



GENESIS

Study 1: Introduction and Creation

Introduction

Historical Context

- 1.) Who is credited with being the author of Genesis?
- 2.) To which audience was Genesis originally directed?

Word Study

- 1.) What does Genesis mean in Hebrew?

Study Questions/Self-Reflection

As you read Genesis, put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites. Imagine you recently escaped oppression, are wandering in the wilderness, and wondering about your purpose and current circumstances. Imagine hearing God's Instruction (Torah) for the first time. What do you think you would have wanted to hear? While we are not the original audience, imagining ourselves in their environment provides background for God's word and what it meant to the Israelites. This, in turn, provides us the context necessary to achieve greater understanding of God's word in our own lives.

Discussion

- Though not completely agreed upon, substantial evidence exists to indicate Moses is the author of the majority of Genesis.
- The Israelites are the original audience of Moses' writings. Why is this important? When reading Genesis, and continuing on through the Torah, it is important to distinguish among authors and intended audiences so we can better understand the concepts and intent of God's word.
- "Genesis" means "In the beginning" in Hebrew.



Creation 1:1-2:4

Historical Context

- 1.) These are God's first words to His chosen people. Take note of His first dialogue with mankind. Why do you think he established His relationship with the nation He chose set apart before establishing any rules?

Study Questions

- 1.) Does God provide scientific proof of Creation?
- 2.) What was God's first commandment to man?

Read Gen 1:1-2:4 and answer questions above.

Word Study

- 1.) In 2:2, the New Living Translation(NLT) version reads "And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation." Look up the meaning of "Holy" in an Interlinear Bible. Does this meaning differ from your previous definition of the word? Does the original meaning of the word provide any deeper understanding of what it means to be Holy?

Discussion/Self-Reflection

- This is the first chapter of the God's Instruction to His chosen people. He had the option of starting however He pleased and could have opened with the Ten Commandments if he so desired. Instead, he chose to establish the relationship between Him and all of the world, providing Him authority to establish purpose, inheritance, promises, and guidelines for all His creations.
- God does not go into specific detail about HOW he created but more importantly that he IS the creator.
- In verse 28, God's first dialogue with man was to "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it."
- "Holy" in 2:2 comes from the Hebrew word "Qadash" and it means to separate or set apart. Note this is a different "separate" used in verse 14 and is not a general term used to set apart but to consecrate or dedicate spiritual reasons. God does everything with reason and purpose. Why do you think God chose the first time he spoke this word(Holy), it was attached to a period of time(the seventh day)?



As you continue to study, think about areas in your life where you've been held up in rules over establishing relationships and seeking God's purpose and ask God to reveal His will in those areas. Think about God's first use of the word "holy" being used for a period of time and how that relates to our lives. It is tempting to dwell in the do's, don't's, rules, and regulations - but God saw it important to establish relationship(1:1), purpose(1:28), and the importance of time(2:3) before rules; we must approach Him with the same order of importance in our lives.

CRITICAL THINKING

- 1.) Read the King James Version(KJV), New International Version(NIV), NLT and the Message(MSG) translations of Genesis 1:1-2. What are some differences in the wording between the first three translations and the last one?

KJV/NIV/NLT versions as follows:

"In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth. The Earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters."

MSG:

"First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss."

In Richard E. Friedman's "Commentary on the Torah" he, at the risk of using bad grammar, more directly translated this verse as follows:

"In the beginning of God's creating the skies and the earth, when the earth had been shapeless and formless, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and God's spirit was hovering on the face of the water."

Interpretation of this verse could lead to much confusion and has done so amongst modern day science and religious studies, most notably, the debate between Creation and Evolution. It's important to note the intent of Genesis and the Torah, is not scientific but a text of instruction to mankind. Early interpretation could assume the Bible starts from the beginning of time and God created something from nothing. This is not the original intent of the scripture. If we look at the more direct translation and the MSG, God is giving us the beginning of 'a story', as opposed to the beginning of time. Also, if we look at verse 2 with correct grammar, there was some sort of "water" or shapeless matter present. The creation story provides a picture of God creating order from chaos, as opposed to 'something from nothing'. As you continue to study, remember translations are only as good as the research available at the time of



publication. Cross-reference with different translations, use interlinear references, do word studies, study history centered around that time - and pray!