

Book of Beginnings

Genesis

(preached Pine Grove 1/4/15; Sunday PM)

Introduction

I have run exactly one race in my life.

In 2002, most of my family trained for and either ran or walked the Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston SC.

The race is 6.2 miles over the bridge and ends in downtown Charleston.

I got passed in the race by a man dressed in a gorilla suit.

IT took me almost an hour to run those 6.2 miles and it was my last race.

But what is interesting about that race is the huge crowd that runs it.

It is so crowded at the starting line that you may not actually begin running a few minutes after the starting gun fires.

If you are running the race and have a chance of winning, you need to find a starting spot near the front so that....

You don't get caught up in the crowd and ruin your chances of winning.

However, with the race being 6 miles long, you aren't ruined even if you get off to a bad start.

The same would be true for longer races like a marathon.

In those races, the start isn't as important as the finish.

Which has probably given rise to the saying, "it's not how you start, it's how you finish."

But that is not always the case.

Take for instance, a really short race like the 100 meter dash.

In those short races, it definitely matters how you start.

In fact, a poor start usually equals a poor finish.

If you are running a short race, the start is as important as the finish.

And that is what I like to say when it comes to understanding the Bible.

What happens in the first book is critical to understanding what happens in the middle and even in the end.

IF you weren't here last Sunday night, we are beginning our journey through the Bible.

The object is to start in Genesis and go to Revelation.

I said last week that it would take 66 weeks since there are 66 books....

But now that I have laid it out, we may be able to finish in a shorter amount of time.

I may combine some of the real short minor prophets...

And I will probably combine the three letters of John and even the book of Philemon.

WE will see about that as we get closer to those books...

But the point is to take about 30-35 minutes each Sunday night to give a bird's eye view of each book.

And here is the point...

To increase your knowledge of the entire Bible.

That way, when you are in a Sunday School lesson or you are listening to a sermon...

And you see a reference to the book of Leviticus, you can say in your mind...

“Oh yeah, Leviticus is a book about God’s holiness and it describes the sacrifices that need to be offered to God in the OT.”

It is also to see that the Bible is one book.

Yes, there are books that make up the Bible, but they tell one big story.

And the whole picture is important to see.

So, let’s begin to put that picture together in the book of Genesis.

And I remind you that the beginning is very important.

So, open your Bibles to Genesis 1:1.

Now, the big outline of the book of Genesis looks like this....

(Projection)

I. History of Four Key Events (1-11)

- Creation (1-2)

- Fall (3)

- Flood (6-9)
- Babel (11)

II. History of Four Key People

- Abraham (12-24)
- Isaac (25-26)
- Jacob (27-36)
- Joseph (37-50)

And what we are going to do each week is I am going to give you an outline of the entire book...

And then we will simply follow that outline....

And I will finish each week with some principles that we need to see in the book.

So, let's begin with.....

I. History of Four Key Events (1-12)

These four key events cover the first 12 chapters of the book of Genesis.

A) Creation (1-2)

The first of those events is the act of God creating the world.

If you look at the first chapter, it is the account of God creating the world out of nothing in 6 days and resting on the seventh.

But a verse to mark in that first chapter is Genesis 1:26-27.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the ^[ak]sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the ^[al]sky and over every living thing that ^[am]moves on the earth.”

If I had to pick the top 5 most important passages in the Bible, this would be in that top 5.

This passage reveals the purpose of man in the world.

We have talked about this in men's group on Saturday morning.

Man and woman's original purpose was to rule over God's creation.

People were originally created to rule God's kingdom that he had established on the earth.

You see that in these verses.

You also see that man and woman are set apart from the animal world in that man was created in God's image.

Man is God's image bearer in the world.

Man is not God but he was made to reflect and represent God in the world.

And he was made to rule for God on the earth.

And declared his plan very good in 1:31.

What you need to see here is that God's plan was perfect at this point.

The universe was created. Man was created. And man was set over God's creation and it was very good.

