

Beginnings for Beginners

The Discipleship Intent of Genesis

(and the other books of Moses)

Lesson 1 | Introduction

Outline:

- I. Genesis, a Discipleship Manual for the Infant Nation of Israel
- II. Genesis is intended to be a Discipleship Manual for Israel Always
 - A. Evident from the Structure of the Book (*toledoth* – “generations” 11x)¹ – Moses intended to unveil to the people of God their identity
 - B. Evident from the Books’ Inclusion in the Law (serves as an introduction to Moses’ other books as well as an introduction to the whole Bible)
 - C. Evident from Instruction Given to Parents to Promote and Propagate its Teaching Generationally (Deuteronomy 6:1ff)
 - D. Evident from Instruction Given to Future National Leaders (kings to make their own copy – Deuteronomy 17:16-18)
 - E. Evident from Instruction Given to Present Leaders (Joshua 1:8-9)
- III. Moses and Genesis were Part of Jesus’ Own Discipleship
- IV. Jesus Used Moses and Genesis in His Discipleship of Others
- V. Genesis is Intended for Our Discipleship

Introduction: We are going to assume Mosaic authorship, though Moses very likely employed the use of written histories and oral recollections, together with divine revelation. Moses was a prophet. He was aware that he was (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Luke 24:27).

- *He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. ⁷ Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; ⁸ With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the LORD . . .”* (Numbers 12:6-8)
- *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend* (Exodus 33:11).
- *Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face* (Deuteronomy 34:10).

We are going to sit at Moses’ feet – not in Moses’ seat – hopefully in the same way that he sat at the feet of the Lord. The very truths that we will study in these chapters are a foundational portion of the truths God used to disciple Moses that led to Moses’ own willingness by faith to be inseparably identified with God and His people:

¹ *Toledoth* is the modern Hebrew word for “history” (see Thurman Wisdom, *Royal Destiny*, 33).

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned (Hebrews 11:24-29).

- I. Genesis, a Discipleship Manual for the Infant Nation of Israel (we'll focus more on this one next week)

No doubt, during the exodus, the wilderness wandering years, and even the early years of being back in the land, the people's hearts would often be filled with questions as to the immensity of their challenge to build a nation from the ground up. They would likely often ask themselves, "Why are we doing this again?" or "How is this supposed to really happen?" or "What kind of success can we really expect?" The Book of Genesis is a resource for God's continuing ministry to His people who step out even in weak faith to follow Him.

- II. Genesis is intended to be a Discipleship Manual for Israel Always

- A. Evident from the Structure of the Book (*toledoth* – "generations" 11x)² – Moses intended to unveil to the people of God their identity

1. To Abraham through the patriarchs (as distinguished from Ishmael, Esau, Ham, and Japheth)

"But even as humanity expands (Gen. 1-11) and Abraham's offspring are enlarged (Gen. 12-50), the focus of the narrator always narrows onto the specific descendant who shoulders the blessing of furthering the promised line; Seth, *not* Cain; Shem, *not* Ham or Japheth; Abraham, *not* Nahor and Haran; Isaac, *not* Ishmael; Jacob, *not* Esau. The history is meant to be read as a theology. God was calling to himself a special people to represent his name and so establish blessing on the face of the earth" (Johnny V. Miller and John M. Soden, *In the Beginning . . . We Misunderstood*, 61, original emphasis).

2. To the land to which they were to return

"What right did Abraham's offspring have to that land? If prior possession was indeed proof of ownership, then Israel's claim was the oldest of all: their God was the one who created the land (Genesis 1; 14:19, 22), and therefore he had authority to grant it whomever he chose (Genesis 15:17-20; cf. Jeremiah 27:5; Psalm 115:15-16; Daniel 4:17, 25, 32)" (Miller and Soden, 61).

² *Toledoth* is the modern Hebrew word for "history" (see Thurman Wisdom, *Royal Destiny*, 33.)

God had moved them from that land to protect them, and He was returning them to the land flowing with milk and honey.

