

Osaka International Church
Date: September 21st, 2008
Daniel Ellrick
Series: Patriarchs
Title: Get Understanding
Scripture: Genesis 1-50
Key Verse: Proverbs 4:5

I. Introduction

Good morning! This is our 33rd and last message in our Genesis series. After this, we will have some special messages and then we will probably start a new series in November. I am thinking of doing a study in Luke next, but everyone is welcome to suggest ideas via the Share & Communicate Cards as well. I will pray about all of the suggestions I receive before making a final decision. Today, I want to review a few things from Genesis, and provide a little more perspective on the book as a whole.

Let's begin by comparing the first and last verses. **Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** And **Genesis 50:26 "So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt."** In Genesis 1:1, we see the beginning of all things; God decides to create the universe and takes action. Before God creates, nothing exists except God. This shows that God is completely independent and all-powerful. God alone acts and does His will. And what does God do? He creates all things, including mankind, according to His plan and purpose.

But at the end of Genesis, in Genesis 50:26, we see a very different picture. Instead of a beginning, there is an end. Joseph is old, and he dies. They embalm him and place him in a coffin. In Genesis 1:1, everything was new and we can feel the energy of new and abundant life. But in Genesis 50:26, Joseph is old and life slips away. Yet, there is also hope. Joseph is in a coffin in Egypt, but he will not stay there forever. The idea of the resurrection has already been taught in Genesis through God's promises and the events of history. The coming of the Savior who will defeat sin and death has been prophesied and modeled many times. If you read Genesis, I think you will agree that you arrive at the closing verse filled with hope for the future. Joseph will rise again.



Genesis is the story of creation, the story of the fall, and the story of God's promise to bring restoration to all things. Genesis gives us hope. Yet, to enjoy this hope, we need to have a basic understanding of the facts of our own existence and situation. Genesis gives us what we need, answers to life's toughest questions.

II. Teaching

Genesis 1:1 tells us, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** These are simple words, but they are full of deep meaning. They tell us that there was a beginning, and that there is an all-powerful Creator God. Some people like to think that all religions and philosophies are basically alike. But the very first sentence of the Bible shows that this is not true. We are free to decide for ourselves what we believe. But we need to make a choice.

If Genesis 1:1 is true, then atheism, agnosticism, polytheism, materialism, humanism, pantheism, monism, and deism are all false. These philosophies are all logically incompatible with Genesis 1:1. Some of these words may be unfamiliar, but these are the ideas on which communism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, and new age religions are based. There are many ideas that we can choose from, but the bottom line is clear; only monotheistic religions that believe in a Creator God, such as the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths, are logically compatible with Genesis 1:1. And, as we discussed when we studied Genesis chapter 1 in detail, I am convinced that only Christianity is fully consistent with the first chapter of Genesis, because Genesis 1 also reveals that God is singular in essence and plural in personality; and that requires the Christian doctrine of the trinity, one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

World View Choices 世界觀的選擇	
X	Atheism 無神論
X	Agnosticism 不可知論
X	Polytheism 多神論
X	Materialism 物質主義
X	Humanism 人間主義
X	Pantheism 汎神論
X	Monism 一元論
X	Deism 理神論
O	Monotheism 唯一神教

God created all things, the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and even non-physical things like light, energy, and time. And God created us, **Genesis 1:27** says, “**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**” Michelangelo painted Adam as a literal image of God with the two reaching out to touch each other, but it is clear that the Scripture is not talking about a physical resemblance.



It is not the body of man that is made in the image of God; the meaning is more subtle than that. For example, God is a Creator, and man is also driven by a desire to make new things. God makes moral decisions, and man also has free will. God is eternal, and man also has the potential for eternal life. God is a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and man is a trinity of body, mind, and spirit. Men and women are made in the image of God in their inner nature, not in outward appearance.

