

## Is the Book of Genesis Trustworthy?

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During my early morning prayer run last Sunday, I listened to a podcast about the alarming state of our society and how we must stand on Scripture or we'll get swept away. When I got home I continued listening while getting ready to take a shower. All of a sudden I heard the sound of a piercing alarm coming from my phone. When I looked down at the screen it said, "*Emergency*" and I could see I had inadvertently called 911. I tried to stop the call but it wouldn't disconnect. When the dispatcher answered, she asked, "*What's your emergency?*" I told her I didn't have an emergency and I had called by mistake. I don't think she believed me because I was winded from my run and still breathing hard. Then she said, "*Sir, are you safe?*" I assured her I was fine and apologized again for calling. I half expected a squad car to show up.

Brothers and sisters, there is an alarming emergency in our culture today. Since we have disconnected from the Bible, we are in societal free-fall. Wrong is now right and what is right is now called wrong. Lamentations about abominations in the past have been replaced with much celebration in the present. I'm reminded of Isaiah 5:20: "***Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!***"

Brothers and sisters, we are only safe when we anchor our lives to Scripture. We're continuing in our series called, "Glad You Asked." Last weekend we asked and answered this question: "*Can we really believe the Bible today?*" We looked at 10 proofs and 10 purposes of the Bible and established this truth: *What you believe about the Bible will determine your beliefs and your behavior.*

Our question today is, "*Is the Book of Genesis trustworthy?*" Here's what we're going to discover: *If you want a good ending, begin with the beginning.*

Here's my short answer to the question. We can trust the Book of Genesis because, as we learned last weekend, "***All Scripture is breathed out by God...***" Moses was the human author and the Holy Spirit was the divine author. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, many liberals believed Moses could not have written the Pentateuch (the first five books). It was believed primitive Jews did not have the capacity to write back then. Not surprisingly, this has since been refuted by archaeology, which has conclusively proven that writing was a part of their culture.

Here are some additional reasons you can trust Genesis.

1. The Bible doesn't begin like a fairy tale, "*Once upon a time...*" but with a factual statement, "***In the beginning God...***"
2. Genealogies in Genesis give the names of actual people who lived in specific times of history. In the fact, the entire framework of Genesis is built around genealogies (See chapters 4, 5, 10, 11, 22, 25, 29-30, 35-36, and 46).
3. Jesus Himself confirmed Moses as the author in John 5:46-47: "***For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?***"
4. The scribes and Pharisees referred to Moses as the author of the first five books in Matthew 22:24: "***Teacher, Moses said...***"
5. Jesus quoted from Genesis 2:23-24 in Matthew 19:4-5 when referring to marriage.
6. Jesus acknowledges Noah and the flood in Matthew 24:37: "***For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.***"
7. The Apostle Paul affirms Adam and Eve as real people in 1 Timothy 2:13: "***For Adam was formed first, then Eve.***"
8. Paul also holds up Abraham and Sarah as models of faith in many of his letters as seen in Galatians 4:22: "***For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.***"
9. The Apostle Peter refers to a literal worldwide flood in 2 Peter 3:6: "***...the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.***"
10. One commentator has found at least 165 passages in Genesis that are either directly quoted or clearly referred to in the New Testament.

Let me lay it out clearly. There is ample evidence the human author of Genesis was Moses and it is the first book of the Bible. Therefore we must accept what it teaches, regardless of what society, sociologists or secular scientists might say. Actually, we must do more than just accept Genesis, we're called to contend for our faith so that apostates don't turn the grace of God into a license for sensuality according to Jude 3: "***I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.***"

The Hebrew title comes from the opening words, "***In the beginning.***" Genesis means origin, source and birth, which is why it's referred to as the Book of Beginnings.

## Overview

I appreciate Bible teachers like Chuck Swindoll for their ability to communicate complex truth in understandable ways. Let's consider his visual summary of the Book of Genesis (show slide).

One way to understand Genesis is to see the first 11 chapters deals with the human race and chapters 12-50 explains God's promises to the chosen race. The first chapters describe four major events – creation, the fall, the flood and the nations. The final  $\frac{3}{4}$  or so of the book focuses on four main characters – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

I've also found this outline helpful:

- Generation (1-2)
- Degeneration (3-11)
- Regeneration (12-50)

Here's another one:

- Creation (1-2)
- Catastrophe (3-9)
- Confusion (10-11)
- Covenant (12-50)

This book provides a foundation which the rest of the Bible builds on. J. Sidlow Baxter writes, *“Besides being introductory, Genesis is explanatory...the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.”*

