

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:9-20

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work & increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

'The Book of Beginnings'

This morning, we begin our study of the Book of Genesis!

- **Genesis simply means beginning and you will often hear me refer to this first Book of the Bible as the Book of Beginnings.**

Before we look at this in some detail I thought it might be good to take just a moment to review how we came to this place in my preaching here at Church of the King. Those of you who have been with us from our beginning almost nine years ago may remember that I began with a series of seven sermons from the Book of James which I preached here before I was the full-time pastor.

- **They were intended to be a challenge and encouragement for our young church.**

I was certainly thankful for the opportunity to preach similar, but much improved messages for Santa Cruz & Menlo Park. My first major exegetical work came as I preached through the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah where we learned how God cares for and uses His people for the building of His Kingdom.

We then turned again to the New Testament where our study of Luke & Acts took us through almost a third of the New Testament learning that Jesus had come to save His people from their sins and that the Spirit would fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus.

- **Now after our brief review of those great truths from the Gospel According to Mark I want to turn our attention to the Book of Beginnings.**

We have certainly NOT ignored the Book of Genesis in all of this time, often looking to this Book of Beginnings to more fully understand the truths revealed later in the Scriptures and our modern issues.

- **Genesis is a book that is under constant attack in our modern age, & that should come as NO surprise!**

Some leaders in our small denomination gathered this past week to review the work of the Church and our role for today. The subject of marriage was part of those discussions because it is under attack in SO many ways these days here in America.

They suggested that perhaps rather than continuing to play defense that we should consider a strategy for offense. Since the root problem is a more and more militant atheism today, it might be wise to launch a sort of war on atheism.

- **A proper understanding of Genesis would certainly help to prepare us for such a battle.**

My plan is to go through this major Book exegetically which will take some time, but it will be time that Lord-willing is a blessing to us all! Almost everyone, including its critics, agree that you have two major divisions in this Book of Beginnings. Chapters one through eleven take us from the creation of the world until the calling of Abraham. Chapters twelve through fifty then give us the early history of God's chosen people with the focus on four major characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and then Joseph.

As we go forward and study these events and/or people we will be asking some important questions:

- **How does the Bible view them?**
- **Why does the Bible consider them to be important!**
- **How do they relate to Jesus?**

As we study these events and people, we will see that the Scriptures in general and Jesus specifically see them as historical: In space & time! This truth is not universally held even within the Church with the more liberal elements even doubting that Abraham or Joseph are real people...

- **Of course this should not come as a surprise when we know that some of them struggle to even believe that Jesus was a real person!**
- **Lord willing in our study of Genesis we will come to understand that NOT seeing Genesis as true history leads to doubting even the existence of Jesus or the reality of His resurrection!**

In the broader reformed and evangelical churches you certainly have the belief that these patriarchs were real historical people, but much less consensus on the events of the first eleven chapters. Again it is important to allow the Bible to be our authority in these matters:

- **We will continually ask how the Bible treats these people & events.**

IF we are rightly seeing the Book of Genesis as the Book of Beginnings then it should be obvious that we need to get things right here or they will be messed up all the way down the line. What we will learn is that the issues dealt with in this book are the critical issues of life and thus even minor mistakes can have devastating impacts. If some of our boys are flying their paper airplanes across the room after lunch today, they can launch them a bit to the left or right and still get them to the other side of the room.

- **However, if they grow up to be engineers who are launching rockets to Mars then being off by just a fraction of an inch here on earth with the launch can mean missing that Red Planet by tens of thousands of miles.**

We will learn that the Book of Genesis is not a childish book written for a backwards tribal nation that was largely ignorant of any real science or philosophy. The Book of Genesis claims to reveal the truth about the BIG issues of life: Truths revealed to us by the Triune God who has always existed and who created all that we know and see. The Book of Genesis gives us vital and fundamental information about the major issues of life and gives us the ability to answer the BIG questions.

- **Where did I come from and how did I get here?**
- **Is God real and can I know Him?**
- **What is my purpose?**
- **Why is there so much evil in the world?**

- Is love real?
- Is justice real?
- Is marriage important?
- Where do I go after I die?

There are certainly other important questions but I think you get the idea from this partial list! In providing answers to any or all of these critical questions we must remember the important lesson that Jesus taught us about foundations. You can build a house on a foundation of stone or one of sand and make it look pretty good... BUT when you face the storms of life that foundation will be tested and the one built on sand will not hold up and thus that house is destroyed.

