

Place: Lurgan Baptist 8:10:2013

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31

2. THE BOOK OF GENESIS

I heard about two mischievous boys, ages 8 and 10, who were always getting into trouble. If anything happened in the neighborhood, the parents knew their boys were involved. The parents finally decided to take the boys to a preacher that had been successful in dealing with unruly children. The eight year old was sent to the preacher first. *The preacher, a huge man with a booming voice, sat the eight year old down and then sat down directly in front of him.* He leaned over toward the boy, took him by the arms, looked him right in the eyes, and with his booming voice asked, “**Where is God ?**” The boy did not say a word, but just sat there wide-eyed, with his mouth dropped open. So the preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, “**Where is God ?**” Still the boy did not respond, so the preacher raised his voice even louder asked, “**Where is God ?**” The boy let out a yell and then bolted from the room and ran all the way home.

He ran through the door, up the stairs, and dove into the closet. When his older brother found him he asked, “*What happened ?*” The younger brother, gasping for breath replied, “***We are in big trouble this time. God is***

missing and they think we did it.” My God may be missing in our society, in our government, in our schools and universities but one thing is for certain God is not missing from His Word, the Bible. The Bible is but a collection of pages that bear His imprint upon every line. On each page of His Word, we see the breathtaking portrait of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we begin our journey, book by book, we come to the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis. It has been well said, “ Genesis tells us the beginning of everything except God.” Genesis is the seed plot of the Bible. Every subject of major importance can be traced back to its “*first mention*,” in the book of Genesis. W. H. Griffith Thomas said, “ *If we were to approach the Old Testament as though we had never read it before, and take note of all the remarkable predictions of someone who is coming afterward, we would find that this series of predictions begins in the early, unfolding chapters of Genesis.*” Now Genesis is a Greek word meaning “*beginning*,” or “*generation*.” In fact in the New Testament, the word “*genesis*,” is translated “*generation*,” in (Matt 1:1) Genesis is the book of generations or beginnings. It is a very appropriate title as the book includes the origin of so much, our universe, the sun, moon and stars, planet earth.

Here we have the origin of plants, birds, fish, animals and humans. We have the beginning of marriage, family life, the origin of civilization, government, culture, nations, music, sin, death, murder and war. In fact, Genesis tells us about the beginning of almost everything except God. But it not only deals with origins, Genesis deals with the

ultimate questions of life. *Where did our universe come from ? Why are we here ? Why do we have to die ?*

Genesis is one of the five books which form a unit in the Jewish Scriptures known either as the Pentateuch (penta means five) or the Torah which means instruction. The Jews believe that these five books together form “ *the maker’s instructions,*” for the world and so they read through them every year taking a portion each week. Most agree that Moses is the author of the first five Old Testament books. (Deut 31:24-26 Num 33:1-2 Jn 1:45) The Lord Jesus Himself settles all questions concerning the historicity of Genesis by His frequent references to the characters of Genesis as real people and the events of Genesis as real history. I mean did Christ not regard the account of Noah and the Flood as an historical event ? Do you recall the Saviour’s words ? “ *But as the days of Noe were so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood,*” (Matt 24:37-38)

Do you remember what Christ about Abraham ? He said, “ *Before Abraham was I am.*” (Jn 8:58) When the Lord was asked about divorce and remarriage He referred His questioners to (Gen Ch 2) and told them that they would find the answer there. My if Christ believed that the book of Genesis was true we have no reason to do otherwise. You see, if Genesis is not true, neither is the rest of the Bible. If we do not accept that Genesis is true, it follows that we cannot rely on the rest of the Word of God. As David Pawson says, “ *If Genesis is not true then ‘ chance,’ is our creator and the brute beasts are our ancestors.*” Does it surprise you therefore that this book

has been under more attack than any other book in the Bible ? You see, the devil hates most the two books which describe his entrance and exit, Genesis and Revelation. He therefore likes to keep people from believing the early chapters of Genesis and the later chapters of Revelation. My if he can persuade us that Genesis is a myth and Revelation is a mystery, then he can go a long way in destroying our faith.

Now as you read Genesis, you cannot help but note that the first eleven chapters are general and not too detailed while in the rest of the book starting with Chapter 12 the lives of four men are given in great detail. The first section (Ch’s 1-11) deal with mankind in general, and explains the origin of man and sin, while the last section (Ch’s 12-50) deals with Israel in particular, especially the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. So we have divided this book into two sections.

