

## Genesis Introduction - John Karmelich

One of my teaching mentors who also taught the entire bible was once asked, what's the hardest Bible book to teach? He said Genesis, not because it is hard to understand, but because the scope is so wide "it's hard to get one's arms around it!" I remember that line and it popped in my head as I'm starting to teach Genesis for the second time!

Let me begin by reminding you of the purpose of the ministry. I'm not here in effect to convert people, but my mission statement is for people who say, "I believe in Jesus, now what?" So, my ministry is for us to learn what God wants us to learn from studying the bible, so we can use our lives as a witness for Him which is what He desires of all Christians. Therefore, like any ministry this will not be a complete study of every possibility but an emphasis on what God desires we know to help us grow closer to Him as well as be a better witness for Him. Over and above that I have my favorite Genesis "facts" I love to sneak in these studies.

Let me start with the authorship. I believe God communicated all of this to Moses so I'd argue in effect God's the author. There are lots of strange theories denying Moses as the author. Here's my argument: Jesus quotes from all 5 books penned by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers & Deuteronomy and Jesus states in the Gospels that Moses was the author of each. Since I'm not smarter than Jesus, I'll simply accept the fact God dictated Genesis to Moses. Do I believe we have the original text? I'd argue yes or very close to it. Remember we're reading modern English translations that came from Hebrew of 3,500 years ago! I'm convinced Moses took dictation and there's little debate about author's intent. Yes there's always a word here or there with more than one meaning. I'd argue for the most part, it is pretty clear. For what it's worth I've read lots of bible commentaries including a few Jewish ones. On my web site on the last lesson are my sources. Since I last taught it, I have read commentaries by Dennis Prager (Jewish) and John MacArthur's series on the first 12 chapters. In short, there's a lot of stuff in my head on Genesis than what I'm writing on these summaries I try to keep to two pages.

Let me give you my other bias. I do believe the first eleven chapters are literal. I believe the world was created in six literal days from our perspective of time. If I get to heaven and I'm wrong, I'll shrug, but I want you to realize that's my perspective. In Exodus 20:11 God said in effect "Since I made the world in six days and rested on the 7th, so the Israelites are to honor My Sabbath". In my study of Exodus, is a discussion of Christian observation of the Sabbath. My point being if God said six days, I figure that it is safer to be too literal than not literal enough, so that's a key reason for my view on that!

I have to admit, the book stands a unique test of time. Moses wrote this as a "history book" in the sense that all the events in Genesis took place before Moses was born. From the perspective of the Israelites, it teaches them their history of how they formed as a nation, why they had to suffer in Egypt, and then why God brought them out as a nation to inhabit the land of Israel. It's not meant as a complete history or say a complete book on the science of how God "did it". The idea's to explain history from His view and why He bothered in the first place!

Speaking of why God bothered, let me explain it the best I can from a Christian perspective! I've spent a lot of time thinking about why God bothered. Best I figure is God is an entity full of love as well and full of justice, and He wanted "someone or something" to express that love upon! I believe God created people in effect as a wedding gift for Jesus. It's to say in effect God wants to spend all eternity showing love to those who choose to accept God's free gift of salvation! What's required on our part is simply to

accept that free gift. That leads me back to "now what"? What God desires of us after we're saved is to use our lives as a witness for Him. Of course, we still must live life, but that's the underlying idea!

OK then, back to Genesis! I beat the "who" to death, God gave this information to Moses. We do not have an exact date, but best guess is it is around the time frame the Israelites were camped at Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments. Most historians place Mt. Sinai in Saudi Arabia and I'll stick to that theory. If one takes the bible dates seriously, it's straightforward to count backwards to when Adam & Eve lived. Remember Moses is writing about events before his time. There was a 19th century bishop who estimated when Adam and Eve were created, and he came up with 4,004 BC. If you want to argue the universe is billions of years old, there are lots of places on the internet to debate that. My job is just to explain how believing Christians should apply Genesis to their lives. One more thing on dates, then I'll move on. A rough rule of thumb to remember is Abraham lived about 2,000 BC, Moses was about 1,500BC and King David was about 1,000 BC. Yes, it's rough, but it helps to get dates right.

The word "Genesis" comes from the Greek, and Genesis means "origin". This book contains origins of mankind, the universe, creation, the Jewish nation just to name a few. As we go through this book, I'd like you to remember the bible rule of "first mention". That just means the bible, is pretty consistent as the first mention of say a certain type of animal is consistent in it's symbolic use. For example, we had a ram stuck in the bushes when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac and the ram was sacrificed as a substitute. Therefore, the use of rams (as well as lambs and bulls) are symbolic in their meaning of substitution for sacrifice through the bible.

The book of Genesis is also fascinated with the details of people, faults and all. It's the reminder God's using imperfect people to accomplish His will just as He uses you and me for that purpose. Remember that Genesis is a series of stories that lead to "end points". For example, the origin of the human race is a lead in to Abraham, who God called to start the Jewish nation. His great grandson was taken slave to Egypt and eventually became second only to Pharaoh. The book is full of fun little "coincidences" that if it didn't happen on God's timing, it never would have happened.

I have to admit that for a book written roughly 3,500 years ago and discusses in detail life thousands of years before that, it's amazing how this book has stood the test of time. It is often quoted without even one realizing the origin of many things come from this book. It's quoted all through the bible. Many a Jewish rabbi has memorized this book and many Christian scholars have written commentaries on it. I am not claiming to be wiser than them or adding to it. I'm simply trying to reach people God called me to reach through my writing. As I discerned many years ago, my job is just to write this and place it on the internet. As to who reads it, that's God's business after that!

Finally, I need to talk about the fact God is perfect. In effect God wanted people to be a witness to His existence. The human race corruption leads to the flood-story, but our sin nature still existed! God got to a point where He wanted a nation of people to be His witnesses, faults and all! My point is this book is full of stories where one fact leads to the next which leads to His people. Genesis wasn't meant to be a history of all facts about mankind to date, but a specific series of things God wants people to study so we can be a better witness for Him! I never argue we must be bible expert to be saved. Salvation is the belief that Jesus is God and died for our sins! Learning the Bible makes us better witnesses for Him. I want to state again, I'm not here to convert people although many have drawn to God through what I've written over the decades! Simply that studying His word helps us to grasp why He bothered in the first place and what He wants us to do with our lives, which is to be a witness for Him!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John