

GENESIS

The text of Genesis comes to us down through the ages from an original text that was written, many believe (including myself), by Moses. We do not have that original text today, but we have copies of it, reproduced over and over throughout time immemorial, which are miraculously accurate, (e.g., the Dead Sea scrolls). The manuscripts that are contained within the Old Testament were primarily written in Hebrew. Several later translations followed, most notably the Septuagint and the Masoretic texts, and eventually the King James version. We hold these scriptures to be the inerrant word of God. What does the Bible say about inerrancy (meaning free from error or untruths)?

Read the following scriptures and note what each tells us about the infallibility of scripture and the inerrancy of scripture.

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - a. ANSWER: All scripture is "God-breathed."
2. 2 Peter 1:20-21
 - a. ANSWER: ...you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."
3. Matthew 22:29
 - a. ANSWER: The power of God is contained in the scriptures.
4. John 17:17
 - a. ANSWER: We are set apart from the world by God through the truth contained in His Holy Word.
5. John 10:35
 - a. ANSWER: The scriptures are a unified work by God; you cannot set aside any part of it to make its meaning convenient to your desires.
6. Matthew 5:17-18
 - a. ANSWER: Nothing in God's Holy Word will change or be deleted until everything God intended to accomplish is accomplished.
7. Isaiah 55:11
 - a. ANSWER: God has a purpose for every word He put in the Bible.
8. Hebrews 4:12
 - a. ANSWER: God's word has great power.
9. Matthew 4:4
 - a. ANSWER: All scripture comes directly from God; there is no other source of truth but God's Holy Word.

In summary then, the Bible is inerrant and infallible. It does not contain any lies—just truth, all of which was written down by men as God led them to write what He, God, wanted them to write. Because of this, our wisdom and faith come from believing in this book we call the Bible, and it will be our primary source for our study of Genesis. Yes, we will consider what the world has to say, and we will faithfully examine their claims; but in the end, God's Holy, infallible, inerrant, Word will be our bedrock.

As we study Genesis, many questions about our origins and the world around us will be answered through this book. Our purpose, creation itself, and God in three persons, can all be understood more deeply by studying Genesis. What exactly was "the fall of man?" Why is it that simply because Adam ate something that he shouldn't have, that all of creation,

including man, has suffered ever since? And how can we know that all of this is true? After all, no one was present when God did all these things. All of this and more will come to light as we study this exciting book.

Along the way, we will look at some fascinating facts that you may not be aware of. How long did Isaac pray for his wife to have a child? How old were Jacob and Esau when Jacob tricked Isaac and stole Esau's birthright? What do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all have in common? Did Christ exist before anything was created, and why is this important to know? What about dating the Old Testament chronology? I.e., What are the current issues and positions on the dating of Old Testament events? How old is the earth? Were there dinosaurs on the ark that Noah built? (and so many more related questions)

As we begin our study of one of the foundational books of the Bible, we should also be aware of the world around us and the various views of Genesis. As well, we should be cognizant of the varied positions on creation, the flood, Abraham, and the Patriarchs. We will look at each of these as we work our way through the study, however, initially, we need to know that not everyone sees Genesis, or the Bible for that matter, as the inerrant word of God. In fact, in much of the world today, including the Jewish community itself, Genesis is seen primarily as a book of fiction, narratives written by scribes during the Babylonian captivity. There is also a school of thought referred to as the Higher Critics, who do not believe the book was written by a single person, but by several writers over time, again resulting in a book of narratives, fables if you will, written long after the original events. There are many more critical views, but suffice it to say that the non-believing world does not see the Bible, and especially Genesis, as an authoritative book inspired by God and written by a single author, likely Moses.

We ourselves should be aware that one cannot study Genesis, or any book of the Bible, in a vacuum. That is, we need to consider the world setting around the events in the Bible. For example, if Abraham purchased a cave in Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite to bury his wife Sarah, then we should be asking ourselves if cave burials were a custom during the time of Abraham. Can we locate the cave today? Was Hittite law something that Abraham would have known at that time, given that he used its process to negotiate the purchase of the cave with Ephron the Hittite? If not, then perhaps the world's view of the passage, i.e., that it is a mythological narrative, is true. If, on the other hand, we can determine that the burial customs of the day, the contract law Abraham followed, and the presence of Hittites living in Canaan, are all supported by archaeological and textual evidence from the Middle Bronze Age, then we can be confident in using the Biblical text as our source of truth. We will discuss this topic further when Abraham comes on the scene in Genesis.

What we will find as we study the book of Genesis, and the Bible in general, is that we can rely on the text being historical, accurate, and authoritative based on the acronym MAPS, (Manuscripts, Archaeology, Prophecy, and Statistics).

Throughout this study, we will incorporate all four of these to establish the reliability and authenticity of the text. In this manner, we can confidently explain the book of Genesis to others as the true and reliable source of the beginnings of man (both Gentile and Jew), mankind's fall, and God's plan of salvation. (2 Peter 3:15)

We should enter our study of this pivotal book by understanding that scripture can be hard to grasp. Simply reading a passage and then moving on will not prove useful when studying Genesis.

Read 2 Peter 3:16 and note what Peter tells us about scripture and the lost world around us.

10. 2 Peter 3:16

- a. ANSWER: "He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

As we see from Peter's writing, even the apostles found some scriptures "hard to understand," and Peter warned that "ignorant and unstable people distort" scriptures—just as we experience today in both the secular and academic worlds.

Finally, it should be noted that in this study, when we take a "literal" approach to scripture, it is probably not going to be what most people define as "literal." When we are applying a literal approach to understanding the text that we are examining, it means that we must consider the linguistic nature of the text, its context, its historical background, and all evidence in support of the text. This is the operational definition of literal. It does NOT mean simply accepting the English translation that we are reading as literal in every word. We must dig deeper and wider than that. We would all be going around with one eye plucked out and a hand missing if we applied every word in scripture according to its literal English text. (See Matthew 5:29-30.)

Now that we have laid the groundwork, in the next lesson we will begin our study of the book of Genesis with a look at creation. We will see the power of God like we have never considered.

God bless each of you for joining us on this journey towards knowing God in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Have a blessing-filled week in Christ!

In Christ,

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