

OT Narratives Bible Study Series

Genesis 1-3 - Beginnings

Read Genesis 1-3

In our previous study, we saw that Genesis 1-3 lays the foundations for the Christian understanding of pretty much everything - that is, for the Christian's worldview. It tells us about who God is and who we are. It tells us about how we and the world came into being, and about why the world and mankind are the way they are today.

-Briefly review:

-What does Genesis 1-3 tell us about God?

-Main thoughts from previous study include: (refer to notes from previous study for further discussion)

- He is eternal - "In the beginning, God..." - in existence before anything
- He is Creator of all things --> owns all things and rules over all things
- He is powerful
- He is good
- He is holy - 'set apart' from His Creation
 - sets the standard of right & wrong; confronts, judges & punishes sin/wrongdoing
- He is immanent - i.e. not far off from His creation, but intimately involved within it
- He is merciful

-What does Genesis 1-2 tell us about the origins of the universe and of Man?

- God created everything - we understand this by faith (Hebrews 11:3)
 - the universe had a beginning - created out of nothing
 - everything didn't just come in to being by chance, but by the will/intent & action of God
 - contrary to theories of macroevolution (i.e. evolution of 1 species from another) as well as theistic evolution (i.e. God using evolution to 'create' new species)
- mankind had a defined beginning -created intentionally by God; not gradually evolved by chance from other primates

-What does Genesis 1-3 tell us about the nature of Man (i.e. mankind)?

- specially created by God, in the image of God, for relationship with God
 - implications include the dignity & worth of mankind --> applications to discussions on abortion, euthanasia, murder, etc.
- created to have dominion / rule over the earth, as stewards
- created "very good", but fell into sin by disobeying God's command
- contrary to popular opinion, no longer good by nature, but tainted by sin and bound for death
 - cf. Romans 5:12-21

-How does Genesis 1-3 speak to issues of sexuality, gender identity, and marriage (1:26-31; 2:4-7, 15-25; 3:1-21)?

How does this run counter to what is being taught in the world? (you might also consider Deuteronomy 22:5; Matthew 19:1-9; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4 with Leviticus 18:1-30 & 20:7-23; 1 Cor. 6:18)

- Man created as male and female
 - sexuality goes to the core of who we are, as creatures created in God's image
 - explains why every generation since Adam & Eve is so obsessed with sex (and why the Bible spends so much time addressing it)
 - also why it is such a flash point between the people of God and everyone else (all the way from Biblical times)
 - explains why sex is such a powerful temptation for so many
 - sexual sin goes to the core of who we are --> has devastating consequences, often beyond that of other sins
 - equally created in the image of God --> equal in dignity and worth
 - different in function
 - genders not to be confused/blurred (cf. Deut. 22:5), as is commonly promoted in various ways today
 - homosexual relationships included in this prohibition (Lev. 18:22; 20:13)
- marriage defined as permanent union between 1 man and 1 woman) (cf. Matt. 19:1-9) - based on God's design in Genesis 1-2, as quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Paul in Ephesians 5
 - rules out 'gay marriage' (i.e. marriage between 2 men or 2 women) - contrary to what's being taught in the world today
 - also rules out polygamy (i.e. multiple wives/spouses in a marriage)
- sexual union (one flesh relationship) is intended for marriage, and is pure/holy only in the context of marriage (Heb. 13:4)
 - all sexual relationships other than between a man and his wife are sinful (Leviticus 18:1-30 & 20:10-21 for examples)
 - sexual sin - i.e. violation of the one-flesh relationship - as the only legitimate grounds for divorce (Matt. 19)
- a harmonious relationship of headship and submission between husband and wife portrayed in the creation of Man as male & female
 - equal (by virtue of God's image as noted above), but different
 - the man created first, then the woman created out of the man to be a helper
 - a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33) --> loving headship & glad submission
 - this relationship of headship and submission established in a world without sin --> a thing of beauty & joy (1:23-25)

