I. The Primeval History

02-Jun-02 Genesis 1-11 Schaeffer pp. 9-10

Theme: The early chapters of Genesis introduce us to the grand themes of Scripture and tell us today who God is, who Man is, and gives us hope for deliverance in the midst of a Fallen world.

Introduction

Welcome to our summer study on Genesis 1-11. This is the first of what I hope will become a four-quarter survey on the book of Genesis. We’ll cover The Primeval History of chapters 1-11 this summer. Next summer, Lord willing, I hope to cover the life of Abraham in chapters 12-25 of Genesis. After that, we’ll see.

What I’d like to do today is to get us all oriented on Genesis 1-11 by giving an introduction or overview to the material. The first question to ask is, “Why study Genesis at all, or Genesis 1-11 in particular?” In our textbook, Schaeffer gives a succinct answer on page 9 in the preface: “In some ways these chapters [Genesis 1-11] are the most important ones in the Bible, for they put man in his cosmic setting and show him his peculiar uniqueness.”

Another way to answer it is this: Just as a building depends on its foundation for support, the entire Bible rests on the foundation of Genesis in general and the primeval history of Genesis 1-11 in particular. In these opening chapters of the opening book of God’s revelation to man, we learn of God and His work, of man and his work, of the relationship between God and man, of the terrible consequences of sin that have such great impact for all of Adam’s descendents, and the way of salvation. The themes of judgment and grace are repeatedly in view in the early chapters of Genesis.

Schaeffer is very “big” on the idea of historicity. That is to say, the early chapters of Genesis are historical, real life accounts of what really happened. Today, the tendency is to “spiritualize” these events, to make them moral stories but divorce them from what actually happened. “As long as the doctrine is taught, it would not matter if the stories ever happened or not” (Jordan). The problem with this approach is that if it doesn’t matter whether or not Adam really existed or not, then by extrapolation, it doesn’t really matter whether or not Jesus came in the flesh to redeem sinners. If Adam really didn’t represent all mankind when he fell, then we don’t really need a Savior to redeem us. If the First Adam is a myth, the Second Adam is superfluous.

However, too many “Christians” today are embarrassed by what Genesis 1-11, and in particular Genesis 1-3 say. James Jordan says that one way for them to get around this embarrassment is “to say that the early chapters of Genesis are simply not historical at all. These texts, in other words, exist for ideas only and not for history. They are just stories, ‘pregnant myths,’ designed to teach us about God and man and the world according to this view. Orthodox Christians cannot accept this way of reading the early chapters of Genesis. In a word, such a reading is Gnostic, rejecting history in favor of mere ideas. Liberal ‘Christianity,’ whose general approach to Genesis 1 is in this manner, is Gnostic.”

Schaeffer is very correct to bring us back face to face with the historicity of Genesis. These events happened. And it matters tremendously to us today that they happened, because in understanding what happened and why it happened, we can begin to understand ourselves and our desperate need for God. If you relegate Genesis 1-11 as myth, you gut the Christian religion.
of its essential value. All you are left with is moral tales and ethical situations. You end up with a Pharisaical religion, devoid of all power and true content.

Genesis 1-11 covers the period from Creation to Abraham. It is at least several thousand years of history, compressed into 11 short chapters. Thus, it is not “exhaustive” history, but a selective account. Thus, we should pay careful attention to the included material and order/arrangement of ideas. No word is idly used, there is a tremendous “economy” here in which a lot is said in a small space. It is our job to unpack it.

So, this quarter, I hope to encourage all of us to dig into the text of Genesis, to come face to face with our Creator God, to ground ourselves once again in the truths of the Gospel even in its early form, that we might be an approved workman like Noah: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8).

Overview of Textbook

As I begin, let me say a few words about our textbook, *Genesis in Space and Time* by Francis Schaeffer. I’ve probably read this book half a dozen times, and I always find something useful in it. I fully recommend it to you, and I hope you read it. But I have three caveats that you need to be aware of.

