

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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## CHAPTER THREE

### GENESIS

The title of the first book of the Bible is of very ancient date, and is well chosen. Genesis means the source or primal cause of things; and this book relates the beginning or origination of the earth and all that it contains. Genesis also is the beginning of the revelation of God to man, the Bible. Here are the germs, the deeply fastened roots of all that follows after. Here are the beginnings of the human race, the family, the community and the nation, of sin and sacrifice, of promise and prophecy, of language, of arts, civilization and history.

Broadly, the first five books of Scripture may be described thus:

- Genesis records the introduction of sin into the world, and its consequences;
- Exodus teaches the doctrine of redemption by blood;
- Leviticus, access to God, worship, holiness;
- Numbers, the pilgrim life of God's people;
- Deuteronomy, obedience, the blessedness of obeying God, the misery attending disobedience.

Genesis falls naturally into two parts:

Part I., chapters 1-11, which contain a very brief but very comprehensive history of the world from the creation to the confusion of tongues;

Part II., chapters 12-50, which narrate the history of Abraham and his family to the death of his great grandson Joseph. By far the larger portion of the book, it is thus seen, is occupied with the story of the chosen people, Abraham and his descendants; and from this twelfth chapter of Genesis to the close of the Old Testament, the Bible is devoted to Israel and to God's ways with that favored but disobedient race. The principal topics of the book are the following.

#### 1. *Creation*, Genesis 1

All readers must admire the simple majesty of this remarkable chapter. Three times the word "**create**" is used in it, verses 1, 21, 27, and each time it marks an epoch or era in the sublime process of the Almighty's work.

Some timid Christians have been not a little disturbed by alleged scientific discoveries which appeared to antagonize if not demolish this Mosaic account of creation. They were needlessly alarmed.

As time goes on and thoughtful men come to know more about the truth of this marvelous universe in which we dwell, they approach closer and closer to Moses' record.

Never, perhaps, in the history of scientific investigation, did Genesis 1 stand so solidly and triumphantly as now!

“In the year 1806, the French Institute enumerated not less than eighty geological theories which were hostile to the Scriptures; but not one of those theories is held today” (Prof. Lyell, cited by Dr. Townsend).

If the Bible is God's book, we may settle it definitely in our minds that it will come forth out of the smoke of battle with a luster all the brighter for the conflict.

This account of creation reveals the unity, power and personality of God.

- It denies polytheism—one God creates.
- It denies the eternity of matter—“**in the beginning**” God made it.
- It denies pantheism—God is before all things, and apart from them.
- It denies fatalism—God here as everywhere acts in the freedom of His eternal Being (Murphy).

## 2. *The Fall*, chapter 3.

“The story of the fall, like that of creation, has wandered over the world. Heathen nations have transplanted and mixed it up with their geography, their history, their mythology, although it has never so completely changed form and color and spirit that you cannot recognize it” (Delitzsch).

One of the strange proofs of the truthfulness of this account, if proof were needed, is found in the universal presence of serpent worship in the olden times. It was practiced in China, India, Palestine, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Africa—in short, all over the world. No other religious form was more common, save sun-worship, with which this was usually associated. Our own continent bears testimony to its presence in some of the ancient remains.

- In southern Ohio there exists a huge snake made out of earth and stones, a thousand feet long or more and which was once an object of homage on the part of the aborigines.
- The savage of Louisiana carried a serpent and sun, the symbols of his religion, and tattooed them on his skin.
- In Mexico the serpent is found in the rude pictures of that strange people, the Aztecs, entwined with their most sacred symbols.

The main elements of serpent-worship were, a tree, a woman and a serpent.

George Smith in his “*Chaldean Account of Genesis*” presents his readers with a facsimile of a drawing found in the excavations about Babylon which has two figures sitting on either side of a tree, holding out their hands toward the fruit, while back of one of them is stretched a serpent. How singular that rational beings should pay their highest honors to a repulsive snake!

It was one aim of the old Serpent, the Devil, in the temptation of our first parents, to put himself in the place of God as an object of worship. How well he succeeded, the universality of this form of Idolatry attests.

3. *The Flood*, chapters 6-8. There are three supreme tragedies connected with the history of our race; the fall, the flood and the cross. The flood was God’s judgment on the guilty world; Calvary was His judgment on the sins of His people in the person of their blessed Substitute, Christ.

The sin which called down the judgment of heaven on the apostate race is referred to in Genesis 11:1-8. It was the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men. Who are meant by the “**sons of God?**” Many interpreters think the angels.

There are very strong objections to this view. Good angels would not commit this sin: bad angels are not called “**sons of God.**” The statement in Jude 6, 7, may mean that the sin of the fallen angels was spiritually what that of Sodom was carnally. Besides, the offspring of these unholy alliances are called men, which they could not be if the product of demons and women, Genesis 6:4, 5.

It seems more natural and Scriptural to regard the “**sons of God**” as the pious Sethites. Already the separation of the godly from the wicked had taken place, Genesis 4:26. The former called themselves by the name of the Lord. Their sin was their breaking through the barrier, ignoring their call and character, and their going over into the ranks of the wicked and contracting evil alliances with them.

It was deliberate and universal apostasy from God.