God created all things good. **Genesis 1:31**, “**God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.**” The story of creation is structured as six days, but whether these days are intended to be taken literally or not is less clear. In any case, the length of time is not the main point; the main point is that God created all things, step-by-step in an orderly fashion, with plan and purpose.



If we allow for some use of figurative language, then the Genesis account is in agreement with modern science in many ways. And we can be confident that where there are issues, that those issues will eventually be resolved through better science, or through better interpretation of the Scriptures. Ultimately there cannot be any disagreement between nature and the Bible, because both are given by God. And, the Scriptures urge us to examine nature for evidence of God’s existence and ways. **Psalm 19:1**, “**The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**” The Christian faith is not a blind faith; it is solidly based on evidence, the evidence of Scripture, the evidence of nature and history, and the evidence of the testimony of millions who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.



God has given us the freedom to choose what we believe, but we are also held responsible for our choices. So, what we believe really matters. Have you ever heard of Yogi Berra, the major league baseball legend and occasional philosopher? Yogi once said, “*You can see a lot by just looking.*” Some people say they don’t see the evidence for God; maybe they should try looking a little more. God has provided sufficient evidence for us to believe in Him. We just need to look and see.



God created all things very good, but then Satan, one of God’s powerful angels, fell into the sin of pride and was cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-13). Then Satan, who we also call the devil, appeared as a snake in the Garden of Eden and tempted Eve. Eve, and then Adam also, gave in to temptation and disobeyed God’s command. The Bible record of the fall is so simple that a child can understand it, yet it is full of deep meaning. This is one of the characteristics of Genesis; there is deep meaning on every page; yet, the key points are easy for even a child to understand. God created all things good. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and sin came into the world. Since that time we live in a fallen world, and our only hope is to reconcile with God through believing His Word and obeying Him.



Genesis 3:8, “**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.**” The Lord God walked in the garden and Adam and Eve heard the sound of His footsteps. God is Spirit, but in the person of Jesus Christ, God takes on human form. And here, I think what we see is Jesus coming to look for His lost sheep. Adam and Eve had an intimate relationship with the Lord; they used to walk together. But now things have changed. Adam and Eve are ashamed of their sin and they hide from God.

Genesis uses the storytelling method of teaching. The author tells the story and leaves it to us to think about what it means. This is a powerful way to teach, because the more we think about the story, the more we learn. And if we reflect on the story of the Garden of Eden, I think we can see the truths that **Micah 6:8** spells out for us, **“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”** Here we find our purpose. We were created to walk with God, to live in intimate and loving relationship with Him. That is our purpose. But our sin separates us from God. God will administer justice, but God also opens the way of mercy.

The Lord comes looking for us, seeking to restore the relationship. He calls out to us, **Genesis 3:9b, “Where are you?”** But like Adam and Eve, all too often we hide from Him, because we are ashamed of our sin. We close our ears to His voice; we cover our eyes so that we do not see the evidence of His existence; and we try to go on about our lives pretending that everything is okay. But everything is not okay. We have sinned, and we need to be saved from our sins. And salvation is found only in a renewed relationship with God.



The Lord God found Adam and Eve and announced the grim results that would come from their sin. But the Lord also gave a promise that a Savior would come, and He taught them some basic truths about salvation through a symbolic act. **Genesis 3:21, “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”** From this simple verse we understand that it is the Lord who provides a covering for sin and that the penalty for sin is death, the shedding of blood.



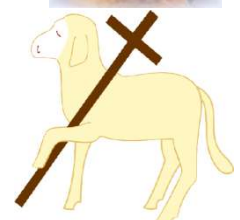
Most of the great truths about our existence and the world around us are covered in the first three chapters of Genesis. But these truths are echoed many times in Genesis. For example, in the story of Noah, we read in **Genesis 6:9b, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.”** Noah walked with God, believed God’s word, and he and his family were saved in the ark.



