

## Genesis

It is appropriate that the first book of the Bible would be a book of firsts, a book of beginnings. Within its pages, we are told of the first man and woman, the first family, the first murder, and of God's creative work on the first day. As such a book, Genesis becomes a foundation for the other books of the Bible. Also, Genesis introduces us to some towering biblical figures: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc. It is a chronological carnival, covering more than 2,300 years. Embodied in this span of time many exciting events are recorded. Some of these will herein be discussed.

The creation of heaven and earth, and the fall of Adam and Eve are recorded in Genesis chapters 1-3. Here we find the goodness of God and his creation contrasted with the disobedience of the first humans. God created all things upon the earth and called them "good." Adam and Eve took God's good work and introduced a foreign ingredient (willful rebellion) resulting in destruction. This destruction has affected all. It is pandemic in its proportions: we have never seen a perfect rose; we have never worked a perfect work; we have never understood with perfect understanding. As a race, we have been hampered by the sin of our forefather and foremother. The fall mentioned in Genesis chapter 3 was, in every sense of the word, a great fall.

Continuing to journey through the first book of the Bible, we come to an account of God's wrath upon the wickedness of those dwelling on the earth. The extent of this evil is seen in the Bible: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6: 5). Such is the setting of the story of Noah and the Flood. God was going to send his judgment on all the earth. All living things would perish in this deluge, save Noah, his family, and all creatures aboard the ark. God was going to start anew. After Noah had completed the ark according to God's instructions and, after specimens of all creatures had entered the vessel, Noah and his family boarded the ark also. Then God closed the door of the ark and the floodwaters rose higher and higher, until all the earth was covered. When the flood finally subsided, (371 days later!) the ark came to rest on the mountain ranges of Ararat. Noah then offered sacrifices to Lord. The Lord was pleased and set into motion a covenant, not just between Noah and himself, but toward all mankind: "...all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither again shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth" (Genesis 9: 11, 12). Since this time, God has never again let a full portion of his wrath and judgment devour all of life. Since this time mankind has never gotten what he deserved—annihilation.

So far, Genesis has been concerned with the human race as a whole. Entering the scene now, however, is a man named Abram. By faith this man left his hometown of Ur to enter the land of Canaan. He would become the Father of a great nation, and the heir of a great covenant. From Abram, now known as Abraham (the name change took place to signify God's covenant to Abram—that he would be the father of a nation) would come the two other great patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob. The significance of these three men is displayed by the phrase, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." God referred to himself by this title repeatedly when meeting Moses (Exodus 3: 6, 15 & 4: 5). In addition to this, Abraham became a type of Heavenly Father, Isaac, a sacrificed Christ, and Jacob's son Joseph, a redeeming Christ. It could truly be said that nearly the entire gospel is foreshadowed in these three men.

As people of God, we can be grateful for such a book as Genesis. No opening book of another religion is so revealing and insightful. No other sacred writ is so candid with the lives of their heroes. Indeed, in Genesis we observe the strengths and weaknesses, the victories and defeats, the virtues and vices of God's chosen people. No cosmetic veneer is applied to make them seem something they're not. They were regular people, like you and I. They dared to put their trust in God. As a result, God showed himself as powerful and able to save. Genesis, it is a book of beginnings: the beginning of God's revelation to us, and the beginning of our relations to him.