(1) PRIMEVAL HISTORY: THE PRELIMINARIES

Primeval or primitive history. Do you see how the Bible begins ? It begins with amazing words, “ *In the beginning God,*” (1:1) A young woman teacher shared with her class of small children that she was an atheist. She asked her class how many of them were atheist’s. Not really knowing what atheism was, and wanting to be like their teacher, their hands shot up into the air, all hands but one. Lucy did not raise her hand. The teacher asked why she did not raise her hand like the rest of the class and she replied, “ *Because I am not an atheist.*” “ *What are you ?*” the teacher asked. Lucy answered, “ *I am a*

Christian.” The teacher then asked Lucy why she was a Christian. Lucy quickly answered, “ *Because my mommy and daddy are Christians.* ” The teacher then said, “ *That is no reason to be a Christian. What if your mommy and daddy had been morons, stupid people ? What would you be then ?* ” After a pause Lucy answered, “ *I’d be an atheist.* ” My the Bible makes no attempt to prove that there is a God. It takes this fact as self evident. Thirty two times in thirty one verses in (Gen Ch 1) God is mentioned by name and a further eleven times by use of personal pronouns. The expression “ *And God said,* ” occurs ten times. Do you know something ? This is the most God centered chapter in the Bible. It may come as a surprise to you to discover that the subject of (Gen Ch 1) is not creation but the **creator**. It is not primarily about how our world came to be, but about who made it come to be. It’s not so much the story of creation as a picture of the creator. “ *In the beginning God.* ” You see,

1. God is Self-Existent:

That’s how the scholars would put it. In other words, nobody made Him. God is independent of all else than Himself for the continuity and perpetuity of His being. “ *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* ” (1:1) He is not dependent on anyone, not on you not on me. He is not dependent on the weekly church offering. We do not have to give God anything. Indeed all that we have is His. 1.

2. God is Personal:

Does this chapter not depict a personal God ? He has a heart that feels, a mind that thinks. He has a will and makes decisions and sticks to them. All this forms what we know as a personality. My God is not an **it**, God is a **He**. He is a full person with feelings, thoughts and motives like us.

3. God is Powerful:

For it’s evident that if He can speak things into being by His word, He must be powerful. Did you notice that in this opening chapter God gives “ *10 commandments,* ” and every one is fulfilled just as He desires. Look at this phrase in (Ch 1) “ *And God said,* ” (1:3, 1:6, 1:9) and connect it with the following “ *And it was so.* ” (1:7 1:11, 1:15) The psalmist says “ *For He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.* ” (Ps 33:9)

4. God is Creative:

What an imagination God must have. What an artist. Six thousand, varieties of beetle. No two blades of grass the same. No two snowflakes, No two clouds. No two grains of sand. No two stars. What an astonishing variety and yet in harmony for it is a uni-verse.

5. God is Triune:

In Spurgeon’s Catechism we have this question. “ *How many persons are there in the Godhead ?* ” Answer.

“ There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.”

Now the Trinity is plainly implied in this chapter. Look if you will at (Gen 1:26) The Hebrew word for God here is “ *Elohim*, ” and notice God refers to Himself in the plural. “ *Let us make man in our image*, ” but then in the very next verse we read, “ *so God (Elohim) created man in His own image.* ” (Gen 1:27) Do you see that the plural “ *our*, ” in (1:26) equals the singular “ *His*, ” in (1:27) ? “ *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, ” now if you believe that then the following philosophies are out.

1. Atheism: Atheists believe that there is no God. This chapter confirms there is.

2. Agnosticism: They say they don’t know whether there is a God or not. This chapter says there is.

3. Animism: this is the belief that many spirits control the world, spirits of rivers, spirits of mountains and so on. This chapter declares that God created and controls the world.

4. Polytheism: Polytheists believe that there are many gods. Hindus would be in this category. This chapter states that there is just one God.

5. Humanism: Humanists reject the concept of a god outside the created world. Although this chapter states that man is created by God, humanists believe that man is

God. Yet the Bible says, “ *In the beginning God*,” (Elohim) the name of God which links Him with creation. The basic root of the name is “ *El*, ” which means “ *mighty, strong, prominent.* ” Now in these opening 11 chapters there is brought before us,

(a) THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS: (Ch’s 1-2)

For in these opening two chapters we have fifty six simple but sublime verses that bring before us the concise and complete account of creation. I suppose we could look at (1:1) as a summary statement. God here tells us just what He did. The remaining fifty five verses then become detailed statements informing us just how He went about doing all He said He did.

