

SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

IN THE BEGINNING GENESIS 1:1-2:3

God made the world by speaking something out of nothing, order out of chaos, and life out of dust.

1. REVIEW

Spend a few moments reflecting and celebrating how God is working in your group.

Read Genesis 1:1 - 2:3. What do these verses teach us about God? The earth? Ourselves?

Why do you think it's important for us to carefully study these opening chapters of the Bible?

2. ASSESS

Write out a personal implication for each of these two foundational truths:

1. *This is God's World, which means we are to live God's ways.*
2. *God's World was made by the power of God's Word.*

In what ways might you need to confess trying to take on God's role, recognizing that you are simply the creation and He is the creator?

3. APPLY

What specifically are you grasping too tightly that you need to surrender to the Creator of the universe who brings order out of chaos?

Ask for your group to help you continue to keep it submitted to him. Who will follow up with you this week?

MY GROUP'S APPLICATIONS

SERMON NOTES

1. This is God's World, which means we are to live God's ways.

2. God's World was made by the power of God's Word.

FOR FURTHER STUDY...

Hebrews 1:3 tells us, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high". This shows God did not simply speak life into existence to leave the world to fend on its own. God did not initiate the world by knocking down the first domino just to watch the others fall. In reality, God is in every moment sustaining the earth through His Son who upholds the universe by his power. If Jesus were at any moment to stop actively upholding each blade of grass, the heartbeat of every animal, and our very lives, life would cease to exist. This is why every breath is a gift from the one who chooses to freely give it. Meditate on the truth that Jesus now holds your life in his hands, and choose to glorify him with it.

5 DAY READING PLAN

DAY 1

Hebrews 11:1-3

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How should I respond?

DAY 2

Colossians 1

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How should I respond?

DAY 3

John 1

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How should I respond?

DAY 4

Romans 1

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How should I respond?

DAY 5

Revelation 21

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How should I respond?



GENESIS

GENESIS: FACT OR FICTION?

Is Genesis fact or fiction? Is it to be understood as a retelling of literal events or is it something like allegory in which “spiritual” but not “historical” truths are taught? Or is it simply a mythical story to be enjoyed? The implications are immense. Consider this:

“If the story of the fall of Adam and Eve into sin is fiction, perhaps “theological fiction,” as some would call it, it may be intended to give insight into what is basically wrong with us as individuals. It may show our frailty, sin, even our attitude of rebellion against God. But if it is not historical, if there was no literal fall, then there was no previous state of innocence and no guilt for having fallen from it. In other words, we are not sinful because of our own willful rebellion against God, we are simply sinful. We need a helper, perhaps a Savior, but we do not need to confess our sin and repudiate it. Similarly, if the flood is not history but only a myth created to teach certain eternal truths, the story may teach that God does not like sin, but it loses the fearful truth that God intervenes in history to judge sin and will judge it totally and perfectly at the end of time.”¹

We must settle our view of Genesis as historical narrative and interpret it as such. To help support that view, we’ve provided four evidences that point to a literal historical narrative approach. These are edited summaries from gifted theologians that can be accessed in their full length in the footnotes below.

EVIDENCE #1: THE INSPIRATION OF THE WORD

The starting point for answering whether Genesis is fact or fiction is that it is a part of the inspired Word of God and has therefore been given to us by God and speaks with His authority. We think here of 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” When Paul wrote those words, he had Genesis in mind as much as any other portion of Scripture. We must consider Genesis inspired and treat it as such. This doesn’t clear up everything, because we know that God can inspire poetry (the Psalms) or fiction (parables), but it does matter. Since the book of Genesis is the revelation of God through men, we can reject the idea that Genesis is simply an interesting myth.

E. J. Young, former professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, until his death in 1968, stated the matter succinctly: “The Bible is either a revelation of God, or it is simply the gropings of the Hebrew nation and the presentation of the best that they could find.” If it is a revelation from God, then “God has told us about the creation, and we [should] believe that it is historical, that is, that it actually took place, because God has so spoken.” ¹

EVIDENCE #2: THE ASSUMPTION OF SCRIPTURE

A good student of the Bible will use scripture to interpret scripture. What does God’s Word have to say about another portion of God’s Word? As it relates to this topic, the question is: Does the rest of the Bible view the book of Genesis as fiction, or does it view it as fact?

