, within each book of the Bible is a progressive revelation. Refer to the chart of Genesis, page 14. The eight main subjects of the book indicate a progression in the revelation of God's attributes, thus:

Creation. Chapters 1 and 2 reveal to us the *power* and *wisdom* of God. If we knew nothing of Him except what we learn in these first two chapters, we would know He is all-powerful and all-wise to create this universe and so marvelously fit this world for the habitation of man (cf. Ps. 19:1-6).

Fall. Chapters 3 and 4 reveal to us the *love* and *mercy* of God who, when the human race disobeyed His command and rebelled against His sovereignty, came seeking them and provided a way by which they could regain their lost estate.

Flood. Chapters 6 to 9 reveal the *justice* and *holiness* of God. Sin is abhorrent to Him. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin. He must punish sin.

Nations. Chapters 10 and 11 reveal the *sovereignty* of God. He is King. He rules the world. He has power over all mankind. He will be obeyed.

Abraham's life. Chapters 12 to 25 show forth God as *Saviour*, unfolding His redemptive plan in the creation of an elect nation.

Isaac's life. Chapters 25 and 26 show forth God's *faithfulness*, in the fulfillments during Isaac's life of His promises concerning Israel.

Jacob's life. Chapters 27 to 36 show forth God's *grace*, His "unmerited favor." Jacob did not merit any favor from God. He had no claim, either by right of birth or character, to the blessings he received, yet all through his life God showered him with blessings.

Joseph's life. Chapters 37 to 50 show the *providence* of God, how He watches over His own, guards them from evil, makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. He manipulates everything, making the most likely and the most unlikely circumstances minister to the working out of His great purposes for His people.

SUMMARY

The survey study of Genesis unfolds truths just as interesting as they are grand. Some of the more prominent ones are:

1. A *contrast*: the impersonal record of the divine creation of the universe and the personal record of the parents of the human race and their sin.
2. A *progression*: a progressive revelation of the nature of God.
3. A *particularization*: describing first the race as a whole, then the chosen family of Abraham.
4. A *projection*: the beginnings of things, peoples, behaviors, and so on, with prophecies as to the future outcomes.