

DATE: March 30, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 12: 1-3

TITLE: "Genesis I: An Introduction"



For the next few months we will be looking at the book of Genesis. Whenever I begin a new sermon series on a book of scripture I always do two things. I always give a background of the book. And I share with you my philosophy of preaching.

I will begin with my philosophy of preaching. Let me begin by sharing three facts I have discovered about myself.

First, I have discovered that I am not an exceptionally intelligent person. I had one goal throughout college. To get "B"s in my classes. I got a B in every single class. I have worked hard to educate myself and have accumulated some knowledge, but I will not go down in history as a great thinker.

Second, I have discovered that I have a good number of opinions. As a matter of fact, I have an opinion on almost everything. I have also discovered that a number of my opinions prove to be wrong.

Third, I have discovered that people come to church not to hear my limited knowledge or my questionable opinions... people come to church to hear the Word of God.

This is my pledge to you as your pastor. I will study the Bible each and every week, and to the best of my ability... and relying on the Holy Spirit, I will share with you the truth that the scripture teaches.

I believe the Bible is the inerrant (that means without error) Word of God. The men and women who wrote the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit to only write truth. Let me say this is a critically important statement because it is a minority view in our country and in our denomination. Many ministers will make a statement like this: "Within Scripture you may discover the Word of God in your life." Did you hear the difference? To say that Scripture is the Word of God or to say that within scripture you may find the Word of God is radically different. The second statement implies that some of the Bible is not the Word of God. Advocates of selective inspiration would make a statement like this:

“Scripture becomes the Word of God to you when the Holy Spirit convicts you of its truth and its application in your life.”

This sounds good but it makes your receptivity to the Bible the barometer of truth. Or

people who hold this position make a statement like this:

“There is a basic kernel of truth found in the Bible. Around this kernel of truth has been placed many layers of historical distortions. Our task as Christians is to peel away the historical distortions and discover the kernel of truth.”

The problem is this: who is to determine what this kernel of truth is. I believe all of scripture from Genesis to Revelation, in it's original language, is the inerrant Word of God.

Again let me say, I am not inerrant. My understanding of scripture is not perfect. I can only promise to do my research and to share the truth to the best of my ability as led by the Holy Spirit.

Now, lets turn to Genesis. I have never before attempted a detailed study of Genesis. I have never had a sermon series on the book before. I have never led a detailed Bible Study on the book. I have enjoyed the last few weeks of studying the book and I will continue to study. We will learn together. The most difficult part of this sermon series for me will be to filter through all the information. I could give 200 sermons on Genesis. I will not. I have now

outlined 7 or 8 sermons on the first 11 chapters of Genesis. I am not sure how many I will have on the Patriarchs, which begin in chapter 12 and end in chapter 50. The second challenge I face is applying the Word of God. I do not want to share just Biblical fact or even Biblical history. I believe scripture is written to teach us today and needs to be applied to our lives today. This sermon, however will be primarily facts... it may interest some... it may bore some.

Question # 1 Who wrote the book of Genesis? This has probably been one of the most debated questions among Biblical scholars for the past 100 years. Truthfully, from the years 1920 to 1990 most scholars believed the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Bible) were written by 4 to 5 authors in the time period of 800 to 1000 B.C. For the past 20 years this view has faded somewhat and more and more Biblical scholars are seeing the book written much earlier, possibly in about 1300 to 1500 B.C., which just happens to be the time of Moses.

The other truth is this... the Bible itself states that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Again and again the Bible states Moses' authorship. Also, Jesus believed in the Mosaic authorship. In

Mark 7 Jesus states....

"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

9And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! 10For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'

Jesus is quoting Exodus and Deuteronomy and attributing them to Moses. One other...

John 5:45-47 Jesus states....

"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Moses wrote Genesis. Let me say this... he had help. He almost assuredly had sources.