I was helped in my preparation by one of my pastor friends, Ben Lovelady. Ben is the pastor of First Baptist in Silvis. He's been preaching through Genesis for quite some time so I asked him for his input. Listen to his perspective: *“I tried to approach Genesis on its terms more than from our current cultural framework...I've found it yields great results that way. To a degree, the book demands this—that you read it on its terms—in that it begins with, **“In the beginning, God...”** It leaves the existence of God as presumed, which would offend our cultural climate.”*

## **In the Beginning**

*If you want a good ending, begin with the beginning. Let's do that now.*

The opening verse of the Bible is perhaps the most controversial and the most important: ***“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*** Skeptics, atheists, evolutionists, unbelievers and doubters of all varieties have taken aim against the opening chapters of Genesis, arguing that it is absurd to believe in a 6-day Creation, a literal Adam and Eve, a talking serpent, a Garden of Eden, Noah and the Ark, a worldwide flood and the Tower of Babel.

Ray Pritchard points out, *“Unfortunately, many Christians have bought into these attacks to a significant degree. Because we are intimidated by the cacophony of criticism...it has been easier for us to keep silent so we won't be mocked or to make a series of compromises so that we can live at peace with the unbelieving majority...there is no need to make compromises with unbelievers. It never works, it never helps, and they won't be convinced by our compromising anyway.”*

Since Genesis 1:1 is true, Ray lists seven things that cannot be true – atheism, materialism, polytheism, humanism, fatalism, pantheism and evolution:

*“Naturalistic evolution as a worldview is diametrically opposed to biblical faith. It is pagan at its root and evil in its fruit.”*

We could say it this way. If Genesis is not true, then the whole Bible is suspect. If you can't trust what is written here, how can you trust the rest of Scripture? A.W. Pink refers to Genesis as the *“seed plot of the Bible.”* If you discount Adam and Eve, how can you be sure Christ is real?

Write this down: *Genesis either explains it all or it does not explain it at all. You either believe it or you don't. If you don't, you can't believe anything else in the Bible. If you believe it, you can believe everything else the Bible teaches.*

Let's spend some time in the opening verses because this section is foundational to our faith. Six truths bubble to the surface right away.

**1. God is eternal.** Notice we are not given any arguments for the existence of God. The fact is simply declared: ***“In the beginning God...”*** The name for God is Elohim and it is in the plural, meaning there is one God, made up of a plurality

of persons in the Godhead. He is referred to by name 35 times in the first 34 verses! God had no beginning and He will have no end. Psalm 90:2: ***“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”***

My friend Ken Lundeen teaches Hebrew. When I saw him Thursday at the Quad Cities Association of Evangelicals gathering, I told him what I was preaching on and asked if he had any input: *“‘In the beginning’ is a prepositional phrase. The normal word order in Hebrew is Verb, Subject, Object (unlike English which is Subject, Verb, Object). The only reason the word order in Hebrew would be different is if there was something put in the first position of the sentence that GOD wanted to emphasize. Such is the case with Genesis 1:1. He could have just as easily said, ‘Created GOD the heaven and earth in the beginning.’ But He said ‘IN THE BEGINNING created GOD, the Heavens and the Earth.’”*

That reminds me of some scientists who got together and decided they had come a long way and no longer needed God. They picked the smartest one to tell God they were done with Him. The man declared, *“God, we’ve decided that we no longer need you. We’re to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so don’t bother us anymore.”*

God listened very patiently and then said, *“Very well, but before I leave you alone let’s have a man-making contest. We’ll do it just like I did back in the day with Adam.”* The scientist said, *“Sure, no problem”* as he bent down to grab a handful of dirt. God quickly said, *“What are you doing? Go get your own dirt!”*

**2. God created everything.** The second part of verse 1 is profound and yet simple enough for everyone to understand: ***“God created the heavens and the earth.”*** BTW, the word ***“created”*** is used throughout the Bible only with God as its subject. Elohim brings design out of disorder when He created the cosmos out of chaos. He birthed beauty out of barrenness, and He continues to do the same in lives today.

***“And God made the expanse...”*** (7)

***“...And God made the two great lights.”*** (16)

***“So God created the great sea creatures...”*** (21)

***“And God made the beasts of the earth...”*** (25)

***“And God saw everything that He had made...”*** (31)

One of the questions from the congregation was: “*Can we believe in creationism?*” Here’s my short answer. Absolutely. If we believe the Bible, we *must* believe God created the world.

If reason alone does not convince you of creation, hold on to Hebrews 11:3: “***By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.***”

Let’s drill down. God’s creation is...

