

Genesis

Part 1 – A Christian Book

Genesis 1

Genesis is a Christian book. It tells us who God is and what he is like. It tells us of the origins of the cosmos and the special creation of mankind. In Genesis we learn what it means to be human, male and female in the image of God. We also learn about sin, its consequences, and its final remedy.



Genesis is properly understood only in light of the entire Bible. Genesis records the most tragic event in the history of the world; the rebellion of the man and woman against their Maker (chap. 3). It tells how their sin brought decay and death, not only to them, but to the entire created order. It tells how sin drove a wedge of enmity between God and humanity. But Genesis also points us to God's gracious determination to save for himself a vast multitude of rebels through the most precious Sacrifice (**3:15**). The heart-breaking third chapter of Genesis points us forward to the final chapter of the Bible where not only sin-ruined people but the entire cosmos will be redeemed. The tree of life will be restored providing healing to the nations. Sin and death will be vanquished. And at the center of it all will be the Object of all the longings of the redeemed. The Triune God will reign over his healed and tearless people forever and ever.

1. Genesis was given at the right time

Genesis was penned some 1500 years before the birth of Christ. Its composition took place during the Exodus wanderings after the Hebrews had been delivered from hundreds of years of captivity in Egypt. Surely, after generations in a pagan land steeped in polytheism, God's people were in need of instruction. Genesis was God's way of introducing himself to these formerly enslaved heirs of the covenant of grace.

In Genesis God gave written revelation to his people in order that they might know something of their Creator. Beginning as early as the opening words of the creation account the veil over God's mysterious eternal and Triune nature is lifted just enough to offer his finite people a glimpse. In this book of beginnings God reveals his power, love, and justice. He reveals himself to be unchanging, everywhere present, gracious, and eternally faithful to his promises.

God also used Genesis to teach his people what it meant to be human. They learned in Genesis that they were the product of a special and supernatural act of creation. They were made from the dust of the earth and therefore shared certain creaturely characteristics with members of the animal kingdom. However, the man and woman were not simply a higher order of animal. Only God's human creatures are stamped with his image (**1:26-27**). Man and woman are rational, moral, and worshipping beings unique from anything else in all creation. This understanding of humanity would be necessary as God led his people into the land occupied by the Canaanites where such abominations as child sacrifice and all manner of fornication were practiced routinely.

2. Genesis was written by the best Author

- Genesis was written by Moses, author of *The Pentateuch*, the first five books of the Bible. How wonderfully fitting that the great deliverer of God's people would be the one to write the opening section of holy Scripture. Moses would become the great paradigm of the divinely supplied deliverer throughout the Old Testament. Likewise, the deliverance from Egypt became the great paradigm of salvation throughout the Old Testament.
- Of course, any time we consider the human writers we must remember to keep in mind that the Bible's ultimate Author is God. Scripture came by way of inspiration (**2 Timothy 3:16**). The doctrine of the Bible's inspiration teaches us that the Holy Spirit "carried along" (**1 Peter 1:21**) the human writers in such a way

that what they wrote was just as God intended. This is not to be understood as some sort of trance or ecstatic experience but rather a fully rational movement of the Spirit of God so that the background, skills, and personalities of the authors were preserved in the writing.

- The Christ-centeredness of Scripture witnesses to its Divine origins. Christ is announced as early as Genesis 3:15 when God promised the coming of one who, though struck, will nevertheless crush the serpent's head. This is the first gospel announcement in the Bible. And from Genesis 3:15 onward the Bible tells the story of how God fulfilled that promise through the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the story of fulfillment begins immediately in Genesis chapter four.
- The doctrine of the Bible's inspiration therefore carries with it the implication that the Bible is trustworthy, without error and a powerful means by which God sanctifies his people.
- The Divine inspiration of Scripture ensures that it transcends time and culture. The creation myths of Egypt and Canaan have passed away in the mists of time, being obvious derivatives of their particular moment in history and culture of origin. How different is the Genesis account! It has transcended thousands of years, thousands of languages and innumerable cultural moments.

3. Genesis proclaims the greatest news

- Genesis is a Christian book because it tells us what God is like, what it means to be human, what went wrong, and what God will do to redeem it.

a. There is only One God

- The opening words of Genesis assumes two things: 1) that God *is*, and 2) that there is only one God. That God is, does not need to be proven. Unbelievers have not arrived at their atheism by the weight of evidence. Rather, unbelief is a stubborn sin. Men choose to reject God not because he has not proven himself to be but because men prefer their sin and self-worship to the truth and the worship of God.
- That there is only one God means that humanity does not need to run about seeking to please a multiplicity of gods who rule various spheres and require competing loyalties. The world of polytheism is a world of endless legalism; a never ending spiritual treadmill. The gods of the pagans bore a striking resemblance to their human servants. They possessed power but no limitless power. They could be capricious and even cruel. They fought among themselves, engaged in sex, and at times did not keep their word.
- The God who reveals himself in Genesis is unlike his human creatures. The difference between the Maker and mankind is not simply one of degree but one of essence.

b. Mankind is precious but broken

- In Genesis chapter one we read how God created the man from the dust of the earth. Later he created the woman from the raw material of the man. The man and the woman, like the animals, were created beings. But unlike the animals, the man and woman were stamped with the image of God. They were endowed with rationality and morality. They were given the capacity to know, relate to, and worship God. There is nothing in all the vast expanse of the universe which bears such dignity. And yet Genesis tells us why there is so much wrong in the world. It traces all of this world's decay and death back to the sin of the man and the woman (**chap. 3**). As precious as humanity is, we are broken; deeply damaged by our sin and the sin of Adam. All violence, hate, disease, moral corruption, and death itself may be traced back to the sin of mankind.

c. There is a Redeemer

- "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (**Romans 6:23**). God promised the man and woman that should they choose to sin, they would surely die. And though God showed mercy by sparing their lives on that awful day, they, along with everything else, began to die. Death entered the cosmos and paradise was lost. Or so it seemed. For God, not willing to abandon his precious people, made a way for them to be redeemed. God announced this promised salvation as he pronounced curses upon the serpent. Even as death and decay entered the human family, so too, from the line of the woman would arise a Redeemer who would suffer our curse in our place. By his triumph over the Devil and death redemption would come to the innumerable multitude of God's people.