



## **UNIT 1 - INTRODUCING THE OLD TESTAMENT**

### **LESSON 2**

#### **THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

##### **STUDY PASSAGE: Genesis 1-11**

The first 11 chapters of Genesis is often referred to as the "Prologue" to the whole Bible.

Genesis, as we have noted, means "Beginning". This book is concerned with the beginning of many things:

1. The beginning of the world (chapters 1-2).  
This includes the origin of the world; the beginning of night and day; the origin of life and, in particular, of human life; and the institution of the Sabbath.
2. The beginning of sin (chapter 3).  
Not only is sin introduced, but also child-bearing, clothing and agriculture in the face of difficulties caused by needs.
3. The beginning of sacrifice; the beginning of murder; the beginning of population growth (chapters 4-5).
4. The beginning of God's covenant with man, seen in God's dealings with Noah and his family (chapters 6-10). Incidentally, we are told of the origin of rain and the rainbow.
5. The origin of different languages (chapter 11:1-26).
6. The beginning of God's revelation of Himself, and call to one chosen family (chapter 11:27-32).

The first 11 chapters also tell us many things about God and humans.

##### **WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD**

1. Creation : Genesis 1 & 2
  - a) God is independent of creation (transcendent). He is not like other gods, who were dependent on the cycle of nature.
  - b) God created all (even Satan).
  - c) God took pleasure in what he created. Everything he created was good and this is an indication of his character.



2. The Fall : Genesis 3

- a) God is willing to enter into fellowship with humans.
- b) God is holy and cannot tolerate sin.
- c) God is merciful. Already there are hints of redemption.

3. Cain and Abel : Genesis 4 & 5

In this, we see how God views action against fellow humans:

- a) God views it as sin.
- b) God is pleased by the attitude of the worshipper, rather than the gift.

4. The Flood : Genesis 6-10

- a) God has a longsuffering nature, but he is holy and cannot tolerate sin. He is merciful and will make a way out.
- b) He is a God who makes covenants. Covenants are a key means which God uses throughout the whole "drama of redemption", which is the Bible.

5. Tower of Babel : Genesis 11:1-26

This story again shows the holiness and mercy of God.

## WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT HUMANS

1. Creation

- a) Humans are creatures.
- b) They are completely dependent on the Creator.
- c) Humans are unique because they are made in the image of God. His uniqueness is shown in the following ways:
  - i) They are self-conscious; (i.e. aware of themselves as individuals. Other animals give no evidence of being self-aware.
  - ii) They have the power of moral choice.
  - iii) Humans have a spiritual capacity.
  - iv) Humans have dominion ("lordship") in creation. They are to be managers, not owners, of the rest of creation.



2. The Fall

- a) Humans are moral beings. They are responsible for their actions and not confined to instincts.
- b) Humans are rebels from the beginning.
- c) Humans are now alienated from God, which is not how God intended them to be.

3. Cain and Abel

Humans are alienated from God. They are rebels and murderers.

4. The Flood

Humans are people who ignore God. They are rebels and murderers.

5. Tower of Babel

Humans are rebels. They are presumptuous - presuming to be God himself.

Considerable controversy has raged over the interpretation of Genesis 1-11, particularly in the light of scientific advance during the past century. Many Christians read these events as literal portrayals of the way in which God created the earth and man, and the way in which man fell into sin. There would be many however, who interpret these stories as parables, presenting truth in picture language.

But in fact, these early chapters of Genesis are historical, in that they bear witness to events which actually took place. The world was created; man and woman were made in God's image; the fall did take place in time. The problem is the degree of symbolism used in describing these events. On this, opinions will continue to vary considerably.

Some of the different theories about the story of Creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, are as follows:

1. It is a literal account of creation in 6 days.
2. It gives a sequence of 6 days of instruction. A man of God (to whom God came in 6 successive days) was told to write various facts. On the first day he wrote the facts recorded as Day 1. On the second day God came again and he recorded the second lot of facts as Day 2, etc.
3. It is an account of a general sequence of events. Each day is a period of time and is poetically called a day.
4. It is a Hymn of Creation for use in worship at a Jewish New Year festival. On each day of the 6 day festival they would sing another certain portion.
5. It is a poem in which the "day" motif gives a form to the passage, with no meaning for each day.



The aim of the Biblical story of creation is to set forth praise of God's handiwork, not to describe the process. The essential point of the story is that God created everything.

The important point to remember is that Genesis is not a scientific textbook about how the world began. It is a theological explanation of origins, telling all men that though they may explain origins in scientific terms by theories of evolution and natural selection, from a Biblical viewpoint, man's origin is in God.

### **QUESTIONS**

#### **Question 1:**

Why is the first book of the Bible called "Genesis"? Explain this, giving examples.

#### **Question 2:**

What can we learn about humans in Genesis 1 & 2?

#### **Question 3:**

What, in your opinion, is the purpose of the record of creation in Genesis 1 & 2?

#### **Question 4:**

What can we learn about God in Genesis 3?

#### **Question 5:**

What does the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-26) teach us?

#### **QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:**

What have you learned about both God and humans through the story of the Flood (Genesis 6-10)? What aspects particularly relate to you?