4. *Origin of languages and nationalities*, chapters 10, 11. The tenth chapter anticipates the disaster recorded in the eleventh. The division of one race into tribes and nations was necessitated by the confusion of tongues. Sixty-nine are mentioned, of whom sixteen are independent and the rest affiliated nations.

This is another fruit of sin, the first sin. What a prolific thing sin is! Good may have arisen from the formation of separate nations and the partition of the earth among them; but how much evil likewise. How these nations have trampled each other out in the rage of their huge passions. Tongues originated in judgment, the gift of tongues in grace.

- When God gave the law telling what man ought to be, He spoke in one language.
- When He told at Pentecost what He is, He spoke in many tongues.

What a barrier difference of language is to intercourse among the peoples of the earth; what an obstacle to the progress of missions, and even to a full knowledge of the inspired word!

No wonder John Trapp wrote (1660) this about it:

“This great labor hath God laid upon the sons of men, that a great part of our best time is spent about the shell (in learning of language) before we can come at the kernel of true wisdom, especially Scripture wisdom.”

In the last book of the Bible, Babel, Shinar, tribes, nations and tongues are all gone; and paradise lost is succeeded by paradise regained.

### 5. *The Chosen People*, 12-50.

This part of Genesis relates to the origin of the Hebrews and their history from Abraham to the emigrations into Egypt. In it we have:

(1) *Abraham's call*, 12. His ancestors were idolaters, Joshua 24:2. As a solemn protest against that system, as also the forming of the new stock from which the Messiah was to spring was Abraham led away from his country and friends.

There seem to be two stages in his call.

- The first, when he left Ur and settled at Haran, Acts 7:13; Genesis 11:29-32.
- The second, when he departed from Haran and dwelt in Canaan, Genesis 11:1-6.

He was 60 when he departed from Ur, and 75 when he went forth from Haran. He went out blindfold, but the God of glory led him by the hand, Hebrews 11: 8.

(2) *God's covenant with Abraham*, 15. The parties are, God and the patriarch—but God does all, pledges all, promises all; and it is all of grace, there being no conditions to be fulfilled by Abraham.

(3) *Ratification of the covenant*, 17. Circumcision, its sign and seal added.

(4) *The covenant attested by God's oath*, 22.

(5) *The history of Isaac*, 24-26. Twice was the covenant ratified to Isaac; once at Gerar, then at Beersheba, 26.

(6) *The history of Jacob*, 27-35.

- The covenant was confirmed to Jacob:
  - At Bethel, 28 (first time);
  - At Bethel, 35 (second time);
  - At Beersheba, 46; when on the way to Egypt.

These three patriarchs are the covenant-heads of Israel—and the enactment and ratification of the covenant are the prominent features of their lives. After the descent into Egypt by Jacob and his household, no more mention of it is made till the Exodus.

(7) *The history of Joseph, 37-50.*

6. *Chronology.* The dates here given are only approximate. The chronology of the Bible is difficult to unravel.

- From Adam to the flood, 1656 years.
- From flood to call of Abraham, 367, or 427, if born at 130 of Terah's age.
- From call of Abraham to Jacob's migration into Egypt, 215.
- Sojourn in Egypt, 430.

Abraham was about 100 years old when Isaac was born. Isaac was 59 and Abraham 159 when Jacob was born. Jacob's life overlapped Abraham's sixteen years. Jacob was 130 when he migrated to Egypt. Rawlinson is of opinion his "household" numbered at that time 3,400 souls, (*"Moses,"* p. 2). Joseph was 39 when his father went down to him, and he survived Jacob about fifty-four years.

*Transmission of the ancient traditions.* Noah could receive from his father Lamech what he had received direct from Adam: Shem could transmit it to Abraham, and he to Jacob. So that the account of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and Abraham's call could pass through only five hands between Adam and Jacob.

7. *A prominent fact that Genesis teaches is the connection between sin and suffering.* These two have been named the "Twin Serpents," and the name is well chosen. Sin, suffering; the one follows the other as certainly as night the day. It is a fixed and imperative law.

- Expulsion from Eden follows the transgression of our first parents.
- Expulsion from the presence of the Lord was Cain's punishment.
- The flood was the necessary issue of the admixture of the "**sons of God**" with the "**daughters of men,**" Genesis 6:2, 3.

It is always so; it is the history of man, he that sins must suffer. He that is profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones, a worm that never dies, and a tongue that no drop can cool, if he repent not. "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,**" Galatians 6:7, 8. *That!* Not another kind of harvest, but *that*—the product of the seed sown.

8. *Another great truth taught in this earliest record of human things is separation.* No sooner had sin entered into the world than God began to call out His own servants and people from among the ungodly. From the beginning He drew the Line of separation between His own and the wicked broad and deep. When His people crossed the line, went over into the camp of the enemy, corruption ensued, and judgment fell on the guilty world. This principle holds still: "**Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,**" II Corinthians 6:17, 18.

9. *Dangerous Confederacies*. We have an example of such danger in the oldest union of which history speaks, that of Babel, and its huge tower.

The annals of the race are full of the like disastrous efforts of men to unite in compact bodies independent of God, and in hostility to His will. The business of a Christian is to keep clear of all entangling alliances.

**“Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?”** II Chronicles 19:2.

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