

## Notes on the Book of Genesis

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### Its Place in the Old Testament:

The Old Testament is made up of thirty-nine books. They are divided into four groups:

- (1) The Law: Genesis through Deuteronomy (five books).
- (2) History: Joshua through Esther (twelve books).
- (3) Poetry: Job through the Song of Solomon (five books).
- (4) Prophecy: Isaiah through Malachi (seventeen books).

### Its Importance:

Genesis is the foundational book of the Old Testament. It is the book of beginnings. Without it we could not understand the rest of the Bible. It has been stated by many who have diligently studied the Scriptures that there is nothing in the other books of the Bible which does not have its roots in Genesis. Therefore, its importance can hardly be overemphasized.

(Over) →

### The Writer:

Although Moses was not born until after the events recorded in Genesis had been concluded, yet because of his access to certain written records, oral tradition, and special revelations from God, Moses was sovereignly directed by the Spirit of God in writing this book.

Both the Old and New Testaments in addition to ancient tradition and Jewish history have been in absolute agreement in considering The Law (called The Torah by the Jews) as the books of Moses. Many examples could be cited. Two from the Gospel of Luke are very conclusive. In two verses in Luke 24 we have the Old Testament referred to in its entirety. In both of them the first five books of the Bible are not referred to as The Law, but in verse 27 Luke writes, "And beginning at Moses." In verse 44 he refers to "the law of Moses." To the disciples both of these expressions included Genesis.

### The Date and Place of Writing:

We cannot give either of these with absolute certainty.

We do know that Moses lived about 1500 B.C. It seems possible that the decision of Moses recorded in Hebrews 11:24-26 was reached as a result of becoming acquainted with the truth and history which he recorded in Genesis. Thus, he could have been writing Genesis at that time, before his flight into Midian, or during the forty years of his exile.

From such passages as Exodus 17:14 it would seem that Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were written as the events recorded in them took place. If so, it is reasonable to believe that Genesis must have been written beforehand. However, we can only speculate about these details concerning Genesis.

### The Purpose:

It seems fair to say that the book of Genesis has come under such great attacks because so many have failed to discover the purpose of the book. It is not a book of science, but where it touches scientific subjects it is absolutely trustworthy. Nor is it a book of comprehensive history, even though the

### Its Importance (continued):

Because the book of Genesis (and the whole Bible for that matter) is a book of doctrine, or teaching, it is important to understand the place that Genesis has in the Bible doctrinally.

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, but it is not a book of endings. We are introduced here to the doctrine of God, of man, of sin, of salvation, and many, many more, but these doctrines are not completed in this book. Therefore, it is important to recognize that from Genesis on to the end of the New Testament doctrine progresses from incompleteness to completeness, not from inaccurate to accurate. Genesis does not give us a completed doctrinal statement, but what it does say is absolutely reliable. Nothing of doctrinal significance which is found in Genesis is ever contradicted any place else in the Bible.

It is important to recognize these facts so that we will not pass hasty judgment on the book of Genesis if it does not include all that we think it should. We can be sure that it includes all that God intended for it to include.

history which it records is completely reliable.

The purpose of the book of Genesis harmonizes with the purpose of the entire Bible. Why did God give us His Word? The answer to this question can only be found by reading the Scriptures. As we read we will discover that the Bible gives us the history of redemption from start to finish. In Genesis we have the foundations of that history. We learn from Genesis about the creation of the world, and most importantly about the creation of man. We learn that he was created innocent of sin. We also see how he became a sinner, and how this affected the whole human race. Then we see how God moved in the affairs of men and nations, especially with the descendants of Abraham, to provide a Saviour for the world. Genesis does not tell the whole story, but it tells the beginning.

### The Plan of the Book:

The events of the book of Genesis are built around three chapters: 1, 3, and 12.

In chapter 1 we have creation. In chapter 3 we have Adam's sin. From chapter 3 through chapter 11 we see the ever-increasing effect of sin upon the people who lived in those days. By the end of chapter 11 the evidence is overwhelming that man is helplessly held in the grip of sin, and hopelessly alienated from God.

The first eleven chapters are fragmentary, clearly introductory, fast-moving, and cover as much history as the rest of the Old Testament! When we reach chapter 12 the history slows down, details increase, and we begin to discover that we have reached the main purpose for which the book was written.

Chapters 12 through 50 deal with four men in one family: a father, his son, his grandson, and his great grandson. They are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In chapter 12 God gives Abraham a promise. It is this: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3b). In Galatians 3:8 the Apostle Paul gives us the divine significance of this promise when he writes, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (i.e., the Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Therefore, God's call to Abraham, and God's purpose for the descendants of Abraham, were clearly to provide a Saviour for all men. We have the unfolding of this plan in Genesis 12 through 50.

### Genesis and The Dispensations:

In studying the Word of God it is apparent that God has had different arrangements in dealing with men. Quite obviously God's relationship with Adam before he sinned was very different from the period after Adam's sin. We call these different arrangements which prevailed at different times in human history, dispensations.

There are four dispensations in Genesis.

The first is called Innocence. It includes the time from the creation of man until he sinned against the will of God in the garden of Eden.

The second is called Conscience. It extends from the time man was put out of the garden until God destroyed the earth by the flood in the days of Noah.

The third is called Human Government. This dispensation covers that period of history from the flood to the dispersion of men from the tower of Babel.

The fourth and last dispensation that we have in Genesis is the beginning of the dispensation of Israel. This goes all of the way from the call of Abraham completely through the earthly ministry of Christ in the New Testament, including His resurrection and ascension.

The significance of these dispensations will be pointed out in studying the book of Genesis, but it is important to recognize them at the beginning.

The Outline:

- I. Creation (Gen. 1, 2).
- II. The Degeneration of the Human Race (Gen. 3-11).
  - A. The Original Sin of Man (Gen. 3).
  - B. The Sons of Adam (Gen. 4).
  - C. The Genealogy of Noah (Gen. 5).
  - D. Noah and The Flood (Gen. 6-9).
  - E. The Division of the Human Race into Nations (Gen. 10, 11).
- III. The Revelation of God's Redemptive Work - through the family of Abraham (Gen. 12-50).
  - A. Abraham (12-24).
  - B. Isaac (25-27).
  - C. Jacob (28-36).
  - D. Joseph (37-50).

In considering the divisions of the book of Genesis it should also be noted that there is an expression, "generations," which is employed by Moses to indicate the divisions of the book in another way:

- (1) Introduction (1:1-2:3).
- (2) The Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth (2:4-4:26).
- (3) The Generations of Adam (5:1-6:8).
- (4) The Generations of Noah (6:9-9:29).
- (5) The Generations of the Sons of Noah (10:1-11:9).
- (6) The Generations of Shem (11:10-26).
- (7) The Generations of Terah (11:27-25:11).
- (8) The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18).
- (9) The Generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29).
- (10) The Generations of Esau (36:1-37:1).
- (11) The Generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26).

"Generations" means descendants, but probably also effects, or results, emphasizing that which resulted from the lives of those who are so mentioned.