- **Pervasive.** When you scan the skies, you are gazing at God’s creation; when you look at nature, there is nothing He has not created. Whether you use a telescope or a microscope, whether you examine the surface of Mars or human DNA, it’s clear there is a Creator! In the last book of the Bible, Revelation 4:11 states this truth clearly: “***Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.***”
- **Personal.** God is not some detached deity who flung things into existence from a distance. Nor is He a mere cosmic force. He sees and speaks and is personally involved. God took what was formless and empty and filled it with purpose and meaning. Look at the last part of verse 2: “***...And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.***” Interestingly, in Genesis 1:1, the word “***created***” is in the simple completed form. In verse 2, the word “***hovering***” is in the intensive form, meaning the Spirit was moving continually.

This is a beautiful word in Hebrew. In Deuteronomy 32:11 it’s used to describe how a mother eagle cares for her little eaglets as she hovers over them providing care and protection. God is personally present as He hovers over the unformed and lifeless material and then births it all into being. He cares for His creation with tenderness and compassion. He is hovering, helping and holding everything together.

- **Pronounced.** Nine times in this first chapter we read this phrase, “***And God said...***” This is followed by “***And it was so...***” He spoke and the stars filled the sky. He spoke and birds began to fly.

This is called *Creation Ex Nihilo*, which means creation out of nothing. All God had to do was say the “word” and wonders happened! Psalm 33:6, 9: ***“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their host...For he spoke, and it came to be.”***

- **Precise.** Nothing about creation is haphazard. Everything is organized and orderly. The sequence of events follows each other perfectly; the complexity of nature reflects just the right amount of gravity, oxygen, light, rain, and temperature. BTW, I believe a straightforward reading of the text teaches God created the world in six literal 24-hour days. I believe all this happened about six thousand years ago, not millions of years in the past.
- **Perfect.** At the end of each day of creation, we read ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** Six times God declares what He did was good. On day six, He contemplated what He created and watched the wonder that sprang into being by His Word. Verse 31 says: ***“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”***

**3. Human beings are the climax of creation.** As you read the first chapter of Genesis, it becomes clear God created a fully functioning world for the enjoyment of man and woman.

When I was “Face-timing” (is that a word?) with our grandson Pip he asked what I was preaching on this week. I told him God is the creator who made everyone. I loved his response: *“He really did made me, right?”* Right.

There are at least three truths about human beings taught in the Book of Beginnings.

- **We come from dust.** Look at Genesis 2:7: ***“Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”*** We are derived from dust and Genesis 3:19 says: ***“and to dust you shall return.”*** This should keep us humble.
- **We are created with dignity.** 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.”*** We are not the result of some coincidental cosmic accident.

God made us with dignity, value, worth and purpose. You are more than just matter because you matter to the Almighty.

BTW, would you notice gender is assigned at creation? God created us as male or female.

- **We are commissioned with duties.** Life is to be lived under His Lordship and design. Genesis 1:28 says we are to be fruitful and increase in number (we've done a pretty good job on this one) and in Genesis 2:15, Adam was put in the Garden of Eden ***“to work it and keep it.”*** Once everything was in place, God created people to live out His purposes, reflecting His image to others. We are to work and minister because God has invited us to be coworkers and partners with Him.

Genesis helps us answer these questions...

- Where did I come from?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?

You can't answer the last two until you settle the first one.

**4. Marriage is between one man and one woman.** We'll develop this in greater detail in two weeks but Genesis 2:24 clearly says God designed marriage as between one man and one woman: ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”***

**5. When Adam sinned, we sinned.** Romans 5:12 says, ***“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”*** After Adam and Eve sinned, disunity, decay, disease and death entered the human race. We see this when Cain killed Abel in Genesis 4.

In Genesis 6:5 we read: ***“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*** Because of that, He sent a flood to wash the world. It didn't take long for evil to spread again as seen at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 and the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19.

As I read through Genesis this week, I wrote down some of the effects of the fall: *death, murder, deceit, conflict, shame, guilt, fear, mistrust, lying, stealing, trickery, wrestling with God, immorality, rape, homosexuality, and revenge.* Listen. We are not innocent people who are inherently good. We continuously sin against a holy God. We are rebels who are in desperate need of reconciliation. Our greatest need is not to improve our self-esteem; our greatest need is to be set free from our sins.

**6. God's grace is seen throughout Genesis.** It's exciting to trace God's grace beginning with God clothing Adam and Eve after they sinned and continuing through Genesis 3:15, which is a promise that Christ will stomp out Satan on the cross: ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."***

Even though the world was wicked, God provided refuge for those who put their trust in Him according to Genesis 7:7: ***"And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood."*** After the flood God made a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:11: ***"I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."***

Then God calls Abraham and cuts a covenant with him in Genesis 12:2-3: ***"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*** This blessing is traced through Isaac, not Ishmael and then through Jacob, not Esau. Instead of being passed through Jacob's oldest son, it comes through his fourth son Judah, as we read in Genesis 49:10: ***"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."***

This genealogy from Judah is then traced through King David and ultimately to Jesus as we see in Matthew 1:1-3: ***"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar..."***

Here are some other questions that were submitted for this series. I encourage you to go to [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) for more detailed answers.