Day One: Light

Day Two: Firmament

Day Three: Separation of Land and Water, and Plant life

Day Four: Sun, Moon, and Stars

Day Five: Fish (Sea Life) and Birds (Sky Life)

Day Six: Domestic Animals

Day Seven: God rested from His work

Now when we come to (Ch 2) there is a notable difference. In (Ch 1) God is at the centre, in (Ch 2) man is at the centre, and he is at the centre of a network of relationships, and these relationships define the meaning of life. Do you see here,

1. Our Relationship to that which is Below Us: Nature

You see, animals are given to serve mankind. Look at (2:19) In (Ch 9) we read that animals were given to provide food after the flood. (9:3) Now we are not to be cruel to animals but animals are further down the scale of value than human beings. We live in an age where more value seems to be placed on the protection of certain animals than preserving the sanctity of the human fetus.

2. Our Relationship to that which is Above Us: God

For man was not only put to work in the garden he was put on probation. Look at (2:16-17)

3. Our Relationship to that which is Beside Us: Wife

(2:18) Now I want you to notice that Adam had a job before he had a wife. You see, man is made primarily for his work, while a woman is made primarily for relationships. So there was (a) but then came,

(b) THE CORRUPTION OF ALL THINGS: (Ch's 3-5)

Martin Luther calls (Gen Ch 3) “ *The darkest page of human history.* ” My this chapter is the earthquake of the Bible. It forever changed the history of humanity.

Isn't it significant that Satan went for Eve ? *Adam's rib* gave into *Satan's fib* and it became *Women's Lib*. Eve gives it to Adam, instead of Adam giving it to Eve.

Do you see what he was doing ? He was subverting God's order ? *He was treating Eve as if she were the head of the house.* Do you see the tactic's the devil adopts ? He encourages doubt with the mind, desire with the heart and disobedience with the will. Is this not the strategy that he is using with you ? Has he been inciting you to doubt

God's Word ? Has he been enticing you to desire evil in your heart ? To disobey with your will ? My do you see the outcome of the Fall ? Birth is painful, life is hard and death is certain. (2:17) Sin, sorrow, suffering and death stemmed from the fall. Adam's children were now born in his own fallen image (5:3) Man's first sin separated man from God, the second sin as told in the story of Cain and Abel separated man from man. So God's perfect world is now a place where goodness is hated and the evil people excuse their wickedness. Genesis goes on to trace the line of Cain (Ch 4) and the line of Seth (Ch 5) Cain's kind lived for this world. Seth's kind lived for the world to come. The history of Cain's kind climaxed, in the wickedness of Lamech, the seventh from Adam.

The history, of Seth's kind climaxed in the godliness of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. Man had now become corrupt, the earth was filled with violence and God had to destroy all things. The Bible says, “ *And it repented the Lord that he had made on the earth and it grieved him at his heart.* ” (6:6) There was now,

(c) THE CONDEMNATION OF ALL THINGS: (6-9)

You see, the flood was God's answer to man's unrepentant sin. Sin must be punished and salvation must be provided and it was through the ark. Isn't the ark a wonderful picture of our salvation in Christ ? It was planned by God, not invented by man. There was only way of salvation, there was only door in the ark. The ark saved them from judgment and Christ saves us from the wrath to come.

But aren't we living "*in the days of Noah ?*" (Lk 17:26)
The days of spiritual decline (4:4) social dilemma (6:1)
shameful depravity (6:5) scientific development (4:21)
strong delusion (Matt 24:39) And Christ says "*as it was
in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days of the
Son of man.*" (Lk 17:26) The signs are abundant that the
end is approaching. But are you ready ? Like Enoch, like
Noah are you walking with God ? (6:8) Something else
affected God deeply in these early chapters of Genesis and
that was,

(d) THE CONFUSION OF ALL THINGS: (Ch's 10-11)

For in Genesis (Ch 10) God sent confusion among the
midst of a foolish people. You see, the building of the
tower of Babel was an attempt by man to build a united
world society with God left out. It ended in judgment for
the Lord confounded the language of the workers, making
it impossible for them to work together. The human race
was now divided into 3 great racial families, speaking
different languages. These 3 families were the
descendants of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Shem: Semitic tribes who settled in the Middle East:

Ham: Cannanites and dark-skinned tribes who settled in
Africa

Japheth: Tribes who settled in Europe

Genesis (Ch 11) ends with a sharp contrast. On the one
hand we see willfulness at Babel, on the other hand we
see willingness in Abram, we see man's sin in going
contrary to God and then we see a man's willingness to do

the will of God and this brings us to the second section of
the book.

