

BACK TO THE BEGINNING: *LEARNING ABOUT GOD*

Dowlen Road, September 20, 2009 AM

Introduction:

- A. **Genesis 1.**
 - 1. Our children spend a lot of time studying from this Old Testament book. We tell them over and over again the story of creation, about Abraham and the three promises key to the Bible story. We rehearse with them the stories of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.
 - 2. I've been involved in developing curriculum for children's Bible classes many times over the years and without fail we always began back at the beginning – we began with Genesis.
- B. How odd then that, as we get older, it almost seems as though we leave Genesis behind.
 - 1. I've also been involved in developing adult Bible class curriculum over the years I've been preaching. You can be sure this always included heavy doses of the gospels, Acts and all of the epistles. We would always be careful to work in at least a survey of the Old Testament and perhaps a foray into the prophets occasionally. But rarely do we go back as adults and think about Genesis.
 - 2. It is an unfortunate oversight on our part. Genesis is more than an interesting collection of stories best suited for children's Bible classes. It is the book of beginnings. But more than just telling us how things started, Genesis lays the foundation stones of our faith. It is here that the Bible sets forth many of the most basic things we believe. In fact, it has been man's failure to understand and act on these truths that is the core of most of our troubles.
 - 3. For a while this morning I want us to go back to Genesis and appreciate once more some of these basic life lessons we learn at the beginning.
 - 4. In this session I want us to take special note of some powerful lessons we learn about God from the early chapters of this first book.

There is a God.

- A. Before the Bible tells us anything else, it tells us this (**Genesis 1:1a**).
 - 1. With these simple words, the Bible satisfies one of the greatest human longings – our desire to know our origin, to know where we came from. Everyone is looking for the answer to this question.
 - 2. The atheist wants to know, he just looks for answers in strange places. He observes the amazing design of his own body, and then decides the best way to explain the existence of such a marvelous machine is to look to some lifeless mud puddle a billion years back (**Psalms 14:1**).
- B. Genesis places on the table a far more rational explanation. It says that our universe and everything in it – including us – is the work of an all powerful, wise and loving Creator (**Genesis 1:1**).
 - 1. It does make sense. After all, every time we see design, we assume there has to be intelligence behind it. From the car sitting in the drive way to the flat panel TV hanging on the wall, we assume that intelligence designed and created them.
 - 2. So, as we observe the world around us – as we consider our own bodies – it just makes sense that a powerful intelligence must certainly have designed and created these marvels. In fact, the more we understand about our amazing world, the more this prehistoric mud puddle theory just isn't going to cut it. There is a God! Genesis lays down this foundation stone.
- C. But this statement does more than satisfy our desire to know about our origin. It carries weighty implications.
 - 1. Among all those foundation stones of our faith that Genesis lays, this is the most fundamental. The fact that God exists changes everything. It alters our entire approach to life.
 - 2. Let's be plain, if there is no God...
 - a. There are no rules. Morality is whatever we want it to be, and it can be changed with our whims. If an atheist was consistent, he would never object to anyone's behavior no matter how offensive he might find it to be. He has no objective basis for saying anyone is wrong. This is one of the dirty little secrets of atheism. No atheist wants to live in a world where most people believe what they do. It would be a nightmare! The atheist wants to live in a world where most people believe in God and basically follow His rules. They just don't want to be personally obligated to do this. They are hypocrites.
 - b. There is no hope. We are born, we live, we die and that's it. There is nothing else. So we better forestall death for as long as possible and live it up for the few years we have because, once this physical machine shuts down, there is nothing else. Atheist think it's intellectual to scoff at believers when they are young and healthy. It's pathetic when they are old and about to die.
 - 3. But if there is a God who made this world and everything in it...
 - a. Then I am subject to Him. Because He is the Creator, He has the right to tell me what to do.
 - b. No longer can life be about doing what I want to do. I must seek to know my Creator and to understand why He made me and what He expects from me.
 - c. Everything changes in the most profound ways when we believe that there is a God who made this world.

God has expectations.

