

“Then Jesus answered and said to them,... ‘You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;

And These Are They Which Testify of Me

Sermons on Genesis

Chapters 1-3

God—Giver of Life

With Study Questions

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Introduction

Focus on Redemption

You'll forgive me if during our study of Genesis, I refrain from straining at gnats. There seems to be so much controversy surrounding the book, that the church, in its noble and necessary defense against detractors, has abdicated presenting the redemptive message contained in the first book of the Bible.

Our goal presently will be to highlight the aspects of the book which placard Christ, who speaking of the Old Testament explained, "**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me**" (John 5:39). Over and against Genesis being a narrative on the history of the world, it is a narrative of the person and work of Jesus.

I would like to avoid the minutia and controversy, and present the law of God and the gospel of Christ, lest our efforts be similar to my recent visit to the fast-food drive through. I gave my order and paid my money only to realize, when I was half way home, that I forgot to pick up my food. There is food in Genesis. So let us "**taste and see that the LORD is good**" (Psalm 34:8).

Approaching Genesis

At the same time I don't wish skirt the issues altogether, so I will seek to employ the following formula. First, I will address the points of difficulty with a brief answer. Second, I will give some explanation on the points of emphasis. Most of this will be the way other texts (mainly New Testament texts) use the narrative. It must be our assumption that the Apostle Paul's use of Genesis is to be respected in the highest degree. Third, it is my prayer that we might see the primary redemptive message contained in the each story. For example, the main reason for the creation account, the story of Cain and Abel, Noah, Babel, etc.

In order to achieve this (and not spend 5000 pages or 15 years in the process), we must cover large portions of Scripture in relatively short periods of time. Unlike Romans, Genesis doesn't have doctrine in every verse. I will, therefore, trust in you to be reading Genesis on your own, so you'll be somewhat familiar with the topics discussed. I will paraphrase and summarize with an assumption that you're familiar with the text. As a pastor and a teacher I assume a great deal of responsibility for the souls under my instruction. But each man and woman ultimately stands before God as an individual, responsible for how they have handled His word, as Paul writes, "**Therefore we make it our aim,**

whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:9,10).

Now that I have been duly comforted by that disclaimer, let us proceed.

I. Creation (1:1-1:31)

It should be no mystery to us that chapter one of Genesis is the creation account. In summary, day one God created light; day two God created the firmament; day three God created dry land, grass, herbs, trees, fruit, seed; day four God created the sun, moon and stars; day five God created sea creatures and birds; day six God created living creatures, cattle, creeping things, beasts and man.

Points of Difficulty—Gap Theories

In verses one and two God creates the heaven and earth out of nothing. It is an unformed mass from which God will mold His creation. Herein lies a million pages of debate. Let's seek to handle them all in a paragraph or two. The well-known gap theory postulates a pre-Adamic race, rule by Satan, existed between verses one and two¹. The Day-Age theory views the days in Genesis as metaphorical rather than twenty-four hour days². The Literal-Day-With-Gaps Theory views the days a literal twenty-four hour days separated by long periods of time³. The Revelatory Day Theory⁴ asserts that creation was revealed in six days rather than performed in six days. There is also the very popular Framework Hypothesis which asserts non-literal and non-sequential days of creation.⁵

Answering the Theories

Answering, or even presenting, these theories properly is impossible if we wish to stick to our commitment of avoiding minutia. I will seek to briefly answer these theories (I am sure unsatisfactorily to their proponents) with three responses:

First, church history. Westminster Confession, Chapter IV states,

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the

¹ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison* (Baker Book House, 1976), p. 43.

² Davis, p. 52.

³ Davis, p. 53.

⁴ Davis, p. 53.

⁵ *The Genesis Debate*, (Cruxpress, 2001), p. 219.

world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.

Of course, proponents of these views can find advocates in history as well, perhaps even Augustine, but they are an extreme minority.

Second, dubious science. Many of these theories have found momentum in the past hundred years due to scientific theories on the age of the universe. Science, prides itself on pursuing objective truth based upon a method of that which is testable, measurable, observable and repeatable. Of course the method defies itself, since it can't stand under its own criteria. But more importantly, and germane to our topic, the theory of a 500 million year old universe can not be proven. It, therefore, is not properly a theory but a hypothesis. Things are passing for scientific fact which, in reality, are mere conjecture.

