

Genesis : Review and Preview

If you are new or visiting; *a special warm welcome to you.* We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

Last year we began a study into Genesis. Understanding Genesis is essential to understanding the rest of the Bible. There are 2 main ways of subdividing the book of Genesis. Academics use the Hebrew word *toledot* or the Greek word *geneseos* translated "This is the account of..." in the NIV at the end of 9 major sections that probably notate the source of preceding details.

Chapters	The account of..	Event
1:1-2:4	..the heavens and earth	Creation
2:5-5:1	..Adam	The fall
5:1-6:9	..Noah	Antediluvians
6:10-10:1	..Noah's sons	The Flood
10:1-11:10	..Shem	Babel
11:10-27	..Terah	Semites
10:28-25:9	..Isaac	Abraham
25:20-37:1	..Jacob	Isaac and Jacob
37:2-Ex1:1	..Jacob's sons	Jacob and Joseph

A second simpler outline is to divide the book into 2 sections with 4 subsections relating to the key events and people described.

Primeval History		4 outstanding events	
	1-2	Creation	God's eternal priority
	3-5	The Fall	God's moral authority
	6-9	The Flood	God's judicial severity
	10-11	The Babel Crisis	God's governmental supremacy
Patriarchal History		4 outstanding people	
	11-25	Abraham	Supernatural call
	24-27	Isaac	Supernatural birth
	27-38	Jacob	Supernatural care
	37-50	Joseph	Supernatural control

Review

Genesis is a controversial book. Even Christians, influenced by modern atheistic humanistic ideas question the validity of the book, especially the first 11 chapters. Can we really trust this ancient document that claims to be the Word of God, when so much of modern science makes claims that clearly contradict the Bible? Ultimately, it is a test of faith. Either we believe that the description of the beginning of the universe and early human history given in the Bible is true, or the opinions of men based on the changing views of science provide the real description of the earliest events of this world. Either way, it is a matter of faith. "By faith, we understand that the world was formed at God's command.." (Heb 11:3). Or by faith I believe that the current and future explanations of modern science will provide the best explanation of how life came to be. The first chapters of Genesis give an explanation of many of the things we observe in our world (evil, gender wars, 7 day week, why we wear clothes, languages, millions of fossils etc). Does secular humanism based on scientism provide equally valid explanations for these things? What we believe will make a profound difference to how we live. For if this world is a consequence of a huge explosion of nothing that self generated the complexity of everything we see, then we are a cosmic accident, with no value or purpose. Without God, there is no purpose to life.

Attempts to compromise will only produce conflict, for the 2 worldviews are ultimately opposed. An example is the 2 views of death. The Bible teaches that this world was created perfect by God, with no evil and no death. But with the fall, when the first man and woman disobeyed God, sin and death came into the world, distorting the whole creation and it's relationship with

the creator. Humanism, based on scientism, teaches that this world evolved from nothing and that death has always been part of life. Sin is part of normal human behaviour and can be justified. There are no consequences of sin beyond death, for once you are dead, that is the end and there is no ultimate purpose in life. But God's Word gives a message of hope in the gospel with the promise of life beyond death.

Just as creation established God's eternal priority – he has always existed, before creation, the fall of man established God's moral authority. Man's sin was to desire to be like God as the determiner of right and wrong. But ultimately, it is God who is always right and the ultimate judge. In the flood, we see that God exercised that right to judge sin. There is nowhere in the world that evidence of the flood in the fossil record cannot be found. But even after such a great demonstration of God's judgement, man determined to make a name for himself at the tower of Babel and the language and racial differences became apparent with the scattering of mankind across the planet.

One wonders why at the end of chapter 11 that God did not give up. Nearly 2000 years of human history had shown the extent of the rebellion against God, but through it all, God had a plan, formulated even before creation. No event had been unexpected. Plan A was still on track. And now, a few hundred years after the flood and tower of Babel, the restoration and reconciliation part of the plan was to happen when God chose a man.

Preview

There have been many occasions in human history where God "took a risk" in human terms, to hang everything in the future on one person. This point was one of them. That man, immersed in an increasingly godless and pagan society was called by God to form a nation, based only on promises, few of which he ever saw fulfilled. He gives a glimpse for all subsequent humanity to see what God is looking for. It is not the human values of beauty, brain or brawn, but simple trust that what God promises, He will fulfil. Abraham demonstrates that God's choice is sovereign and by grace alone, but our response is based on faith and obedience. Subsequent generations in the rest of Genesis reinforce these values. Isaac as a second generation of the promise does not stand as tall as his father, and Jacob, in the third generation was a cheat and deceiver, but valued the promise above his older brother and despite his crooked dealings, shows the importance of grace and faith. And Joseph, one of his 12 sons gives another perspective of the sovereignty of God in events that seem beyond our control. While this early history focuses on 4 people, it ultimately demonstrates that human history is His (God's) story.

Lessons for today

1. Can I really believe the truth of the Bible when it is in conflict with the current views of our secular, humanist society? How many times have events in God's word been ridiculed, only to be found later on that the Bible was right after all? How many times have current scientific understanding been shown by later research to be wrong? Ultimately, who can I trust? God's revealed Word that never changes or man's current and changing opinion?
2. How big is your God? Does the sovereignty of God extend from the overall plan for human history to the individual events of my personal life that will all glorify him? Or am I just a pawn in a huge cosmic chess match between powers that are beyond my understanding? Genesis reveals that God is concerned with small details of our lives and introduces the concept of grace.
3. Never doubt the patience of God. All through human history, God's longsuffering and delay has been taken as evidence for his non-existence. But as this book tells us, God's sovereign plan is being worked out, even in the bad things that will eventually bring him glory.