

Sent: Saturday, June 01, 2019 7:14 PM
Subject: Last Nite Final Lesson on Genesis-A Look Back!

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations! Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, You are God!" (Psalm 90:1-2)

We began our study of Genesis with a recognition--and conviction--that it, like the rest of the books of the Bible, is actually God's inspired Word! And that God chose this means of revelation as His way of addressing the most basic and important questions of life--including the questions of how the world began, and why we're here, and where everything is going!

And, significantly, our memory verse to kick off the study was II Timothy 3:16-17--which declares, unequivocally, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine (teaching us what to believe!), for reproof (identifying errors in our thinking), for correction (resetting our understanding), and for instruction in righteousness; so that the man of God (including "Men of the Bible") may be complete (mature in faith), thoroughly furnished (fully equipped!) for every good work!"

And what better place to start than "in the beginning"--with the study of Genesis, the book of "beginnings" (or origins)! The origin of the world! Of human history! Of sin and "the Fall"! Of languages and nations! And, of God's "plan of redemption" for all mankind!

John MacArthur has rightly pointed out that understanding the origins in book of Genesis is "foundational to the rest of the Bible"!

Dr. Constable put it this way: "In some ways the rest of the Bible is an elaboration of the basic themes we see in Genesis!"

And so, what we believe about the Genesis account has implications for the veracity and our understanding of everything else in the Bible, including the Gospel message and the redemptive plan of God!

Genesis opens with perhaps the most monumental verse in all the Bible! "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth!" With this declaration, the Holy Scriptures--the inspired Word of God--affirms that the existence of the universe and everything in it is the product of God's creative act! No attempt is made by the author of the book to explain it other than that God "spoke" it all into existence--and that it was created "out of nothing" (or "ex nihilo").

We also learned something about the Trinity! God the Father speaking, God the Holy Spirit "moving" (e.g., "upon the face of the waters"), and God the Son making it all happen! John 1:1-3 says: "In the beginning was the Word (speaking of Jesus Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God! He was in the beginning with God! All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being!"

Genesis 1:27 also says that "God created man in His own image...male and female He created them!" (Interesting that Jesus later would "authenticate" the creation story, in Matthew 19:4-6, by responding to the Pharisees with a question: "Have you not heard that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female...?")

Remember our lesson on Genesis 3, about "the Fall"--which MacArthur describes "in many ways as the most defining chapter in the Bible, because it explains why things are as they are today!

And it called for the first step in God's redemptive plan: His promise of a "seed" of a woman (a picture of Christ) to one day conquer Satan, which He would accomplish on the cross! (Genesis 3:15)

Genesis 6-9 highlights how God "saw how great the wickedness was in the world at time of Noah" and sent the worldwide flood--a cataclysmic event in the history of man--that would destroy "the world that was," while preserving the "seed" of the woman and the promise of a Deliverer, and ushering in a whole new phase of God's redemptive plan! (Again, interesting that Jesus would "authenticate" the story of the flood as well, in Matthew 24:37-39, where He compared the "days before the flood" with the evil that would characterize the days before His "coming again"!)

While Genesis 1-11 deals with four "key events" (creation, "the fall," the flood, and the Tower of Babel) the remainder of Genesis (chapters 12-50) deals with four great "patriarchs"--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. It begins with God's call to Abraham to "go forth" from his country to "a land that God would show him, with a promise that God would bless him and make his name great, and that "through him all the families of the world would be blessed"! God would appear to Abraham at least five more times, with the promise of an "heir" through Sarah, despite the "seeming impossibilities" of this happening! And yet Genesis 15:6 says: "Then Abram believed God and He (God) reckoned it to him as righteousness!" (The great theologian Dr. James Boice called this "perhaps the most important verse in the Bible"! Because it makes crystal clear--for the first time in the Bible, and in the Old Testament at that--the great doctrine of "justification by faith"! And that would become the pattern for all future believers!)

Isn't it amazing also that God would share with Abraham during one of His appearances to him (in Genesis 1:13-14) the fact that his descendants "would be strangers in a land that is not theirs (speaking obviously of Egypt), where they would be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years but then enter the promised land"! Wow! And, of course, that was exactly what would happen in a future Abraham in no way could have imagined!

Well, the Abrahamic promises were extended to Isaac and Jacob as well--all part of God's plan to establish a "people" and a nation, and the coming of a Savior, Jesus, the Messiah! And who would have been able to foresee the "Joseph narrative"--with Joseph ending up in Egypt and rising (through the providential working of God) second only to Pharaoh! And how that would result in Jacob and His sons being "rescued" by Joseph and living in the "land of Goshen"! And who can forget Joseph's "you sold me but God sent me" attitude, and response, to his brothers--as an example for us of how God can use set-backs and difficulties--and cause "all things" in our lives to "work together for good to accomplish His greater purpose!

And how about the scene, in Genesis 48, of Jacob, on his dying bed--after living for 17 years in Egypt-- looking back and sharing "his story" with Joseph and his two sons about how God had appeared to him many years before in Bethel--while on the run from Esau, leaving the land of Canaan--to affirm the Abrahamic covenant and to promise him that He would "go with him wherever he would go and bless him and bring him back to the promised land, the land of Canaan, which would be an "everlasting possession" for his descendants! And how for this reason--now with eyes of faith--he wanted his body returned and buried with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, and his wife Leah in the cave of Machpelah, which served as a kind of "holding place" in the promised land! All of which Joseph must have taken to heart--because he too, when he faced death, would have his brothers swear to "carry his bones back" to the land of Canaan as well! (We continue to see God working out His sovereign plan, in accordance with His own timing!)

Well, there so much more we could reflect on about our study of this great book of Genesis--including how the patriarchs, as imperfect as they were, came to believe in God's promises--and were "justified" as righteous by faith after hearing God's words! (Just like we as believers are "justified" today!) And how--to quote "Shepherd's Notes"--they "lived a life of promise in a hostile culture"! (Just like we are called to live today!)

I hope our study of Genesis has motivated you, as it has me, to want to trust God more, and to learn more of His plan for the redemption of man as we pick up the story--at some point--in the Book of Exodus! The story line in Genesis is only beginning, and the stage is set for the role next to be played by Moses--400 years later--in delivering the children out of their (eventual) bondage in Egypt! Back to the "promised land"! (And, best of all, we know that God is still working out His sovereign plan, from generation to generation, in all the ages! And we want to play a part, right?)

"Ah Lord! You have been our dwelling place (our "refuge"!) in all generations! Before the mountains were brought forth (in the beginning!), or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God!!

To Him be the glory forever and ever! Amen!

Lowell