First, the book is not a full treatment of Genesis 1-11, Schaeffer does a pretty good job on Genesis 1-3, but then his treatment of the later chapters drops off. You can see this from the lesson plan. Schaeffer covers Genesis 1-3 in pages 13 to 108 (95 pages), while he only takes 52 pages for Genesis 4-11. Thus, while I do recommend that you read along in Schaeffer as we go through Genesis, be aware that I will be supplementing heavily from other commentaries and sources.

Second, Schaeffer’s treatment is mostly topical and only loosely exegetical. That is, he does not do a verse by verse treatment of the text. This is particularly true for the first several chapters of Genesis. There is nothing wrong with this at all, and the points he raises are for the most part very useful. However, I’ve chosen to follow a more traditional path and go through the text verse by verse, and thus I’ve recommended sections in Schaeffer that are not in order. For example, look at the lesson plan for weeks 3, 4, and 5. There you can see that Schaeffer’s treatment of Genesis 1 and 2 jumps around a bit. Hopefully, that won’t be too distracting. After Genesis two, Schaeffer’s treatment more or less follows the text of Genesis.

Third, I have to warn you that there are several sections in Schaeffer’s book that I disagree with. I have eight specific instances in the book where I have problems. Almost all of these have to do with genealogy and chronology. Let me specifically list the 8 occasions, and I suggest you flag them in your book. I’ve flagged them in my copy by writing a question mark off to the side.

1. p. 57 *Day* - takes no position on length of creation day
2. p. 114 2nd paragraph in *The Culture of the Ungodly Line* – Gen. 4:11-24 - literary form, not chronology
3. pp. 122-124 *Genealogy and Chronology* – main section of his arguments
4. p. 128 2nd paragraph in “*These Are the Generations*” - generations as section end, not as section beginning
5. pp. 134-135 *The Date of the Flood* – before 20,000 B.C.
6. pp. 138-139 bottom paragraph - Ice Age Date about 10,000 B.C.
7. p. 150 *Genealogy not Chronology* – same argument
8. pp. 154-156 The Generations of Shem – another main section of his arguments against chronology

However, apart from these sections, which really boil down to a single different interpretation, I heartily recommend the book to you. Actually, it’s sort of ironic that Schaeffer makes a big deal about history and historicity, about the reality of space-time events, and then takes this position on chronology in Genesis. He says at the top of page 156, “In the flow of history in Genesis 1-11, therefore, I feel there really is no final discussion possible concerning dating (not of the opposite sex). On the Bible’s side there are the questions we’ve just considered (some objections he’s raised), and on modern science’s side there are certainly many questions as to whether science’s dating systems are accurate.”

So, Schaeffer, writing 30 years ago, feels a bit caught between the clear sense of Scripture for a “young earth” and the widespread scientific theory of “millions and billions of years” of evolution. It will be my position in this class that whenever the words of Scripture seem to be at odds with the pronouncements of science, that Scripture wins. I have great respect for science, for it seeks the truth by studying the creation. But I have greater respect for the Word of God, the direct communication of the Creator to us. We will not be trying to interpret Scripture through science. Rather, we will let Scripture speaks as it will, and draw our conclusions from it.

Title

Eveson: The title “Genesis” is actually derived from the Septuagint rendering of a word used in 2:4 and numerous other places in the book, variously translated into English as “generations,” “history,” “account,” or “genealogy.”

Gen. 2:4 “This is the history of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”

The Greek word genesis actually means “origin” or “source.” The name of the book in Hebrew is taken from the opening, “In the beginning.”

Genre

The book of Genesis is written as a historical narrative. Doug Kelly writes, “The first eleven chapters of Genesis are written as historical narrative much the same way that I and II Chronicles are written. That is, they are theological interpretations of actual states of affairs that have occurred in the space/time cosmos. However, Creation has a primeval uniqueness about it that is absent from other historical accounts. Simply stated, the writer of Genesis meant to say what the historic Christian Church (until the mid-nineteenth century) believed he said. That is, he intended to speak factually of what happened at the beginning. In summary, the type of literature found in Genesis 1-11 is historical narrative though of a unique variety.”

Author

The traditional author of Genesis is Moses, although it is not stated in the book itself. This derives from the frequent allusions to the “law of Moses” or the “books of Moses.” Genesis is part of what is called the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible – these are the books of Moses.