- A. As we study Genesis it is clear that God did not simply create man and leave us to our own devices to do as we please. God had expectations.
 - 1. We see this from the beginning with Adam and Eve (**Genesis 2:15-17**). He was put in the garden and given things to do, cultivate and keep it. He was also given rules – don't eat from the tree of knowledge.
 - 2. You will notice that God does not state these as suggestions or ask Adam for his opinion about the rules. There is no attempt to justify God's rule over Adam. It's obvious – God has this authority because He is the Creator. He has the right to make the rules and to expect obedience from His creation.
- B. God has expectations of us as well.
 - 1. This is what the Bible is all about. This book is the tool our Creator uses to communicate His expectations.

- a. This is how we know what God wants. It tells us what we are supposed to do with ourselves while on this planet (**Psalm 119:105**).
- b. Because He is the Creator, it is our duty to obey (**Psalm 119:4-6**).
- c. However, this is not oppressive. We serve a God who loves us, whose commandments are for our good (**Psalm 119:1-3**).
- 2. In fact, these instructions from God address another basic human need – the need for purpose. People want to know: Why am I here? What is my purpose? What am I supposed to do with myself? The Bible gives us the answers to these critical questions. I am here to serve God, to use my life to bring Him glory (**I Corinthians 6:19-20**) and to prepare for the eternity that follows this life (**Matthew 25:46**).
- 3. The atheist scoffs at this, but what does he have to offer? If he's right, there is absolutely nothing we can do that has any real value or meaning. We can be a good person – whatever that is – and still get hit by a truck tomorrow. Then it will all be over and we will soon be forgotten. Whatever we collected will go to others. Whatever we might accomplish will be forgotten. Whatever we might build will one day fall down. It is a hopeless existence that the atheist offers. It makes you wonder why he's laughing at us.
- 4. The believer has so much more. These expectations of God give meaning and purpose to our lives. But there is something more we need to see in these early chapters of Genesis.

God holds us accountable.

- A. Remember that Adam and Eve were given rules (**Genesis 2:16-17**).
 - 1. The problem is, they chose to ignore the rules (**Genesis 3:6**).
 - 2. But notice, when they broke the rules, God held them accountable.
 - a. He did not ignore their rebellion or lightly pass over it.
 - b. Instead, He called them into account (**Genesis 3:11b, 13**).
 - c. He also punished them (**Genesis 3:16-17**). In fact, they suffered the fate God said they would (**Genesis 2:17; 5:5**).
- B. In all of this we learn something important about God.
 - 1. Our God is a just God. He gives us rules and expects us to obey. When we refuse and rebel, we are held accountable.
 - 2. What does this mean?
 - a. God will not lightly pass over our sins or ignore them.
 - b. In fact, there is a coming day when every person will give account for the path they've chosen in life (**II Corinthians 5:10**).
 - c. He will also punish those who rebel in exactly the way He has promised (**II Thessalonians 1:6-10**).
 - 3. This is such a terrifying possibility that many would choose to believe it cannot be so. We cannot afford to be so foolish. Genesis teaches us that God will hold us accountable. It is a foundation stone of our faith that God laid down from the very beginning.

God provides a solution for sin.

- A. Notice what God says to Satan after Adam and Eve's sin (**Genesis 3:15**).
 - 1. It is a strange statement, but it points to the most important promise found in scripture.
 - 2. It points to a coming day when Satan and the descendant of the woman would bruise each other – Satan on the head and the descendant of the woman on the heel, one clearly being more severe than the other.
 - 3. It is the first promise of the coming of Jesus and His victory over our great enemy.
 - a. When Jesus came, Satan bruised Him on the heel – gave Him a minor injury by persuading men to put Him on that cross.
 - b. But in the process, Jesus inflicted a head wound on him, a death blow.
 - c. Through His death on the cross, Jesus provided the solution for sin that enabled us to have victory over sin and Satan.
- B. This is amazing.
 - 1. In spite of man's sin and rebellion, God still loves us.
 - 2. From the beginning He's had a plan. Through Jesus he would provide a solution for our sin problem.
 - 3. God's plan has been accomplished. The sacrifice has been made. We can be saved from our sin.
 - 4. There is only one question remaining to be answered...

Conclusion: Will we accept that salvation God offers?