(2) PATRIARCHAL HISTORY: THE PATRIARCHS

For here in this second section there is brought before us,
the patriarchs or (fathers) of the Hebrew race. You see, if
in (Ch's 1-11) events are predominant then in
(Ch's 12-50) persons are predominant, for these chapters
are basically the stories of just 4 men. First of all there is,

(a) THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: (Ch's 12-24)

For in (Gen Ch 12) God raised up a man, Abram, who
would become the father of the Hebrew nation. Now the
Hebrew race was chosen by God to be His instrument to
bring the Word of God, and the Son of God. William
Norman Ewer wrote,

**How odd of God
To choose the Jews**

Then Cecil Browne decided to add a second verse in
reply.

**But not so odd
As those who choose
A Jewish God
But spurn the Jews**

My God chose the Jews, with the intention that all
other peoples might know His blessing through them. I

mean look at (Ch 12:1-3) and notice,

1. A Promised LAW:

Do you see what God says in (12: 2-3) ? “ *I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* ” My those words comprise the Abrahamic Covenant that is irreplaceable, irrevocable, and irreversible. My this race was not chosen because of any distinctive qualities they possessed. They were not chosen because they were a choice people. They are a choice people because they were chosen. 1.

2. A Promised LAND:

You see, God promises Abraham the land of Canaan. (12:7) “ *Unto thy seed will I give this land.* ” In the very next chapter we have the duration of Israel’s tenure in the land. (13:14-15) My God has put a reservation mark and has preserved the land for Israel. God said in effect, “ *This is the place I am going to give you forever.* ” They hold the title deeds to that place, whatever anybody else says, because God give the title deeds to them, to Abraham and his descendants for ever. There have been, and are battles being fought over the land of Israel; but, the land doesn’t belong to anyone else. It belongs to the Jewish people. They have rights of exclusivity to the land.

3. A Promised LAD:

You see, God’s initial promise of a son and seed to Abraham came when Abram was 75 years old. (12:4) Abraham is 86 years old when Hagar conceives Ishmael, the father of the Arab nation. (16:16) Do you recall how the Lord describes him ? “ *And he will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him ...* ” (16:12) My the battle between the Jews and the Muslims began in Genesis (Ch 16) It has been a battle between Ishmael (Muslims) and Isaac (Jews) ever since, and will continue to be until the Prince of Peace puts an end to the battle. Twenty five years after God’s initial promise to Abraham, Isaac the promised seed arrived, when Abraham was an 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years of age. (21:5) “ *Is anything too hard for the Lord ?* ” (18:14)

**Got any rivers you think are uncrossable
Got any mountains you can’t tunnel through
God specializes in things thought impossible
He can do just what no others can do**

4. A Promised LORD:

Life is a series of tests is it not ? Abraham had his share of tests from the beginning. In (Ch 11) God give Abraham the Family Test: He called on Abraham to leave his home, his father and mother and move out of Ur to go to the land of Canaan. (11:27) In (Ch 12) he was given the Famine Test: which he failed because he doubted God and went down to Egypt for help. (12:10) In (Ch 13) he was given the Fellowship Test: for when a conflict arose between him and Lot, he gave Lot his choice of land.

In (Ch 14) he was given the Fight Test: when he defeated the kings who had kidnapped Lot. He was also given in that chapter the Fortune Test: because he was offered all the wealth of Sodom but he turned it down. In (Ch's 15-16) he was given the Fatherhood Test: when Sarah got impatient with God and suggested they have a child by Hagar. But here in (Ch 22) the Lord has reserved for Abraham the greatest of all, the Faith Test. Why did the Lord do this ? To see, if his all was on the altar. (22:12) God did not want Isaac's life he wanted Abraham's loyalty. God did not want Abraham's son he wanted Abraham's heart. My has it got your heart ? He does not want your Isaac's, He wants you. Does He have you ? Does He have all of you ? Here is Abraham on his way to the top of Mount Moriah about to sacrifice the promised seed, Isaac.

“ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father and said, my father and he said here am I my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood but where is the lamb for a burnt offering ? And Abraham said, my son God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. ” (Gen 22:7-8) Do you know what Christ said ? *“ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. ”* My Mount Moriah in the Old Testament is Mount Calvary in the New Testament. A Promised Lord. (a)

(b) THE STORY OF ISAAC: (Ch's 24-27)

And Isaac became the heir of the promises of God to Abraham. (26:2-4) Now although Isaac lived until he was 180 years of age very little is said about him.

(35:28) Perhaps his life is best summarized in three phrases, which are associated with him. *“ And Isaac pitched his tent, and he digged another well, and he builded an altar there. ”* (Gen 26:17, 22, 25) The tent speaks of the pilgrim, the man who trusts God a day at a time and is always ready to move. The well, speaks of the resources of God. The altar speaks of the worshipper, who brings his sacrifice and offers it to God. Sadly, Isaac's loss of sight in old age led to deception by his own family.

(d) THE STORY OF JACOB: (Ch's 28-36)

Is colorful. Jacob is a most interesting character. John Philips summed up the life of Jacob in 3 words.

“ Supplanter, servant, and saint. ” The life of Jacob is a picture of the glorious work of God in the life of a believer. He takes a supplanter, makes him a saint, and breaks him to be a servant. My the name Jacob means *“ guile, deceiver, cheat, con artist, twister, and crook. ”* And that exactly what Jacob was and yet he was saved but he had so much of this old man in him. He was had so much of the old ways in him that God needed to deal with him. How did God do it ? There was a crisis and then there was a process. The crisis took place at Jabbok or Peniel (32:30) the process took the rest of his life for there are no shortcuts to holiness. All of his life Jacob had been after the blessing of God but he had gone about it the wrong way. All of his life Jacob had been singing, *“ I did it my way, ”* but now the Lord is going to tell Jacob *“ We're going to do it my way. ”* So God breaks Jacob. *“ He touched the hollow of his thigh and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint. ”* (32:25) Do you see what

the Lord did ? The Lord disabled him. He brings him to the place of absolute dependence on God. You know we are so different from God. We can't use things that are broken, God can't use things till He breaks them. It's the broken box that gives the perfume. (Mk 14:3) It's the broken food that gives the strength. (Matt 14:19) David says, “ *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit a broken and contrite heart O God Thou wilt not despise.* ” (Ps 51:17 Is 66:2) Brokenness. Do you know anything about it ? “ *And he halted on his thigh,* ” that is he limped. Someone says, “ *Jacob, what in the world has happened to you ?* ” He says, “ *I just got blessed. I met God last night and I shall never walk the same again.* ” Do you what Jacob learned ? “ *Learning to lean,* ”

(d) THE STORY OF JOSEPH: (Ch's 37-50)

Now it's interesting that one quarter of the book of Genesis from (Ch 37 to Ch 50) is made up of the account of Joseph's life. More of Genesis is given over to Joseph than is given to any of the other main characters. You see, Joseph represents the link between the family and the nation. Up until Joseph it is a family, the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Seventy people are found at the end of the book of Genesis constituting the family of Jacob, but the moment we open the book of Exodus, it's no longer a family it's a nation. *What is the overriding lesson in the life of Joseph ?* Is it not the providence of God ? Providence “ *is the hand of God in the glove of history.* ” Joseph's life was a demonstration of the providence of God. He could say with Paul “ *And we know that all things work together for good to them that*

love God, ” (Rom 8:28) Oh, think of the trials that Joseph had experienced. He had been forsaken by his brothers, he had been framed by Potiphar's wife, he had been forgotten by the butler. But think of the trust that Joseph had expressed. He tells his brothers “ *God did send me before you to preserve life.* ” (45:5) He says “ *But as for you ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good.* ” (50:20) Joseph saw the big picture of what God had done. He saw that God could take a bad thing and turn it into a good thing. He never questioned what God was doing. “ *Why Lord ?* ” never passed through Joseph's lips.

He believed that God's hand was at work in every event in his life. My do you ? Perhaps his life is a mirror of yours. Have you been forsaken by your family ? Have you been falsely accused ? Have you been betrayed by those who you thought would stand by you ? Are you in some pit of despair where escape seems impossible ? My do you realize that God has a purpose even in the bad things that happen to you ? So much so that we can say with the hymn writer,

**With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted by His love
I'll bless the hand that guided
I'll bless the heart that planned
When clothed where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land**