And what you need to see here is that God plan will always come to pass.

Because if you turn to the last chapter of Revelation, guess what is happening?

A new earth has been created and man is set to reign over it forever and ever.

What you have from Genesis 2 to Revelation 20 is simply a detour in God's plan.

Now, He knew what was going to happen.

But the story in which we live is the story of how man is trying to get back to a position to rule God's creation.

Because if we move to the next important event of Genesis, we see the fall of man in Genesis 3:6.

B) The Fall (3)

⁶ 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.

And with that act of disobedience, Adam and Eve were no longer able to rule God's kingdom.

When sin entered the world, death entered the world.

And now Adam was disqualified from ruling the creation like he was designed to do.

Yet as quick as it seems that all hope is lost, God gives a promise in Gen 3:15...

*¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;
¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall ^[d]bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

This is a foreshadowing of Jesus all the way back in Genesis 3.

Jesus will be the fulfillment of this promise when he goes to the cross and bruises Satan on the head.

Now, this is important to remember, Satan may have been defeated at the cross....

Yet, he will not be destroyed until Jesus casts him into the lake of fire in the book of Revelation.

Though the devil still prowls around like a roaring lion, he knows his defeat was secured at the cross.

And we see the idea of the cross right here in Genesis.

C) The Flood

The third event we see in Genesis after the creation and the fall is the flood of Genesis.

Though God has promised relief from the curse of sin, it does come immediately.

Therefore the world is thrown into chaos in a lot of ways.

Death, disease, thorns and thistles infest God's creation now...

And the sin only grows and grows until we read in Genesis 6:5...

⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This shows how far man had fallen from the time he was created in Genesis 1.

By the time we get to Genesis 6, his heart is filled with evil thoughts at all times..

So god decides to flood the earth as judgment upon man's sins.

Yet, He did not destroy it all, sparing Noah and his family.

And then in the aftermath of the flood, God makes a promise to man in Genesis 8-9 to never destroy every living thing again.

The rainbow was established a sign of this promise that God made.

The Bible uses the word covenant here to describe the promise that God made.

And that is an important word in the Bible.

Right here in Genesis 9, God established his covenant with man to never again flood the earth.

And the Bible describes it as an everlasting covenant.

When God made this covenant, he made it permanently.

Now, we are going to see some covenants that aren't everlasting in the Bible.

But for this covenant that God made with Noah and all mankind, it is an everlasting covenant.

D) The Tower of Babel

And the final event of this opening part of Genesis is the tower of Babel in chapter 11.

Now, the sin of Babel was this...

The people wanted to gather into one place and build a tower to heaven.

What is the problem with that?

Well, what had God told man to do in Genesis 1?

Fill the earth.

Yet, the people here are refusing to scatter over the earth.

Genesis 11:4...

⁴ They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

So, God confuses their language and scatters the people all over the earth.

That is how important God considers his instruction to man.

It is so central to his plan that he comes down and scatters them over all the earth.

And from that scattering, we arrive at chapter 12.

Which is the second outline point of Genesis.

We move from the History of 4 Key Events...

To..

II. The History of 4 Key People (12-50)

As the people spread across the earth, they also become more numerous.

So when we get to chapter 12, we see a great shift in how deals with mankind.

Up until this point, God had dealt with individuals and with nations...

But now, God begins his plan to relate to the world through a nation that he chooses...

And to begin his plan, he goes to Abram, who will become Abraham, the father of the nation Israel.

The important thing to notice is what Abram did to earn the Lord's attention.

And that was nothing.

There is no indication that Abram did anything.

God simply went to Abraham and called him to obey.

And that is exactly what Abraham does in Genesis 12.

He leaves his hometown and takes his nephew Lot with him.

And God does what we have seen before.

God makes a covenant with Abraham.

God promises to make Abram a great nation.

God promises to give Abram a land.

God promises to bless the world through Abram.

And in that last promise, we see another picture of Jesus.