Finally, the words of Moses when giving the Ten Commandments, **“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11).**

I personally have found that all theories which purport creation in something other than six literal days have been strained exegesis at best.

Light

Less pressing is explaining how light was created before the sun and moon. The answer is quite simple. God doesn't need the sun in order for there to be light. Calvin explains that we ought not, **“...tie down the power of God to those instruments, the agency of which he employs.”**⁶ Simply because God has chosen to use the sun (and luminescence of the moon) to supply light, does not mean He is dependent upon them.

Firmament

Firmament would be the atmosphere. Some argue a canopy theory, where atmosphere is between two bodies of water. Others say the outer body of water may be merely clouds. All are guesses and theories. God created the atmosphere.

Points of Emphasis

Creation—Good and Uniform

One points of emphasis in chapter one is the repeated theme that the creation God made was good, very good. God is not the author of evil. All evil in the world falls under the responsibility of men and their willingness to sin. We see the uniformity of nature (seed after its kind). Something all scientists,

⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Genesis* (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 76.

farmers and auto mechanics take for granted. If I plant corn, corn will grow. Righty tighty left loosey, yesterday, today and forever.

Man—Image of God, Dominion, Multiply

Man is made in the image of God. Calvin may have put this best,

“Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated, and truly excelled in everything good.”⁷

Man is also given dominion over all creation. God gives men responsibility for the created order—a commission which still stands. Man is to fill the earth. Over and against all the over-population propaganda, children are to be considered a blessing and not a burden.

Primarily—God is Worthy

Arguably, the primary redemptive message contained in Genesis one can be found in the last book of the Bible. In Revelation 4:11 when the twenty-four elders cast down their crowns before the throne of God, their song is,

“You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

God created all things, including man, therefore everything belongs to Him and He deserves glory, honor and power. Genesis one establishes the primacy of God as creator and all other things as His creation. It is the starting point of all that is honest and reasonable.

II. A Supplementary Account

In Genesis two we see God resting and a supplementary account of creation. The sabbath is discussed; God forms man from dust; Eden (with a prohibition of eating from a certain tree) is discussed; Man names all the animals; God forms woman from man.

⁷ Calvin, p. 95.

Points of Difficulty—Rest, Eat Not

In what respect does God rest. He rests from His creative work, certainly not from maintaining His creation. Why does God prohibit eating from a certain tree? Without launching into an argument on the problem of evil (evil which, by the way, is impossible to objectively call evil apart from the existence of God) the prohibition was quite perfect. There is nothing inherently evil with eating fruit. Therefore, the test was one of pure obedience.

Points of Emphasis—Dust, Garden, Helper, No Shame

We learn in this chapter that man is from dust, which inspired Calvin to write of man that, “**He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility.**”⁸ Even in his unfallen state, man was to work (as Adam was to tend the garden.) We see the early revelation of the roles of men and women—the woman being the man’s helper, a helper for whom he is to forsake all others and cleave. They were naked and not ashamed. Generally, it is a bad dream where we find ourselves naked in public. Those who feel no shame in this condition certainly haven’t obtained the purity of Adam and Eve but are either mad or shameless.

Primarily—Edenic

In this supplementary account of creation we learn that God creates the perfect environment. Eden has become a catch phrase for ultimate happiness. In this chapter we hear for the first time in the history of creation, God said, “It is not good...” But God rectifies man’s solitude and provides a suitable helper. It is the setting for chapter three.

III. The Fall

In the third chapter of Genesis we read of the fall of man; the first form of the gospel is revealed; the curses accompanying the fall; and the closing of Eden.

Points of Difficulty—Talking Serpent, Fall Attributed to Adam

Similarly to Balaam’s ass, no doubt not speaking of its own wisdom or accord, but miraculously, Satan spoke through a serpent. To those who unscientifically presuppose the impossibility of the miraculous, this is impossible. But of course, God in no way denies Himself by allowing Satan to speak through serpent.

⁸ Calvin, p. 111.

Perhaps more challenging to us is why the fall is attributed to Adam (Romans 5:12-20) rather than Eve who first ate. A reasonable, and perhaps necessary, answer is one of federal headship. Jesus, as our federal head, died for our sins and was punished for our iniquity, though He Himself was without sin. The head takes responsibility for the body. Similarly, even though Eve sinned (and it responsible for her own sin) Adam was responsible for Eve, and the fall which followed.