How did Moses write the book of Genesis? Well, obviously, he was directed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But it appears that the book of Genesis is made up of different accounts, which have been edited together. It is very possible that while Moses is the final
author of Genesis, he compiled it from different sources in a human fashion. Perhaps the history of creation had been transmitted by God to Adam and then written down to preserve it and pass it on to Seth. The history of Noah would have been preserved in the same way and passed on down to Shem, and so on. Young says, “If we approach the question scripturally of how Moses learned the truth of Genesis one, we will be compelled to the conclusion that the author of Genesis one was a holy man who was borne by the Holy Spirit. God, in His providence, prepared by training and education the particular man whom he desired to write the first chapter of the Bible, and when that man set to the work of writing he was superintended by the Spirit of God with the result that what he wrote was what the Spirit of God desired him to write. If he did employ ancient documents he was protected and guided in his use of them so that he chose from them only what God desired to employ.”

James Jordan proposes that Joseph arranged much of the material of Genesis that we now have. You might ask, “Why would he think that?” His answer is that “if Moses wrote Genesis, that means that the Hebrews in captivity did not have any Bible from God to read and meditate upon. Genesis 1 would not have been part of the thought-world of the patriarchs.” They had no written Word of God to cling to. They could not look for the promise of the deliverer of Genesis 3:15, because they did not have Genesis 3:15. So, Jordan suggests “that this book of Genesis was the Bible of the Hebrews in captivity. It was the light to their feet and provided them the hope of a deliverance to come.”

On the other hand, there are those (such as Richard Pratt) who feel very strongly that not only was Moses the author, but the main reason that he wrote Genesis was to “justify their social order. From Creation to the Tower of Babel, Moses writes about how God orders society.” This social ordering then is used to explain what was happening in Moses’ day. “To resist Moses was to resist God’s created order.” Thus, in this interpretation, the Primeval History mirrors and explains the Hebrew captivity, Exodus, and entrance into the Promised Land. The land of Canaan becomes the new Creation – the new Garden of Eden. The corruption of the world before the Flood points to the land of Egypt as the land of hardship because of sin. And the judgment of the Flood ushers in a new world order with new blessings for God’s people, the children of Israel.

In my opinion, that is reading a little too much into the text. It seems a bit “self-serving” to suggest that Moses wrote Genesis 1-11 to justify his leadership and what he wanted to do. On the other hand, there are significant parallels between the primeval history and the history of Israel, just as there are significant parallels between the primeval history and the ministry and work of Jesus Christ. And that makes sense. The great act of redemption in the Old Testament is the Exodus – the deliverance of God’s people out of slavery to service. The Bible and the Church rightly connects that Old Testament deliverance and their hope of rest in the Promised Land with the New Testament deliverance won by Jesus and our hope of eternal rest in heaven. And it shouldn’t be too hard to connect the Primeval History with Jesus either, because all Scripture points to Jesus. We have the kernel of the gospel in Genesis 3:15, and the rest of the Scriptures unpack it, until we see Christ in all His glory in the New Testament. So, as we go along, I will be pointing out some of the parallels between the Primeval History and that of the Exodus, as well as the work and ministry of Christ. I think the parallels are valid and valuable, instructing us and giving us hope.

Themes
Well, let’s look at some of the main themes of Genesis 1-11.
The most obvious theme is that of origins, or beginnings. We have the beginnings of the creation, the first man, the first woman, the first sin, the first birth, the first murder, the first covenant, the first global destruction, etc. We have the origins of worship, work, marriage, family, sin, death, society, language, culture, etc.

Genesis 1-11 introduces us to God. We see Him as the Creator and Lord of the Universe. We see His power, His omniscience, His goodness, His love, His glory. We see His justice and wrath, but we also see His mercy and forgiveness. In Genesis 1, He is referred to as Elohim, the all-powerful one, the Creator. In Genesis 2 and 3, He is YHWH Elohim, the personal, covenant-making God, who makes a covenant with Adam and Eve and then has to execute justice when they become covenant breakers. And in Genesis 4, He is YHWH, the LORD, the one we worship. Abel worships YHWH correctly; Cain does not. So, even in the names of God, we begin to learn who He is.