Abram is going to be the father of a great nation that will eventually bring forth the one who will crush the head of the serpent.

And with that, we see the birth of the nation of Israel.

The nation that God will use to make His name great in the world.

One important thing to see about Abraham occurs in Genesis 15:6.

People often ask about salvation in the OT.

And I think this is a great example of salvation in the OT.

Genesis 15:1...

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,
“Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
^[a]Your reward shall be very great.”
² Abram said, “O Lord ^[b]God, what will You give me, since I ^[c]am childless, and the ^[d]heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”³ And Abram said, “^[e]Since You have given no ^[f]offspring to me, ^[g]one born in my house is my heir.”⁴ Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own ^[h]body, he shall be your heir.”⁵ And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your ^[i]descendants be.”⁶ Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

In verse 6, we see something very important.

Abraham believed God.

And God counted it as righteousness.

Now here is what we know from the Bible....

There is salvation in no other name than Jesus.

So salvation in the OT is also in Jesus.

But what did Abraham know about Jesus at this point?

Probably nothing more than what God had promised Adam and Eve.

That someone would come who would crush the head of the serpent.

Yet, he believed whatever he knew and God counted it as righteousness.

That is what salvation is in every age.

People believe God.

In this day, we see the whole picture.

We see the complete picture of Jesus, the cross and the resurrection.

And if someone wants to be saved today, the need to believe the gospel.

Abraham believed what God promised, and he was saved.

And Abraham eventually gives birth to a son, Isaac.

This is to be expected if Abram is going to grow into a great nation.

You need to have kids if you want to eventually be a great nation.

So, Isaac is born in Gen 21....

And he gives birth to Esau and Jacob.

Jacob takes the name of Israel in Genesis 35.

And with the birth of his sons in the same chapter, we have the 12 tribes of Israel.

And the remainder of the book of Genesis from 37 – 50 is the story of one of these sons, Joseph.

And Genesis ends with Joseph's death in chapter 50.

And by the time that Genesis ends, the nation of Israel is still very small with only 70 people....

And with that, you have the big overview of the book of Genesis.

Conclusion

Now with that, let me end with some important principles to see.

1) God is Powerful.

You can't miss the power of God in the opening chapter of Genesis.

He created the heavens and earth out of nothing.

It was a truly creative act.

And what do we learn about us in light of that?

We are powerless.

We are created beings who are in debt to our Creator.

2) Man was created to rule for God over his creation.

Man is special in God's creation.

He was made in God's image to rule and subdue the earth.

3) Man is Sinful.

Man disobeyed God and was disqualified from ruling creation as he was intended.

4) God is Merciful and Gracious.

Though man sinned, God promised one who would crush the head of the serpent who plunged man into sin.

And this is what separates God from all the false gods in history.

The God of the Bible is Saving God.

He will send relief for sinners so that they can eventually return to their God given role of ruling.

5) God is Just

God does not leave sin unpunished.

He cursed the serpent, the woman and the man because they disobeyed him.

He sent a flood to judge the sinful men who lived upon it.

He confused the language and scattered the people at Babel because they refused to fill the earth.

Though we didn't mention it, God also destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin.

And I want to end with something that we have been talking about on Wednesday nights....

And we also see this in Genesis...

6) God is Sovereign

In all these principles, we see another great truth about God...

The fact that he is in control of all things...

He sovereignly created the heavens and earth.

He sovereignly gave man his assignment in the world.

He sovereignly promised a rescue from sin.

He sovereignly judged sin.

He sovereignly called Abraham.

He sovereignly gave descendants to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And that just sets up the rest of the Bible, where we will God sovereignly work out his plan until the very end of the current world and beyond.

And one of my favorite verses in all the Bible addresses the issue of God's sovereignty and it is found in Genesis...

Gen 50:15...

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"¹⁶ So they ^[u]sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying,¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.¹⁸ Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about ^[o]this present result, to preserve many people alive.²¹ So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke ^[u]kindly to them.