He had oral tradition passed down from generation to generation. Possibly Abraham or Joshua

had a scribe who wrote down accounts of the battles or the stories of the people of Israel. Moses

had different sources that he used. Even Adam and Eve may have began telling their children of

the creation and this story was passed down to Moses.

Moses also had editors after he died. The last chapter of Deuteronomy records the death of Moses. He did not write that... a later editor did. Editors may have had a part in the organization of Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch. Again, this was common that Rabbi's and great teachers had a group of followers who acted as scribes and editors.

Finally, we believe the Holy Spirit guided Moses in the writing of Genesis. The Holy Spirit

told Moses of the creation. The Holy Spirit guided Moses to the truth about his ancestors. The Holy Spirit guides us as we read and He teaches us the truth that we need to apply to our lives today.

Question # 2 Is the history told in Genesis true? This question is often broken down into two parts as Genesis is broken down into two parts. The easy part is Genesis 12 to 50. This is the story of Abraham in about 2200 B.C. to Joseph in about 1800 B.C. There is no reason to doubt the historicity of this section. As a matter of fact archeologists have found, again and again evidence that cities did indeed exist where the Bible says cities existed.

The harder part is Genesis 1 to 11. This starts with creation... moves to Adam and Eve and chapters 5 to 11 deal with Noah and his children. This is called the time of pre-history. Let me again share my view... probably held by a minority today. I believe Genesis 1 to 11 is as historical as the rest of the Bible. I believe there indeed was an Adam and an Eve. I believe there was indeed a Noah and a flood. Let me say while we can put an accurate date on Abraham, I will not attempt to put a date on Adam and Eve or on Noah. Some have tried by

tracing the genealogies ... I am not brave enough to go down that path.

Question # 3 What is the structure on Genesis? Genesis does indeed have a structure.

The structure is both historical and literary. It follows a natural history, but is also divided into sections. The key to the structure of Genesis is one Hebrew word.. It is **“toledot.”** This word is translated in the NIV by the phrase “the account of.” Genesis is broken down into 12 sections and all but the first one begins with the phrase “this is the account of.” For example, the 4th section begins in Genesis 6:9 with the words **“This is the account of Noah.”** The 7th section begins in Genesis 11:27 with these words **“This is the account of Tereh. Tereh became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.”** Some of the accounts are less than a chapter. The account of Ishmael is only 6 verses long. (Genesis 25:12-18). From these six verses you have the Islam faith. The account of Isaac is 10 chapters long and the account of Joseph is 13 chapters long.

Finally, Question # 4 What is the overall theme of Genesis? The question is answered in our text for this morning. *Genesis 12: 1-3 states....*

1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." 4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

The central theme is in these verses. It is the theme of blessing and curses. God blesses His children. God curses those who oppose His children. We will see this again and again and again in our look at Genesis.

It is also a theme carried out by our Lord Jesus. Remember the Beatitudes at the beginning of His ministry. Again and again Jesus tells us how to receive the blessing of our Lord. But then at the end of His ministry, a couple days before the cross we have the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23. These are the 7 woes or the 7 curses Jesus proclaims.

I will close with the words of *Romans 11*

7What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, 8as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." 9And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the

Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!...

17If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, **18**do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. **19**You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." **20**Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. **21**For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

This is why we study Genesis. We, as part of the Church of Jesus Christ, have been grafted into the tree of life. The blessing that God pronounces for His Covenant people are the blessings we receive as members of the New Covenant. However, we must remember we are grafted in. The main trunk is the trunk of God's people found in the Old Testament. The ultimate account found in the Bible begins in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The account of Jesus Christ. The language is the same. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke they start with language of "Account." John mirrors the words of Genesis 1. *Genesis 1:1* states **"In the beginning God created...."** *John 1: 1* states

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2**He was with God in the beginning. **3**Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made..... was coming into the world..... **11**He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12**Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— **13**children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. **14**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We are the children of the New Covenant. We are the blessed children of God. AMEN