Third, the knowledge of the origin of all things should drive us back to the Originator – to God. Atkinson applies this to ancient Israel: “Genesis 1 provides a rock of stability for the people of God when faced with the lure of pagan religions around them. Genesis 1 calls them back to the worship of the one sovereign majestic Lord, who, in the transcendent freedom of His creative Word, is the source of all things, all life, all creatures, all people.” Young echoes the same thought for modern man: “Entertaining a higher view of the trustworthiness of the first chapter of Genesis will lead us into a greater reverence and love for Him who is the Creator of heaven and earth.”

The book of Genesis gives us a right perspective to look at the world. We can understand the world around us, because we have the right “spectacles” to look through. We can understand that there is an all-powerful personal God who made everything – we don’t have to slip into the despair of an impersonal universe. We can understand that man is created in the image of God and has great value. However, we can also understand that man has fallen into sin and needs a redeemer. We can understand the right relationship between God and man, and have hope in redemption. We can look around us and understand what is truth and what is the “foolishness of men” because we have God’s explanation of what is truly real and really true.

Jordan points out that the early chapters of Genesis show us how God transforms creation from glory to glory. God is continually pronouncing the creation good. At the end of Creation, everything is “very good.” The rest of Genesis then shows what happens to Creation. “In the very first chapter we see God create the world, and then out of this beginning develops one good thing after another, with each new thing “begetting” in a broad way the next new thing as the Spirit works with the world. Then Genesis records a series of epochs in early history, each of which is “begotten” by the old one that precedes it, and each of which transforms the old into something new.” God does this primarily by working through people. “These are the generations” points to the focus on people as agents of transformation. We go from Adam and his sons to Noah and his sons, to Abraham and his sons, to Isaac and his sons, to Jacob and his sons, and so on.

This focus on accomplishing God’s objectives in transforming creation through men points out one of the major themes of Genesis 1-11: the godly and ungodly lines. There are two humanities in view in the book of Genesis: the seed of the serpent, and the seed of woman. We are continually reminded of this contrast between the godly line and the
ungodly line in the way Genesis is set up. We are given genealogies of both lines. We see the line of Cain contrasted with the line of Seth. We see the line of Ham and Japheth contrasted with the line of Shem. Out of all the families of the world in Genesis 10, one is chosen by God – the family of Abraham, through whom all nations would be blessed. Thus, the promise of the seed in Genesis 3:15 is traced through the rest of the book.

- Finally, the Primeval History teaches us that in the beginning God created a perfect world, and that is what we need and long for today. Eveson writes, “The need for a new creation and a new paradise is the theme of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. They give the background to the call of Abraham, who is clearly the central figure. One man’s sin brought about universal catastrophe, whereas the calling and setting apart of one man, and the promised blessing made to him and through him to all humanity, counteracts the curses that human sin merited.” We need a new creation. That is our hope in Christ.

To summarize, some of the main themes in Genesis 1-11 are: beginnings or origins; the nature and work of God; focus on worship of the Creator; explanation of current realities; transformation; the godly and ungodly lines; and the hope of a new creation.

**Structure**

*Eveson:* The Greek title “Genesis” taken from 2:4 also draws our attention to the structure of the book. “This is the history of…” or “This is the genealogy of…” is an oft-repeated formula in Genesis. It occurs eleven times and in each case (apart from 36:9) it introduces a new section of material. After the prologue (1:1-2:3) describing the formation of the universe, and particularly the earth, there are ten main sections introduced by this formula:

I. 2:4-4:26 The offspring of heaven and earth
II. 5:1-6:8 The offspring of Adam
III. 6:9-9:29 The offspring of Noah
IV. 10:1-11:9 The offspring of Noah’s sons
V. 11:10-26 The offspring of Shem
VI. 11:27-25:11 The offspring of Terah
VII. 25:12-18 The offspring of Ishmael
VIII. 25:19-35:29 The offspring of Isaac
IX. 36:1-37:1 The offspring of Esau (in two parts (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)
X. 37:2-50:26 The offspring of Jacob

