

GENESIS—Seed of the Bible
Session One: Getting Started

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HAVING TAKEN AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE, it seems appropriate to make our first proper series of studies in its first book, Genesis. This is all the more obvious when we realise that all the major doctrines of the Scriptures are found in embryo within this book. In a sense, Genesis is a sort of preface to the Bible itself. But this Book is more than an introduction; it is also an explanation of what follows. It is a book that gives us the origin and initial explanation of what is to follow.

The Bible opens with the Pentateuch, the five Books of Moses, Genesis being the first of these. These Books give us a consecutive history of the earliest dealings between God and mankind. From the **human** viewpoint they reveal the “order of the experience of the people of God in all ages. The revelation proceeds as follows: in Genesis we are shown man’s *ruin* through his own sin; Exodus tells of man’s *redemption* through the blood of the Lamb; Leviticus explains that *communion* with God is established by means of atonement; Numbers shows how during the earthly pilgrimage *direction* is provided by the overruling will of God; whilst in Deuteronomy we have the two-fold truth of renewed and completed *instruction* and the people brought to their divinely pre-ordained *destination*.

Yet there is more than this. From the divine standpoint we have a progressive revelation of God in his relationship with his people. In Genesis we see the *sovereignty* of God in creation and election. Exodus reveals the *redeeming power* of God in their deliverance from Egypt. Leviticus reveals the *holiness* of God as he shows his demand for separation and sanctification. Numbers speaks of two things—the *goodness* of God, but also his *severity* towards those who were not allowed to claim their inheritance in entering the land because of their sin, unbelief and rebellion. Deuteronomy enlarges upon the *faithfulness* of God, faithfulness to his people, his promises and his eternal purpose.

QUITE CLEARLY, GENESIS DIVIDES INTO TWO DISTINCT PARTS. The first eleven chapters deal with the history of the world which we know and inhabit. Then comes a clear and distinct shift in perspective as the book turns its attention to the Patriarchs, beginning with the call of Abram in chapter twelve. The first section speaks of four great events; the second with four great persons.

This present series of studies will focus on the first section of Genesis and its momentous events—Creation; Fall; Flood; Babel.

WE START AT THE VERY BEGINNING. The account begins with simple yet profound words set in majestic style: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; the earth being/becoming without form and empty, and darkness on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moving gently on the face of the waters*—Genesis 1. 1, 2. When that “beginning” was, we cannot tell. It may have been long ages before God fitted up this world for the abode of man, because the word “*was*” in verse two probably should be translated “*became*”. It seems illogical to think that God created the world in a state of confusion: look at Isaiah 45. 18. Many scholars are convinced that between verses one and two of Genesis 1 some terrible catastrophe took place. which left the earth “without form and void,” a desolate, uninhabitable, ruined mass of confusion.

THAT FIRST VERSE STANDS ALONE IN ITS SOLITARY GRANDEUR. We have no means of telling how long a time intervened between verses 1 and 2. Verse 2 tell us the earth was "waste and empty" but Isaiah declares, "not as a waste did He create it". Some have thought that the earth became a waste at the time of Satan's fall, but though it might be true, scripture does not clearly state this. When it became waste, or how long it remained in that state, we do not know. The fact is clear that something took place to cause this desolation. In a similar way, though Adam was created upright, his fall brought ruin into his moral nature. "*Darkness was upon the face of the deep*" describes man's fallen condition too, just as it describes the condition of a desolate creation, all covered with water, a state of instability and restlessness.

Yet the God who gazed out upon the chaos was not at rest. The Spirit of God was at work above it all. The chaotic earth is seen held in the embrace of the Spirit, who is described as brooding over it.

And then—"God said, Let there be light: and there was light". Note the statement: God said. He spoke the word. What does John tell us? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word of God is heard expressing the will of God. So right at the start, as John reminds us in his Gospel of the Son, we meet Jesus, the foundation of God's will!

The complete work of creation from start to finish is the action of the Word.

SO WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT GENESIS INTRODUCES US TO THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE. It gives no detail, just states the facts. But when it comes to the rest of the account of beginnings, more detail is given, for it is in these details that what matters to us lies. The issues with which the Book deals are these. After the Creation is full and complete we learn about the beginning of **sin**. This is offence against God. All is not finally lost, however, for in Genesis 3 we come across God's promise, and we are introduced to the beginning of the **Gospel**.

Then we see how sin led to offence against man; we learn about the beginning of **crime**.

The sad story of Cain brings new beginnings: the beginning of **personal rebellion**, and the beginning of **The City**.

THE STORY OF NOAH BRINGS US TO THE FIRST WORLDWIDE JUDGMENT OF GOD. This was upon a rebellious race, heedless of what had happened in the past. Yet immediately afterwards, human behaviour spiralled ever downward reaching its climax at Babel. Within this story we meet another anti-hero, Nimrod, whose story and its significance are virtually unknown.

Our series will concentrate upon what parts of Genesis we have highlighted above. We will leave it to another time to concentrate our thinking on the four extraordinary people featured in the second part of the book—Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

A little "taster" for then. Abram was known as "The Friend of God" and is reputed for his great faith; yet even he "fell out" and even he doubted! Isaac's greatness lay in two facts: he was the son of his father and he was the father of his son. Jacob was a liar and a cheat who had an encounter with God which changed him to become a Prince with God. And Joseph? Well, provide your own answers!