Francis Schaeffer asserts in *Genesis in Space and Time* that all of the Bible takes the view that “creation is as historically real as the history of the Jews and our own present moment of time. Both the Old and the New Testaments deliberately root themselves back into the early chapters of Genesis, insisting that they are a record of historical events.” ² As one example, consider (as Schaeffer suggests) [Psalm 136](#). This psalm lists many of the reasons that we should praise God, beginning with creation and continuing on to His work of delivering Israel out of Egypt. There is no apparent break or any indication that he’s changing from an allegorical perspective to a historical one. The psalmist continues on through the Red Sea, God’s leading of the people through the wilderness, the defeat of the kings who had been occupying the land into which they came (Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan—it cites them by name), the gift of the land, and then finally, the blessings of God to Israel in what was then the present time: to the One who remembered us in our low estate.

There is a view of history and of God’s specific acts in history according to which there is natural continuity between the acts of God in creation and the events of the present day. This means that the Genesis account is to be taken as history, not poetry or allegory. ¹

EVIDENCE #3: THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST

While all scripture is inspired and God-breathed, as we are looking for understanding in this issue, it is appropriate to consider how Jesus Christ specifically spoke of the Genesis account. Did Jesus consider the accounts of Genesis historical?

He absolutely did! While He never specifically answers this question directly, He quotes the Genesis account as fact to prove other points He’s trying to make. One prominent example is His teaching on divorce. When the Pharisees came to Jesus to ask a question about divorce (“*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?*”), Jesus replied by a specific

reference to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. He said, “Haven’t you read ... that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt. 19:3–6). Jesus’ reply assumes God to be the Creator of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, as well as being the One who instituted marriage. If that’s not compelling enough, consider the words of Jesus in Mark 13:19 when He spoke of “the beginning, when God created the world.” It is clear that Jesus considered the account of Genesis to be factual and historical. ¹

EVIDENCE #4: THE GRAMMAR AND STRUCTURE OF GENESIS

The final argument for the historical nature of Genesis involves a more detailed look at the book itself. There are those who would say, “Well, yes, Abraham and the others after him were historical. But the earliest chapters of Genesis must be poetry.” The grammar and structure of Genesis don’t support this view.

The specific structure of Genesis leads us to believe it was intended as historical narrative. The “primeval” history of Genesis 1-11 transitions seamlessly to the “patriarchal” history of Genesis 12–50. The former tells the origin story of the world while the latter tells the origin of story of Israel. The absence of a break between seems to be intentional as the book comes together as a unified whole. Additionally, this primeval history in Genesis 1-11 talks about people and events that are grounded in time and space. Eden is described in straightforward geographical terms. In fact, the time-specific genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 actually allow us to create a timeline from creation to the Flood and beyond.

The grammar of Genesis 1–11 is also what we would expect of a historical narrative. Without getting too nerdy, one grammatical form that occurs often is the *waw-consecutive* and its purpose “is to present events in a historical sequence. It appears throughout Hebrew narrative, but it is almost non-existent in Hebrew poetry.” In Genesis 1, it occurs 51 times. This indicates that the author of Genesis clearly intended to convey a straightforward narrative.

The *toledot* structure is another grammatical evidence for a historical view. Genesis claims to be a family history, tracing the origin of all humanity from Adam, all post-Flood humanity from Noah and his sons, and Israel from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But Genesis only fulfills this explanatory purpose if it relates historical details. If Adam did not really sin, what is the basis for the ‘offspring’ promise (Genesis 3:15; 5:29; 12:3)? If Abraham is not really the descendant of Eber, the descendant of Shem, then who is he? So, the author of Genesis intends to talk about people who really existed, and events that actually happened, and he intends the Hebrews to understand their existence as a nation in light of the events that he is recording. ^{3,4,5}

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a person may still say, “I believe that Genesis is put forth in the Bible as history, but I do not believe it is true.” This would be an honest person holding to convictions. But what we cannot say is, “I believe that the Genesis account is true **and** that it is poetry.” This should not be us - the most supported and evidence-based understanding of Genesis is as a book of historical narrative.

¹ Boice, J. M. (1998). *Genesis: an expositional commentary* (pp. 20–25). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

² Schaeffer, F. A. (1975). *Genesis in space and time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Cosner, L. (2015). Genesis as ancient historical narrative. *Journal of Creation*, 29(3). Retrieved August 01, 2020, from <https://creation.com/genesis-as-ancient-historical-narrative>

⁴ Chaffey, T. (2011, March 01). Is Genesis 1–11 Historical Narrative? Retrieved August 01, 2020, from <https://answersingenesis.org/hermeneutics/how-should-we-interpret-the-bible-is-genesis-1-11-historical-narrative/>

⁵ Grudem, W. A., & Thoennes, K. E. (2008). 15. Creation. In *Systematic Theology* (pp. 262-314). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan