

**The Message of Genesis and the New Testament**  
**Genesis 1:1, 26–31; 2:15–17; 3:1–7; 12:1–3**  
**January 12, 2014**

To much of the world the book of Genesis might appear as a collection of ancient myths and fables that need not be taken seriously, except for a few ethical matters illustrated in its characters. As far as speaking to people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such a book—unenlightened by modern science, anthropology, and sociology—seems far too antiquated. Even some of those commenting on the book write off certain stories as exaggerated and even mythical and barbaric. So where does that leave us? Do we fall prey to the voices of doubt that count Genesis to be out of touch with the real world? Do we see it as unrelated to the Christian faith and existing only as a strange sourcebook for Jewish history?

On the contrary, we affirm the authenticity of the book of Genesis and its primacy as foundational for understanding the nature of God, the creation, human dignity and purpose, the fall of man, divine judgment, the work of redemption, God’s grace, election, providence, and dozens of other key theological truths upon which we build our lives. As we have noticed in our study through Genesis, both by direct quotes and allusions, Genesis is found throughout the New Testament. According to the index of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), there are 239 direct quotations from Genesis in the New Testament. One hundred and sixty-nine passages from Genesis find their way into the NT’s 239 quotations. If we add allusions and material suggested by the message of Genesis, the 239 quotations would be, at my guess, doubled or tripled in NT usage.

I had originally thought about just going through each book in the NT and giving you the Genesis quotations and allusions found in them. But after considering it, I realized that would be unwieldy for our study. As a matter of fact, I think that it would end up being a hefty sized book if these quotations and allusions are mentioned and then commented upon! So we will reel in our ambitions to something more manageable but no less helpful, I trust.

So, what is Genesis about? We could say that it is as its name, about beginnings: the beginning of the world, the human race, fallen humanity, and the work of reconciliation. And indeed, Genesis does set the stage for understanding each of these things. But more so, Genesis is a book about God. It teaches us who He is as the wise, gracious, and sovereign Creator. It teaches us about His mercy and grace as He responds to mankind’s fall in the garden, and subsequent downward spiral. It shows us how He pursues a people for the sake of His name upon whom He might display His covenant mercies in great abundance. It reveals to us God’s faithfulness as Creator, Redeemer, and Covenant-keeper. It emphasizes how the salvation of human beings is not dependent upon the consistent behavior of the human race but by the graciousness of the Lord God. It shows that despite the fall and its dire effects upon the universe, the Lord God has not abandoned His creation but faithfully works to redeem it and restore it for His glory.

*The story of Genesis sets forth the biblical narrative in acts of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.* How do these acts in Genesis teach us about the Lord God? Let’s approach this study by considering some of the ways these acts are found in Genesis and then quoted or alluded to in the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ.

## **I. Creation**

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). The Bible begins with God. He initiates by His will, purpose, and power every molecule in the universe by speaking the world into existence: “Then God said, ‘Let there be . . . .’” The careful, systematic days of creation identify how the Lord makes each aspect of existence: light, the heavens, water and dry land, vegetation, sun, moon, and stars, fish in the sea and birds in the air, the beasts of the earth, and man and woman. Does the book of Genesis attempt to give scientific explanation for the creation that would satisfy our modern thirst for mechanical details? Certainly not, for it is enough that Genesis begins with *God* as the Creator. And that is enough, for how can our puny, finite minds grasp the transcendent God? That He would even tell us that He created the world should be enough to stagger us and bring us to our knees in worship! Yet in our haughtiness as fallen creatures we dare to lower the power and majesty of the living God to conform with our transitory theories of existence.

### **Stress on Creation**

Repetition helps us to learn. But it also serves with biblical writers as a way of emphasizing particular matters. Genesis two reiterates the creation story of Genesis one with particular emphasis on the primary focus of the creation: man. We are not to take lightly that God created the heavens and the earth, or that He created man after His image. “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). Apart from the handiwork of God and His life breathed into the first man, humanity would not exist. It could not develop from millions of years of cellular evolving since like produces like. Only One who is a living being, whose breath is life itself, could breathe into the elements formed from the dust to make the first man into a living being that would reflect the Creator. Made in the Creator’s likeness and in His image, the Lord God also gave man dominion over the earth. His rule was to mirror the greater rule of the Lord God.

Did the Lord have to create the world and humanity? Of course not since He had no need for the world or mankind. He is God! That’s the message of Genesis over and over. He had no longing to be loved since He is perfectly satisfied in His own being. Mankind could do nothing to make Him more complete or more delighted in His existence. Yet He created the world and its inhabitants for His great purpose. He chose to display His image in humanity out of all the entire creation!