1. *What's the deal with dinosaurs?*

Dinosaurs were created by God and lived during the time of Adam and Eve. They went extinct like other animals. Job 40:15-18 is likely a reference to dinosaurs.

2. *Was incest allowed among Adam and Eve's children?*

It is important to distinguish between incestuous relationships prior to God commanding against them in Leviticus 18:6-18 and incest which occurred after God's commands had been revealed. Until God commanded against it, it was not incest. It was just marrying a close relative. Since Adam and Eve were the only two human beings on earth, their sons and daughters had no choice but to marry and reproduce with their siblings and close relatives. It appears the gene pool would have been pure enough so as not to cause problems.

3. *Why was Cain's offering not acceptable when later on grain offerings were required?*

We read in Genesis 4:3 that Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. Hebrews 11:4 tells us, ***“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.”*** Abel's offering involved sacrificing the first-born of his flock, while Cain simply brought ***“an offering of the fruit of the ground.”*** Abel's offering came from faith while Cain was more flippant in his approach. The key difference was in their attitudes, as revealed in what happened next when Cain refused to repent and rose up and killed his brother.

4. *Do animals have souls?*

I can't improve on this answer from Got Questions: *“The Bible states that both man (Genesis 2:7) and animals (Genesis 1:30) have the “breath of life”; that is, both man and animals are living beings. The primary difference...is that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) while animals are not...human beings are like God, capable of spirituality, with mind, emotion, and will, and they have a part of their being that continues after death.”*

To sum things up, since God made everything and made us, He has the right to place some demands on us. The real issue in many cases is not intellectual or scientific; it's moral and spiritual. If eternal matter plus impersonal chance caused

all this millions of years ago, we don't have to submit to a Sovereign God and repent of our sin. We can live as we please. In other words, it's convenient to discount God as Creator. If creationism is correct, and it is, the Creator demands a commitment. Here are five implications that come to mind.

## Implications

- 1. God owns all things.** Properly understood, since He is the Creator, and I am the created, I own nothing. Psalm 89:11: *“The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.”* I am but a steward or manager of all He has given me and must use my time, my talents and my treasures accordingly. Have you settled the ownership issue? If you have, then you will give back to Him in every way. I'm humbled by how so many of you are giving to Grow Time and how you have sacrificed your preferences by meeting in the gym each weekend.
- 2. God owns me.** Romans 9:20: *“But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’”* Since God owns me, what He wants to do in my life is up to Him. That means even bad things can be used to celebrate His glory and accomplish my good. One of my favorite verses is found in Genesis 50:20: *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”*
- 3. I must submit and surrender to Him.** Psalm 95:6: *“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”* The ultimate test of whether or not I believe in God as Creator is whether I'm worshipping Him. Since He is the head of the universe, He must be Lord of my life. Is He the Lord of your life?
- 4. My life has a purpose.** Since I am more than dust, God has designed me to reflect His image and display His glory. In Isaiah 46:10, God says: *“My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.”* Do you know why you are here? It's not for your enjoyment, but for His. Keep living on mission by telling His story and shining the spotlight on His glory.
- 5. Allow God to recreate you.** Is there a spirit of darkness and a deep void in your life? The Spirit of God is hovering over you right now and wants to help you. It's time to reach out to Him and ask Him to save you from your sins. Because you

are made in His image, you can know Him personally. His greatest dream is for His creation to live in community with Him.

The book of Genesis begins with a beginning and ends with an ending. Genesis 50:26: ***“They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*** God created each of us and one day we’ll be put in a coffin. Make sure you believe Jesus died in your place and rose again. Repent of your sins and receive Him as your Savior. If you have not done so yet, an emergency alarm is sounding. Be saved today!

*If you want a good ending, begin with the beginning.*

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the three astronauts of Apollo 8 circled the dark side of the moon and headed for home. As their tiny capsule floated through space, they saw the glistening blue and white hues of earth slowly fill their window. In that moment, do you think they quoted Einstein or Shakespeare or Darwin? Taking turns, the three recited Genesis 1:1-10 verbatim from a Bible supplied by the Gideon’s. Billions of people around the world heard these words from outer space, ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”***

**Closing Commissioning** - Gabe Clark

Gabe will be headed to Southeast Asia on May 22 for 2 months, sharing the gospel with students.