- runs counter to the world in at least two ways
 - view of what it means to lead and to submit - God's design of loving headship & willing/glad submission vs. selfish/abusive headship & forced submission
 - God's design of difference in function vs. world's 'egalitarian' impulse (i.e. no difference in roles between husband & wife (or male/female in the home & Church))
- this relationship was distorted and corrupted by the Fall
 - the woman's desire would be for her husband --> not a good desire, but a desire to control and dominate - like sin's desire for Cain (Genesis 4:7)
 - the man would rule over his wife --> not loving headship (like Christ over the Church), as before the Fall, but harsh, brutal rule - like the way Cain should have "ruled over" sin, to subdue it (Gen. 4:7, cf. Matt. 5:29-30)
 - start of the 'battle of the sexes'

-What happened in Genesis 3, and what implications did it have? (you might also consider Romans 5:12-14; 8:18-21) Why does so much that Genesis 1-3 says about God, mankind, the universe, etc. run counter to what the world around us teaches? (consider also Romans 1:18-25)

- tempted & deceived by the serpent (i.e. Satan; cf. Rev. 12:9), the man and the woman God had created (Adam & Eve) sinned by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had commanded them not to eat of
 - their 'eyes were opened', and they recognized their nakedness and hid from God
- God seeks out the man & woman and asks what they did --> Adam blames the woman (and God); the woman blames the serpent
- God pronounces a curse on the serpent and on the Creation, with significant impacts on mankind
 - sin coming to mankind, and death through sin --> affecting every person since Adam & Eve (Rom. 5:12ff) (save Jesus Christ, who was sinless)
 - pain, toil, and futility of life --> ultimately, death (3:16-19)
 - Creation itself is subjected to futility and bondage to decay (Rom. 8:18-21); would now resist the rule of mankind (3:18-19)
 - inevitable decay, destruction; unintended consequences associated with our actions
 - a destructive dynamic enters the male-female relationship (3:16) --> instead of loving headship & submission, conflict and disunity/"battle of the sexes"
- so much that Genesis 1-3 teaches runs counter to what the world teaches because mankind has rejected God
 - began with Satan questioning the truthfulness and the goodness of God - "Did God really say..." (3:1)
 - though mankind knew God, they chose not to glorify Him or give thanks to Him (Rom. 1:18-25) --> exchanged the truth of God for a lie; became futile in their thinking
 - mankind sought to make itself the standard, rather than God's commands -- thinking selves wise ("knowledge of good & evil"), became fools (Rom. 1:22)

-In the face of the disastrous events and aftermath of Genesis 3, what hope does God provide in Genesis 3:14-15?

- God pronounces a curse on the serpent (i.e. Satan - cf. Rev. 12:9)
 - crawling on belly and eating dust - not literally "eating dust", but a promise of defeat
- God promises a seed/offspring from the woman who would crush the serpent's head - i.e. strike a decisive blow and secure victory over Satan - yet would Himself be wounded in the process
 - a promise of a coming Savior - Jesus Christ
 - the rest of the Bible is the outworking of this promise

For further reflection

As we've seen over the past 2 studies, Genesis 1-3 lays the foundations for the Christian worldview. It tells us about who God is and who we are. It tells us about how we and the world came into being, and about why the world and mankind are the way they are today - fallen, and subject to bondage to death and decay. And it tells us of a loving and gracious God who promises one day to send a Savior that would set things right. The rest of the Bible is the unfolding and outworking of this promise.

As we've seen, the truths of Genesis 1-3 are very much at odds with much of what the world thinks and teaches. This should not be surprising, as this conflict traces its origins all the way back to the Garden of Eden, when the Serpent came to Adam & Eve with the question, "Did God really say...", and when mankind chose to listen to the Serpent rather than to God. Since that time, as Romans 1:18-25 tells us, mankind has walked in rebellion against our Creator, refusing to glorify Him as God or to give thanks to Him, but choosing instead to go our own way, exchanging the truth of God for a lie, and setting our own standards of right and wrong instead of submitting to God's.

Reflect again on your own worldview in light of Genesis 1-3. Is the way you understand the world and the issues facing our society today informed by God's Word, or by those who would question and oppose God and His ways?

Additional Resources

CGYG/LIFE website: www.cgygfellowship.com (Resources section)

- Genesis Bible study series: http://www.cgygfellowship.com/BBS_Genesis.shtml
- OT Daily Devotional series

CGC website

- OT Survey and Genesis adult Christian education materials: <http://www.cgctorenglish.chinesegospelchurch.ca> (Resources section)