*Eveson:* The opening words, “This is the genealogy of…” remind us that we are beginning a new section. The phrase occurs eleven times throughout Genesis and could be translated, “This is what x produced.” In no way can it mean, “This is the origins of x.” It is not dealing with ancestors, but with offspring. In 2:4 it is used metaphorically for what heaven and earth produced. Thereafter, it is used literally. Each time the phrase appears it acts like a section heading. They are there to emphasize the great purpose of the book of Genesis. These headings have the effect of binding the whole book together and focusing our minds on the promises of God. Genesis highlights the importance of “seed,” or “offspring.” It is therefore most appropriate to have this introductory expression drawing our attention to a family line. The very structure of Genesis calls us to look to a seed that God will use to gain victory over the devil and his offspring.

In this class, we will be looking at the introductory section of Genesis on creation (1:1-2:3), and then the next five sections of Genesis, set apart by this introductory phrase “This is the history of...
...” You’ll notice that many of the sections are short, while the longest two sections are the offspring of Terah (the story of Abraham) and the offspring of Jacob (the story of Joseph). We’ll just have to save those sections for another time!

**Overview of Genesis 1-11**

**Big Picture**

I’ve provided a detailed outline of Genesis 1-11 in your handout material. Let’s take a few minutes to become familiar with the contents and layout of Genesis 1-11. We’ll be referring to this time and again during the class, so it will be useful if we have an appreciation for the overall structure of the text.

Following the lead of Richard Pratt, I’ve divided Genesis 1-11 in four larger groups of material, and in this case, I don’t follow the “offspring” groupings exactly. The first section is called “A Perfect World,” and it covers the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. The second section is entitled “Paradise Lost and Found,” and covers Genesis 2 and 3, including the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man. The third section is “A World of Violence,” and tells the story of Cain and Abel and traces the godly and ungodly lines up to the time of the Flood. The fourth section I’ve called “Judgment and Hope;” judgment because of God’s dealings with the Flood and the Tower of Babel, but hope, because of God’s mercy to Noah and the focusing of the promises to the line of Shem and ultimately to Abraham, the father of faith. So, that’s the big picture.

**Chiasm**

One of the things we’ll be talking about somewhat in this class as we look at literary structures is the concept of “chiasm.” “The word ‘chiasm’ comes from the Greek letter chi and written X. This X shape, when we look at it from bottom to top, represents a literary structure that presents certain ideas, moves to a central pivot point, and then upwards to the representation of those same ideas in a transformed way. An extended chiasm is also called a palistrophe.” The interesting thing about a chiastic structure is that it gives resolution. A problem is stated, a turning point occurs, and the problem is resolved. There is closure, there is completeness. And we will see this structure time and again in our study of Genesis 1-11.

**A Perfect World (1:1-2:3)**

We see this in the first section, “A Perfect World.” I’ve shown in the outline three main points. The first point (1:1-2) is the condition of the primeval world after God has created it, but before he structures and transforms it. The third section (2:1-3) is the resolution of the created earth into an ideal world for mankind. In between are the six days of ordering (1:3-25). These days can also be arranged in various ways – chiastically, parallel panels, etc. Some of the structures are a bit complicated; we may or may not look at them more closely when we study the passage in detail. But for now, just realize that there is a very complicated structure to the six days of creation that make up the central point of the Creation narrative. The point is this – God works in time and in space to prepare a place for Man. At the end of the account, God saw that everything was “very good,” and he blessed Creation and rested from His labors. These are very important concepts. We’ll get to those later.

**Paradise Lost and Found (Gen. 2:4-3:24)**

The second section, “Paradise Lost and Found” (Gen. 2:4-3:24), contains four sections which can also be considered chiastically. The first section shows humanity in the Garden of Eden (2:4-17). “We have a panoramic view of the Garden of Eden and its splendor. This view is then
narrowed to the creation of Adam and his placement in it to work in the Garden.” Secondly, we see humanity’s condition enhanced (2:17-25). “God adds even greater blessings in Adam’s life. The section is introduced by stating a problem – Adam is alone. The rest of the section amplifies the search for a helper and the creation of Eve to solve the problem.” In the third section, humanity’s condition cursed (3:1-21), we have a reversal of the condition of humanity from the previous section. “In this section, we are introduced to a new character, the tempting serpent. We have here the serpent’s temptation and the results of God’s curse.” Finally, to balance the first section, we have humanity out of garden (3:22-24). “God drives Adam and Eve out of the Garden to prevent them from eating of the Tree of Life. Cherubim kept them out. They no longer have access to the Garden.”