### **The New Testament and Creation**

The writer of Hebrews piggybacks on the declarations of Genesis 1–2. “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (Heb 11:3). In other words, nothing existed prior to the Lord God speaking the worlds into being! Many stumble over that truth, preferring to think that the existence of the universe occurred randomly by the explosion of cosmic gases billions of years ago. Those who hold such a view should preface it by the words of this verse in Hebrews, “By faith we understand,” for such an idea defies reason no matter how neatly dressed it is in scientific clothing.

In the memorable opening of John's Gospel, he identifies Jesus Christ as the agent of creation, and as God Himself, thus declaring the singular God revealed—in this case—as Father and Son (later in John's Gospel as the Holy Spirit, John 14–16). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” And so the Word—Jesus Christ—had no point of non-existence since He is God. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (John 1:1–4). The very breath that breathed life into Adam was the breath of Jesus Christ. Humanity existed because the Word brought it into being.

And humanity did not exist apart from the Creator's will, purpose, and sustaining power. Thus Paul affirms concerning Jesus: “By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together” (Col 1:16–17). He gives details—heavens, earth, visible, invisible—so that we understand what he means by “all things have been created through Him and for Him.” We, therefore, exist for His pleasure alone! That little preposition “for” shows us the reason for our existence, so that no person should ever feel that he or she has no reason to live or no purpose in life. We find our purpose in the One who created us for His good pleasure.

Just think—we never have cause for despair if we are in union with the One who created us for His own purpose and pleasure! So many live hopelessly in our day, so many give up on life. Promising men and women—young and old—take their own lives in despair. But that little prepositional phrase, “for Him,” gives us hope for each day. He created humanity for Himself so that we might find our pleasure and joy in Him. Yet, we admit that something interrupted that creation bliss—sin.

## **II. Fall**

It seems rather telling that in the midst of describing God breathing life into a clump of dust that the Lord God made into a man, and the act of providing a completer and helper so that the man would be relationally fulfilled, that the Lord sets forth a prohibition. “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (Gen 2:16–17). Just one thing in all of the abundance and beauty of the garden did the Lord withhold from the man and woman. Everything else He gave to eat freely and enjoy. But that one thing would reveal the potential for rebellion and displeasing the Lord God. The man and the woman were to continue to depend upon the Lord and find their satisfaction in Him.

Then came the fall, when the serpent questioned what God had commanded, and why God had commanded it: “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Gen 3:1) In other words, hasn't God put constraints upon you in every way? Hasn't He tried to ruin life for you by keeping from you things that you would enjoy?

“The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die’” (Gen 3:2–3). Adding to the command of God by a prohibition to touch the fruit, the woman dares to entertain the tempting voice of the serpent who had despaired the kindness and wisdom of God.

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen 3:4–5). Would God lie to Adam and Eve? Of course not! As a God so holy and righteous, it is impossible for Him to lie (Titus 1:2). Yet Eve’s contemplations of the Lord God dipped low, treating Him as though He were a fickle, feckless being who found pleasure in withholding good from those He claimed to care for. How dare Eve listen to the voice of a wily serpent and doubt the voice of the living God! Yet, how like Eve we are so often when we give in to the tempter’s voice in denial of the voice of God. How like Eve we are when we think that our ways are wiser than God’s, and our desires fulfilled are much more satisfying than living life under His Lordship.

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6). Totally complicit with the sin, Adam and Eve joined together to satisfy their senses above the wisdom in God’s spoken word. Their pride lured them into thinking that they would be like God if they ate of the tree—a foolish act on the part of the two humans so near the actual events of creation! Yet, just as foolishly, we pursue sin with the same prideful lust that it will make us like God. The serpent’s lure still lingers. As James warned, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (James 1:14–16).

### **The Seed of the Woman**

Genesis continues to show the effects of the fall. Immediately, Adam and Eve felt the shame of their sin and nakedness. They tried to hide from the Lord—darkness runs from the Light (Gen 3:8). The Lord brought judgment against Adam, Eve, and the serpent. Sin had entered the human race to stay until One could arise with the efficacy to remove it by the power of perfect righteousness laid down in absolute sacrifice. God had given the promise that it would be so: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen 3:15). And so Eve thought that the birth of Cain would make this happen but he ended up killing his brother Abel in a jealous rage (Gen 4:1–15). The slow development of humanity proved one thing: sin resided in the bosom of every person; rebellion against God proved natural. “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Even removing every family from the face of the earth but that of Noah and his three sons and their spouses, demonstrated that sin was not simply a learned trait. It was endemic to the human race, as Noah and his family would soon prove after the flood (Gen 7–9). One would think that God choosing Abraham would end this practice of sin and rebellion, but the great patriarch’s family becomes a biography of depravity. Sin had indeed affected the entire human race with no hope to remove its curse found within humanity.

Paul took the story of Genesis three and expounded it in Romans five. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . . For the transgression of the one the many died . . . for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation . . .

death reigned through the one [transgression] . . . so then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men . . . for as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Rom 5:12–19). Over and over he makes it clear: sin entered the world through Adam, and sin continued in every one of Adam's descendants, and along with the sin came the condemnation of the entire human race. The fall left humanity without power to correct its course or change itself. Mankind's only hope would be the mercy and grace of the Creator taking drastic action to remove the curse and restore the creation.

### III. Redemption

What do we mean by redemption? Leon Morris pointed out that redemption is the "idea of payment as the basis of release" and "consistently signifies deliverance by payment of a price" [*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 12, 26]. Jesus counted His coming into the world to be for the work of redemption—to offer Himself as the payment necessary to redeem sinners from the kingdom of darkness: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). John Murray correctly noted that Jesus "interpreted the purpose of his coming into the world in terms of substitutionary ransom and that this ransom was nothing less than the giving of his life. . . . Redemption, therefore, in our Lord's view consisted in substitutionary blood-shedding or blood-shedding in the room and stead of many with the end in view of thereby purchasing to himself the many on whose behalf he gave his life a ransom" [*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 47].

#### The Substitute

The idea of this act of redemption first came into the world by the promise of the Lord God: "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen 3:15). John had this in view when he referred to overcoming "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world . . . because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 12:9, 12). The offering by Abel of the firstlings of his flock to the Lord indicated substitution on his behalf before the Lord (Gen 4:4). Upon emerging from the ark after the flood subsided, Noah built an altar and offered animals and birds upon it as a substitute for him and his family (Gen 8:20–21). After the Lord called him out of paganism, Abraham built an altar to the Lord and offered substitutes before the Lord (Gen 12:7–8). But the ultimate picture of redemption took place in Genesis 22 when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice upon the altar. Just as he took the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord stopped him. He raised his eyes and saw a ram caught in a thicket. The text states substitution for redemption so clearly, "And Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering *in the place of his son*" (Gen 22:13).

God spared the son of Abraham but He did not spare His own Son when it came to our eternal redemption. Surely Paul had this story in mind when he wrote, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32) Here's what we noted as we studied Genesis 22 last May. 'Here's the very heart of the gospel: God not only required the sacrifice to meet the demands of His justice but He provided the only sacrifice that would suffice—His Son Jesus Christ. God gave His own Son as the sacrifice to avert His wrath away from us

and onto His Son who fully, completely absorbed the divine wrath against us as sinners in His sin-atonement death at the cross' [see <http://www.southwoodsbc.org/sermons/the-father-son-and-the-substitute/>].

### **Faith in the Substitute**

Here is the whole reason that Jesus went to the cross. When on the cross Jesus declared, "It is finished!" the serpent's head was crushed and redemption accomplished (John 19:30). Here God acted with complete righteousness "so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," as He accepted the ransom payment of Christ's bloody death to deliver us from the domain of darkness, and transfer us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Rom 3:26; Col 1:13).

Just as Abraham "believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness," (Gen 15:6) even so, as Paul told the Romans, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Paul goes into detail about the focus of this faith being upon the seed of Abraham, promised in Genesis 12:3, and brought to fruition in Jesus Christ. "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ. . . . For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. . . . But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal 3:16, 18, 22). All that God promised Abraham and his descendants finds its culmination in union with Jesus Christ—the blessings of Abraham, as Genesis called them, are found in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer.

### **IV. Restoration**

We could call this section *recreation* since that's what takes place through Christ. Remember what happened in Genesis. God created the world. He placed the pinnacle of His creation in the Garden of Eden. Only the entry of sin expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden. God's work of redemption brings redeemed humanity back into the recreated and restored Garden. That's the picture given in Revelation 22:1–4. "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street." Remember the river that flowed out of Eden to water the garden (Gen 2:10).

"On either side of the river was the tree of life [note Gen 3:9, 22 "tree of life"], bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2). Genesis 2:9 declares, "Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The nations in conflict from Babel (Gen 11) onward, find healing in God's Garden due to the redemptive work of Christ applied to people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9).

What happened in the Garden? The curse entered due to sin and broke man's fellowship with God and consequently, expelled him from the Garden. But that changes in Christ! "There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will

be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads” (Rev 22:3–4). Christ’s work broke the curse so that redeemed sinners might enter once again into God’s Garden. He will not just stroll in the Garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8), but even better, He sets His throne and the throne of the Lamb in the Garden’s midst and dwells there with them! Just as the Lord placed man in the Garden “to cultivate it and to keep it,” (Gen 2:15) His servants will continue that work of serving Him forever in the beauty of God’s Garden.

### **Conclusion**

Genesis is a book about beginnings: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. All of us are found in those first two categories. But only through faith in Christ do we know the redemption or deliverance from sin’s curse that Jesus accomplished at the cross. There He crushed the serpent’s head! And only in relationship to Him will we know the promise of restoration in God’s Garden forever.