3. To the Creator God

Moses' <i>Toledoth</i> Structure of Genesis		
Introduction	1:1-2:3	<i>In the beginning God created</i>
1	2:4-4:26	<i>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created</i>
2	5:1-6:8	<i>This is the book of the generations of Adam.</i>
3	6:9-9:29	<i>These are the records of the generations of Noah.</i>
4	10:1-11:9	<i>Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.</i>
5	11:10-11:26	<i>These are the records of the generations of Shem.</i>
6	11:27-25:11	<i>Now these are the records of the generations of Terah.</i>
7	25:12-18	<i>Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael</i>
8	25:19-35:29	<i>Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac</i>
9	36:1-8	<i>Now these are the records of the generations of Esau</i>
10	36:9-37:1	<i>These then are the records of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.</i>
11	37:2-50:26	<i>These are the records of the generations of Jacob.</i>

- B. Evident from the Books' Inclusion in the Law (serves as an introduction to Moses' other books as well as an introduction to the whole Bible)
- C. Evident from Instruction Given to Parents to Promote and Propagate its Teaching Generationally (Deuteronomy 6:1ff)
- D. Evident from Instruction Given to Future National Leaders (kings to make their own copy – Deuteronomy 17:16-18)
- E. Evident From Instruction Given to Present Leaders (Joshua 1:8-9)

III. Moses and Genesis were Part of Jesus' Own Discipleship

This observation is closely tied to the next point. One of the clearest and most powerful ways that we know that Jesus was Himself steeped in the Books of Moses is because of His insightful use of them during His wilderness temptations.

When Satan steps forward to do battle with Jesus during the 40 days and nights of Jesus' own wilderness wanderings, Jesus again and again and again reaches deep into the well of the years of Israel in the wilderness for precisely the right sword to combat Satan's wiles.

[Jesus] fights against Satan with man's infirmities and with the means man has at his disposal. He endures hunger, and allows Himself to be approached, parleyed with, and tempted like a man. Like a man, He stands through confidence in God, and triumphs by the power of God. Above all, like a man, He quotes the Scriptures, which were written by men for men. As we see Him on another occasion in His anguish supported by an angel – Him 'whom the angels of God worship' [Hebrew 1:6], so here we see Him resting upon Moses, Lord and Master of Moses as He is! Wondrous source of astonishment and of admiration! (H.C. Fish and D.W. Poor, *Select Discourses by Adolphe Monod, Krummacher, Tholuck and Julius Muller*, c.1858, 138-39).

Jesus had learned like the writer of Psalm 119 that the Books of the Law contained wonders that were inexhaustible, full of delight, and better than honey. Jesus nourished Himself on their contents and chose the God of Israel as His portion.

Much of Jesus' own teaching reflected His immersion in and convictions gleaned from the Books of Moses in general, from Genesis, and Genesis 1-11. He rooted His teaching on marriage and divorce in Genesis 1-2 and Deuteronomy (cf., Mark 10:6-7, cites Genesis 1:27 & 2:24; Matthew 19:3-6). He referred to Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37-38), to lessons learned from Lot's wife (Luke 17:26-32), to Abraham (John 8:58), and, of course, to Moses himself (see next point).

IV. Jesus used Moses and Genesis in His Discipleship of others

Still further, Jesus used the Books of Moses as a tool in His discipleship of others. Citations from the previous point could be included here. At least 24 of 200 citations from or allusions to Genesis in the New Testament are introduced by Jesus Himself (Morris, 682). He quotes or alludes to chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 17, 18, 19, 28, 31, and 33.³

- Mark 10:6-7; cf. Genesis 1:26-27 Made male and female
- Mark 13:19; Genesis 1 Creation which God created
- Matthew 19:5; Genesis 2:24 Cleave to his wife
- Mark 10:8; Genesis 2:24 One flesh
- John 8:44; Genesis 3:4 Father of lies
- Luke 10:19; Genesis 3:15 Treading on serpents
- John 16:20-21; Genesis 3:16 Sorrow, travail in birth
- Matthew 23:35; Genesis 4:4 Righteous Abel
- Luke 11:51; Genesis 4:11 Blood of Abel
- Matthew 19:4; Genesis 5:2 Created male and female

³ See also <http://www.creationstudies.org/Education/quotations.html> for an online copy of Morris' Appendix 4.