The Apostle Paul put it this way in the Book of Colossians:

Colossians 2:1 “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” *[that is the proper foundation and it must be protected!]* 4 “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

- Here the traditions of men stand in stark contrast with the foundation that we have in Christ Jesus as revealed to us in His Word, Knowledge that begins with the Book of Beginnings!

Here in the Book of Genesis we learn about how and when God created. We learn that God created man in His own image in the persons of Adam and Eve... Man is NOT part of the machine! We learn about the fall of man into sin explaining why we have evil in the world and why we need a Savior. We will learn about the institution of marriage and the importance and meaning of human relationships. We will learn that man’s sin has not only separated Him from God but that humanity is divided against itself.

Genesis clearly shows two humanities that will carry forth in history all the way to the great judgment day. This final judgment will be prefigured in the flood of Noah which destroyed the great sin that filled the earth in just nine generations following the fall of Adam.

- There we will truly see the sinfulness of sin!

We will learn about the nations of the earth that God desires to bless and His chosen nation by which those blessings would be delivered.

- And finally we will see how God used the patriarchs to establish this chosen nation.

As we do all of this we will constantly guard against the great sin of the Pharisees who knew this Book of Beginnings and all the books of the Old Testament inside and out. And yet in one of His most famous confrontations with these men we see Jesus challenge them in John chapter 5 at verse 39 “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. 41 I do not receive honor from men. 42 But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. 43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

44 How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? 45 Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

- Thus throughout our study of the Book of Genesis our goal will be to rightly see Jesus!

This is why our morning text was not from the Book of Genesis but from Paul's letter to the Church at Colossi where he wanted to make sure they had the foundations right, and those foundations begin right here in the Book of Beginnings...

- Paul was VERY familiar with the Book of Genesis as a Pharisee of the Pharisees!

BUT his eyes had been opened on the road to Damascus where Jesus struck him with human blindness as part of his receiving the eyes of faith. After this the Apostle Paul would grow to see the need for a savior, understanding that in Adam all had died, included the proud Pharisees and that in Jesus all would be made alive through faith. He would come to understand that Abraham had been called out to establish a special nation that would bring blessings to ALL the nations, as opposed to how the Pharisees had been proud of the fact that they were God's special people and not like THOSE other nations!

Paul was chosen to be the Apostle to the Gentiles and He strove to give them the proper foundations and called them back to them over and over in his letter to the Church at Colossi:

- Listen again to his heartfelt prayers for these early Saints who had come to have faith in the saving work of Jesus... *[These are prayers we should be lifting up for each other today!]*

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work & increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

- Please notice that Paul's prayer is NOT that they would feel good about being Christians but rather to grow in their knowledge of what it means to be in Christ!
- And just as there had been a major change with the fall of Adam into sin & death, so now things have changed again because of Jesus...

13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

- The early promise that the seed of the woman would crush the seed of the serpent had been fulfilled!
- And it was fulfilled not just by anyone, but by the God who had been there from the very beginning...

15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

- As we study the Book of Genesis, and perhaps especially as we study the first chapter, we must be sure that we see Jesus as our creator and redeemer!
- And finally, we know that God created man in His own image for a purpose: A purpose that could not be thwarted by any of Satan's plans nor even by man's sin...

18 “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

- **We will speak again about this peace when we approach the Table this morning.**

Next week we will begin our verse by verse study of Genesis and I can pretty much assure you that we will not get past the first verse where we are told that **In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth!” This is not only the beginning of the Bible, but it is the proper beginning of the suggested offensive against the rampant atheism of our day!**

- **As I said earlier, if we don’t get the foundation right there, the rest of the story will not go well.**

In a moment we will respond with the singing of a great hymn of the Faith: **Crown Him With Many Crowns which we may sing many times during this series...**

I am particularly moved by the fourth verse which not only echoes the encouragement that the Apostle Paul gave the Saints at Collossi, but truly helps us to see Jesus in these early chapters of Genesis...

**Crown Him the Lord of Years,
the Potentate of time.**

Creator of the rolling spheres ineffably sublime:

All hail, Redeemer, hail!

For Thou hast died for me!

Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.

Let us pray...

Please rise and join the Saints from all the ages and throughout all the world in lifting up our voices to praise our creator and redeemer: **Jesus!**

Communion Meditation:

Colossians 1:19-23 “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight-- if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”