There is symmetry between the first and last section. First, we see that mankind starts in paradise but then is removed from paradise. Next, we see the focus on the two trees. In the first section, the focus is on the prohibition against the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the final section, God is concerned with prohibiting access to the Tree of Life. Finally, we see that Adam is “commissioned to blessed work without pain” in the Garden (2:15), but that there is difficult toil outside the Garden. All these contrasts show “that the most desirable place to be was in the Garden of Eden.”

So, we can see from the second major section of Genesis, that sin has damaged the perfect relationships between God and man (2:18). “God is concerned for Adam; brings him a perfect partner; they live in peace and harmony.” However, in 3:8, there is disharmony: “Adam and Eve hide from God; God speaks in anger.” We also have a change in the relationships between humans. In 2:23 “we have the first love poem of the Bible. Adam and Eve lived together, naked but without shame.” However, in 3:16, “human relationships are disrupted; there is difficulty and struggle.” Adam and Eve are naked and ashamed. Finally, human beings now have to struggle with evil. In chapter 2, evil is missing; in chapter 3, it becomes an all too real part of their existence. “Although the Seed has been promised, there is no immediate relief.”

A World of Violence (4:1-6:8)

The third main section, “A World of Violence” (4:1-6:8), is composed of two main parts. The first part, chapters 4-5 contains two sets of parallel narratives. The first and third section contrasts sinful Cain (4:1-16) with righteous Seth (4:25-26). The story of Cain and Abel (4:1-16), has a chiastic structure. In the beginning, we see Cain and Abel together. At the end of the story, we see that Abel is dead and that Cain has been banished from the land of Eden to the land of Nod, the land of restlessness. The second and fourth sections have to do with coming before God: first, in worship with sacrifices; and then later in a “trial” of Cain reminiscent of the trial of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The pivot point of the story occurs in verse 8, when as God warned, sin masters Cain and he murders his brother Abel. The sin of Adam has found its way into the next generation. In contrast, we are given a very brief view of the righteous line of Seth. “Then men began to call on the name of the LORD” (4:26b).
The second and fourth sections contrast Cain’s sinful lineage (4:17-24) with the righteous lineage of Seth. (5:1-32). Here we see playing out in full force this major theme of the two humanities – the godly and ungodly lines. It’s interesting to note that the parallelism of these two genealogical sections carries over even into the names of the people in the lines. “Both Cain’s and Seth’s lineage contains the names Enoch and Lamech. Moses contrasts these names with each other: sinful vs. righteous. Enoch: in 4:17, Cain names his city after his son Enoch; in 5:24, Seth’s Enoch walked with God. Lamech: in 4:23, Cain’s Lamech was a boastful murderer; in 5:29, Seth’s Lamech (the father of Noah), named his son as a prayer to God that Noah would be a deliverer from the curse of Adam and Eve.”

The second main part of this larger section is actually quite short – only eight verses (6:1-8). In these few verses, we see the condition of the world descending into violence and wickedness and evil. The sin of Adam has corrupted the entire human race and sin dominates humanity. As a result, “God responds by determining to employ massive judgment and destruction. Happily, this section does not end in judgment.” The last verse of this section gives us hope. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (6:8). “There remained one man who provided hope for future generations – Noah.”

“In these passages there are two major issues: 1) the threat of violence from Cain and his descendents; 2) the threat of violence from the sons of God and Nephilim. In both cases, God indicates deliverance from the one special son of Seth – the man named Noah.” So already, we have the hint of a deliverer in the form of Noah. The question is, “Is Noah the promised deliverer, the promised Seed?” Although the answer is “no,” still Noah does point ahead to the Greater Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

Judgment and Hope (6:9-11:26)
The final major portion of Genesis 1-11 is a section I’ve entitled “Judgment and Hope” (6:9-11:26). This section is divided into two main parts: the Great Flood (6:9-9:17) and the New World Order (9:18-11:26).