- Luke 17:27; Genesis 6:4 Marrying wives
- Matthew 24:37-39; Genesis 6:5-7 Days of Noah
- Luke 17:26; Genesis 6:12-13 The days of Noah
- Matthew 24:38; Genesis 7:13-16 Noah entered the ark
- Matthew 24:39; Genesis 7:17-18 The flood came
- Matthew 26:52; Genesis 9:6 Life for life
- John 7:22; Genesis 17:10 Circumcision of the fathers
- Matthew 10:15; Genesis 18:20 Sin of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Luke 17:29; Genesis 19:24 Fire and brimstone from heaven
- Luke 10:12; Genesis 19:25 Judgment on Sodom
- Luke 17:32; Genesis 19:26 Remember Lot's wife
- John 1:51; Genesis 28:12 Angels descending and ascending
- Matthew 22:32; Genesis 31:42 God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- John 4:5; Genesis 33:19 Jacob's parcel of ground

Jesus quoted from and alluded to the Books of Moses, to Genesis specifically, and at least 16 different times to the first 11 chapters of Genesis. He found the Books of Moses a deep well from which to draw not only for His own devotional life, but as an instructive resource for teaching people how to study the Bible (John 5:39), how to discern the identity of the Messiah (John 5:46-47, *If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me*), and for a host of other theologically foundational points.

Jesus taught of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 11:23-24), of the image of God in man (Matthew 22:15-22; Genesis 1:26-27), of the eternal character of God (Matthew 22:23-24, 32 *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – not the God of the dead but of the living*). One of Jesus' favorite tactics when truth was in question was to turn to *Moses and the prophets*, a refrain that appears primarily in the writings of Luke (John 5:39; 5:46; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 26:22-23; 28:23). In every instance the thrust of the text involves the teaching of truth found in *Moses and the prophets* that was presently being misunderstood or overlooked by leading contemporary religious scholars. Truth had been revealed in the Old Testament, but its true intent had been ignored or obscured. Jesus' preaching demonstrates the need to "search the Scriptures" again to gain correct understanding. For example, Jesus even rebukes Sadducees (Matthew 22:29), holding them accountable for truth not explicitly taught in the Pentateuch. They had failed to conclude from the expression, "*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*" (Exodus 3:6; 4:5), that there must be a resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:31). A more careful search is needed than originally thought (John 5:39) to discern an unanticipated truth (John 5:46; Luke 24:27, 44) that actually is so clearly taught that, once identified, one wonders how the truth might initially have been overlooked.

V. Genesis is Intended for Our Discipleship⁴

By some counts, the New Testament writers make greater use of the book of Genesis than even the Old Testament writers do. Two hundred times the New Testament cites or alludes to a total of 165 different passages in Genesis. Every New Testament author does, and only three books contain no apparent specific reference or allusion (Philemon, 2 John, 3 John). Of those 200 references, more than half (107) are to Genesis 1-11, and more than half of those (63) are to Genesis 1-3 (see Morris, 21; also Appendix 4).

“Of the fifty chapters in Genesis, only seven (chapters 20, 24, 34, 36, 40, 43, 44) are not quoted or cited in the New Testament” (Morris, 682).

When Paul bears testimony that *whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope* (Romans 15:4), he was not spilling idle words. He was providing a glimpse into his own use of the Old Testament in his own life. He looked beyond the bare commands and explicit teaching of God even to find instructive examples from which to discover the mind of God:

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11).

“The New Testament often cites the book of Genesis using the present tense and the first-person pronoun ‘we,’ not third-person ‘they,’ and relates its content to the church. This should leave little doubt about the implied audience of this portion of Scripture” (Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 28-29). [on page 29, Waltke includes in a footnote the following, “For example, limiting oneself to just the first ten verses of the book of Genesis, compare Gen. 1:1 with Heb. 11:3, Gen. 1:3 with 2 Cor. 4:6, and Gen. 1:6-9 with 2 Pet. 3:3-5.”]

Conclusion: So . . . can we permit ourselves to form a row or two of chairs at the back of the classroom in which the children of Israel find themselves? The wilderness is their mobile school room, the content of Genesis the foundation of their curriculum, Moses is their tutor, and God is their Teacher.

*Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; For I trust in You; Teach me the way in which I should walk; For to You I lift up my soul.*⁹ *Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; I take refuge in You.*¹⁰ *Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*¹¹ *For the sake of Your name, o LORD, revive me. In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.*¹² *And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies and destroy all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant* (Psalm 143:8-12).

Produced and distributed by: Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC 29601, © 2017
Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright, ©1960,1962,1963, 1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

⁴ <http://www.creationstudies.org/Education/quotations.html>