Points of Emphasis—God’s Word, Shame, Gospel, Curse, Skin Over Leaves

The fall of man starts with a fast and loose handling of God’s word. “Has God indeed said...” come from mouths full of evil, hell bent on destruction. The questioning or abject removal of the word of God from nation, church and home is the preface for catastrophe.

A man recently called me to ask for my support in the promotion of family orientated movies. They were against nudity, violence, etc. and wanted more wholesome films. Good enough! I asked him what their criteria for goodness was. He didn’t know. I didn’t feel very safe with that answer.

Eve did what the church must not do. Fight the battle with an embellished Scripture. The conversation proceeded thus: The serpent accused God of being too harsh: **“Has God indeed said ‘you shall not eat of every tree?’** It is a common accusation against the Christian faith that God is harsh and overbearing. Eve allowed the serpent’s accusation to find a footing. Her response, **“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ ‘but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”** We read nothing of an admonition against touching. How often we see this today. The Scriptures declare, “Be not drunk.” The preacher preaches, “Do not touch!” The Scriptures declare, “Have no part.” The preacher preaches, “Do not even show up.” This may be well meaning, but the enemy now has a foot-hold. We must trust in the sufficiency of the Word and Spirit.

The woman is now more apt to listen to an indictment against God (He doesn’t want you to be all you can be) and she is open to a temptation of pride and lust. Get the college freshman to doubt the word of God and/or the veracity of God, and it is much easier to bring their morality to a halt.

After the fall, they sew fig leaves to hide the shame of their nakedness. There is no dearth of examples of fig leaves in men through the ages. People are now sick rather than sinful. They need recovery over repentance. It is not uncommon for us to seek to hide our own shame by our own good deeds. These are willfully blinded to their own depravity and the holy and venerable nature of God. The fig leaves will soon be replaced.

It is worth noting that it is God who pursues Adam, who quickly blames Eve, who blames the serpent. God then pronounces the inevitable defeat of Satan, through, what is called by theologians, the *protoevangelium* (the first

announcement of the gospel), **“He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”** These two things may be contained in the same event, the cross. Jesus’ heel is bruised as He steps on the head of Satan. Even before God pronounces the curse, He gives the gospel.

The curse involves a woman’s pain in childbirth and a submissive role in relation to her husband. Paul calls upon this account when he writes,

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

God pronounces to Adam the curse on creation itself and Adam’s ultimate return to the dust from which he came. The fig leaves are now replaced, by God, with animal skins. God’s divine justice will not be satisfied with fig leaves but by the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). When Adam and Eve looked at their tunics of skin, they were no doubt reminded both of their need for covering and of God’s gracious provision of covering. The sacraments are designed to keep this continually before us.

Primarily--Life

Chapter three closes with man being cast out of Eden and forbidden to eat from the tree of life. Similar to the Ark of the Covenant, cherubim guard man from the presence of God. Man can not make his way back to the Garden, nor can he find or partake in the life he forfeited. It would be God who would make His way to man. The fullness of life, both quantitatively and qualitatively, would once again be given, Christ paying the ultimate price for man’s fall.

There may be no better way to express the glory of the final thoughts of the third chapter of the first book than to go to the final chapter of the last book. For we shall see, by the Lamb of God, a restoration of that which was lost. The Apostle John expresses this in the richest words available to him.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the

sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:1-5).

Questions for Study

1. Explain Jesus’ statement regarding the Scriptures, when He says the testify of Him.
2. Discuss the varying gap theories and answers.
3. How do we explain light being created before the sun?
4. Why is it important to acknowledge that God’s creation was good?
5. Discuss the uniformity of nature.
6. What does it mean that man is made in the image of God?
7. What do you see at the primary message of chapter one?
8. In what respect does God rest?
9. Why did God prohibit eating from the tree?
10. Man is made from dust. Is that significant?
11. Why was woman created?
12. What do you see as the primary message of chapter two?
13. What was the serpent’s method in approaching Eve?
14. Why is it important to go no further than God’s word?
15. What were Adam and Eve hoping to accomplish with fig leaves?
16. Explain the protoevangelium.
17. How did the fall effect the woman? The Man?
18. What do you see as the primary message of chapter three?