

What's the Message - Lesson Twenty

Our study continues with a review of the book of Genesis, summarizing its major themes.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that the study of the book of Genesis will bless you and provide you with a model for your life, one that will enable you to be a blessing to others. Amen.

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, really has two main parts, and even the first of those two parts is actually divided further into two parts. The first eleven chapters constitute a separate division. Let's consider those first.

Yes, the book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. The first three chapters deal with some of the most important and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The very first thing it tells us is a statement of absolute truth: God is. The existence of God does not depend upon me, upon my approval. He is real, and exists, whether I approve of that or not.

And these first three chapters tell us the essential points we need to know about the universe that He created, and the relationship that originally existed between God and mankind. It was a relationship of perfect love and obedience to God, our father.

But man succumbed to the wiles of Satan, and desired to be like God, to be the one in charge, and through this rebellion sin entered into the world with all its consequences. Man was driven out of the Garden, away from the presence of God, but with the promise that God would act to send a savior who would restore the perfect relationship.

Now we have chapters four through eleven. In these chapters we see the spread of sin, and that each generation in turn "was only evil continually." We should be aware of the fact that these chapters probably deal with a period of time longer than that which has occurred since. Within only two chapters, by chapter 6, verse 5, God has decided to destroy all of mankind with the exception of one family, and start all over again.

At God's command Noah builds an ark, and the animals come to him and are saved, but a great flood covers the earth and the rest of mankind is destroyed. Over a year passes before Noah and his family are allowed to leave the ark, and begin again to re-populate the world. But even one of Noah's sons fails to respect his father, and we see that sin still reigns.

In only four generations the people of the earth are ready to rebel again, and they strive to "make a name for ourselves." Their pride consumes them with arrogance, and they intend to build a great tower to reach the heavens. So God confuses their language and they are not able to work together, and they are scattered across the earth.

With that as a background, Terah and his son Abram are introduced. This is not only the beginning of the second part of Genesis, it is the beginning of the rest of the entire Bible. What happens from here on is the story of Abram, who later becomes Abraham, and his descendants. It is a story of repeated successes and failures, a road-map for us to use in our lives to avoid their mistakes.

In chapter 12 we saw the covenant that God made with Abraham, a covenant that continues to this day. And we saw the faithful obedience of Abraham in following the will of God. Abraham was to become a blessing to the rest of the world. We also saw how God gave him the essential material things that would be needed to fulfill the goal set before him. The first of these was land that would be their own, land that would be their base-camp from which they would reach out to others.

One of the great themes of Genesis was laid out and repeated. It was the faith of Abraham, which enabled him to obey God and do whatever was asked of him. And this faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness. We saw the institution of a visible sign of the covenant with God's people, the use of circumcision, a visible sign that marked them as His children.

The next great theme was the use of selection and separation. God had selected His leaders, the ones who would follow Him in faith and become the blessing to the world. But they would have to separate themselves from the world. To be in the world, but not of it.

Their religion must be pure monotheism in the face of idolatry and paganism. And so they would practice separatism, and be tested again and again.

With the stories of Hagar and Ishmael, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, the family of Jacob, and finally the life of Joseph, we have a sequence of examples of how separation would happen, and the tests that would be placed before these people. They are all examples of situations that we can relate to, situations that are familiar to us. We see the mistakes they made and the consequences that followed. We see also the positive side, how God uses these tests to build them up and strengthen them, just as He does us.

Lastly, we saw with Joseph how God can use what appears to be evil for His purposes, and to turn evil into good – if we just obey Him and put Him first in our lives.

In summary, what we have introduced to you in Genesis are the major themes that will be repeated throughout the rest of the entire Old Testament: God's covenant with Abraham to be a blessing; the faithful obedience to God's will that is required; the gift of material blessings and their proper use; visual aids to remind them of whom they belong to; and the use of selection and separation to prepare God's workers for the task set before them.

This concludes our study of the book of Genesis. Next time we will begin the study of the book of Exodus.

This series has been developed and written by our director of teacher training, Mr. D. A. Senter, and is copyrighted by Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Flower Mound, Texas. Your narrator is Dale Gaus.

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