And, in story of Abraham, in **Genesis 15:6**, it says, **“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”** Abraham believed God, and when his faith was tested in **Genesis 22**, he was ready. When asked about the lamb for the sacrifice, in **Genesis 22:8, “Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.”** And Abraham’s confidence was proved valid; God did provide the lamb.



On that day, God provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. But that was just a prophetic example, or a model. Years later, God provided another lamb, a substitute sacrifice for all of the sins of the whole world. **John 1:29**, records that, **“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** All of Genesis, and all of the Old Testament, point toward the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. You see, the cross of Christ is the provision God has made for saving us from our sins and restoring our relationship with Him. When we trust in Jesus, God cleanses us from the stain of sin and makes us able to walk with Him in intimate fellowship.



We don’t have time to review everything today, but when we remember the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and consider the promises that God made to them and how the Lord watched over them in good times and bad, we realize that they were people of faith. They believed in God. They had a relationship with God. And they knew that God would send a Savior, just as He had promised. Even when they fell into sin, God never abandoned them; instead God forgave and restored them. Genesis makes it clear that God will never abandon His people.



The author of Genesis rarely stops to explain the meaning of the story. It is left to the reader to think about the meaning. And when we do, we find that Genesis reveals a great deal about God’s love, grace, and mercy. God’s love and care extended not only to the patriarchs, but also to many others, people like Hagar, Ishmael, Esau, and Joseph’s brothers - the same ones who sold him into slavery. God even had Joseph give a

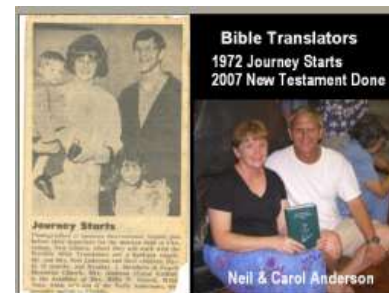
testimony to the Pharaoh of Egypt and to the people of the nations as they came to Egypt to buy grain during the time of the seven year famine. In **1 Timothy 2:4** we are told that God, **“wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”** But I think that if we have eyes to see and ears to hear that we can also find this great truth in Genesis.

III. Conclusion

Take a look at this photo. This man looks different than us, but we have something in common. Look closely, he is holding a booklet of Scriptures. Thirty five years ago, his people, the Folopa tribe of Papua New Guinea, lived in spiritual darkness and fear. But now they have been transformed by the Word of God. They have not changed their style of dress or their way of living, but their hearts have been transformed by God’s love.



How did this happen? Well, in March of 1972, Neil and Carol Anderson, along with their two small children, left America to go and tell the Folopa people about Jesus. They moved into a remote Folopa village and learned the Folopa language, a language that had no textbooks, no writing system, and no teachers. Then, after learning to speak Folopa and inventing a writing system, they began to translate the Bible, starting with portions of Genesis, while also teaching the people how to read and write. It was a big job, but in November, 2007, they celebrated the publication of the completed Folopa New Testament. Neal and Carol dedicated their lives to taking the Good News of Jesus to the Folopa people. They did this because they believed that God wants all people to be saved.



Not only the Folopa tribe, but also all peoples everywhere need answers to the questions of life. They need to hear the Good News that God has sent a Savior, Jesus Christ. In Proverbs, 4:5, we are told, **“Get wisdom, get understanding;”** and then we are also told, **“do not forget my words or swerve from them.”** One part of this verse urges us to find the answers, and the other part reminds us that the answers are to be found in the Word of God. And when we come to know God’s love through Jesus, then we are moved to share the gospel with others.



Many of the answers we need are in the very first book of the Bible. Genesis is full of answers to life’s toughest questions. And Genesis points us to Jesus. Neal and Carol traveled to a remote mountain village to share the Good News about Jesus. But here in Osaka, we are already surrounded by people who need to hear the Word of God. Seize the opportunities that you have every day. Tell people about the Creator God who loves them. Tell people about Jesus.

IV. Let’s Pray