The Flood narrative is also a five-part chiasm. This is a story of judgment on the wicked, but it is also a story of the deliverance of righteous Noah. The first section (6:9-22) shows God entering into a covenantal relationship with Noah. This balances the final section in 8:20-9:17, where God establishes the enduring Noahic covenant with the sign of the rainbow. The second and fourth sections show the flood arriving and the flood abating. And in the center is the pivot – “Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing and all the animals that were with him in the ark” (8:1a). It is at this point that everything changes. Before this verse, the water is rising up and destroying creation. Now, God moves to dry up the water and re-establish life on earth. This structure with God in the center reminds us of the purpose and function of the flood – it provides both judgment and hope: judgment against wickedness, and hope of redemption for the faithful.

The New World Order shows Noah as a second Adam, going out and repopulating the earth. There are a lot of similarities here: Adam is a gardener; Noah plants a vineyard; Adam is blessed and told to be fruitful and multiply, and so is Noah; from Adam come a godly and ungodly line, the same is seen from Noah’s three sons (the chosen line comes through Shem). And so it should be no surprise that we find sin in the garden (or in this case vineyard) of Noah. As a result of the sin of Ham, there is a curse that falls on his son Canaan, reminding us of the curse of Genesis 3. Following the curse on Canaan and the blessing on Shem and Japheth, we have another
genealogy in chapter 10, showing that Noah’s sons obeyed the command to be fruitful and multiply. This genealogy reminds us of the one in chapter 5, again paralleling the earlier account of Adam and his sons.

Following the table of nations in chapter 10, we come to the account of the Tower of Babel. Once again, we have a five-part chiasm. “In the beginning humanity is unified with one common language.” However, at the end, humanity is dispersed, scattered with many languages.” “The second step is humanity’s plan where they determine to build a city to be unified,” which contrasts with the fourth step of “the Divine plan where God stops the construction of the city and tower.” “The turning point is the Divine investigation (11:5), where God determines to see what is happening.” So we see God intervening in history to avert the sinful intentions of men, before their wickedness can grow to the same proportions as was present before the Flood. Thus, we see the grace of God’s providence in ruling His creation and restraining evil. We can thank God that while mankind is totally depraved – that is, sinful in every intent and action – we are not absolutely depraved – that is, as completely wicked as we could be. God acts in history to restrain wickedness.

Furthermore, God acts in history to promote blessing. We see that in the final portion of our study in the genealogy of Shem. God is constantly working in history to select a chosen line. The line narrows from Adam to Seth to Noah to Shem, and now to a particular line of Shem’s descendents – to the line of Eber, the ancestor of Abraham, the one chosen by God to bless all nations. So, even though there is judgment against wickedness, we end our study of Primeval History with hope in what is to come.

**Conclusion**

So, that’s the roadmap of where we will be going this summer. There’s a lot of ground to cover. Much of this section of the Bible is familiar ground to all of us, but I believe we can benefit by looking at it again, looking at it anew.

I’ve spent some time this morning in a general introduction to the class, to Genesis, and to Genesis 1-11. We’ve seen that some of the main themes in Genesis 1-11 are: beginnings or origins; the nature and work of God; focus on worship of the Creator; explanation of current realities; transformation; the godly and ungodly lines; and the hope of a new creation.

I also went over the literary structure of Genesis 1-11 in some detail, because I think it gives us some insights into the message of the text. Already, we can see the goodness of God in Creation; the damage that sin has caused; the judgment of God against wickedness; and the hope of blessing through God’s chosen deliverer.

As we go through Genesis 1-11 this summer, my prayer is that each of us will reach a greater reverence and love for Him who is the Creator of heaven and earth.

Close in Prayer.

Next week: Lesson 2 – “In the Beginning God” (Gen. 1:1-2) Schaeffer pp. 13-34