

17-18 Bible Study #17

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The Pentateuch

Introduction to the Pentateuch

- What is the Incarnation?
- The Early Church understood it from the Old Testament perspective
- To understand the incarnation one had to understand creation
- There is no inconsistency between creation and salvation
- Salvation history can be summarized as a movement of man away from and back into the presence of God
- We cannot appreciate the final chapter of a book without having first read the rest
- To understand the Old Testament we must understand the Pentateuch
- To understand the Pentateuch we must understand Genesis 1-3

The Pentateuch

The Pentateuch, the Torah, the Law (of Moses), the first 5 books of the Old Testament:

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Numbers
- Leviticus
- Deuteronomy

The Pentateuch (Cont)

- **Genesis** can be divided into two parts
 - **Gn 1-11** Primordial history
 - **Gn 12-50** Patriarchal history
- **Exodus** focuses on two primary themes
 - **Ex 1 -15:21** Deliverance from Egypt
 - **Ex 15:22- 18** Journey through the wilderness
- **Leviticus** focuses almost exclusively on legislation

The Pentateuch (Cont)

- **Numbers** presents a census of the people and resumes the account of the Desert Journey
- **Deuteronomy** presents a code of civil and religious laws within a long final discourse of Moses

The Pentateuch (Cont)

- The Pentateuch is **attributed to Moses on Mount Sinai** during the **Exodus** of Israel out of *Egypt* (**1500 B.C.**) and was transmitted via:
 - The oral tradition
 - The written phase (most likely in 5 separate scrolls)
 - The edited phase forming the first part of the Old Testament
- **Moses** may or may not have written them down

Genesis 1

- We cannot fully understand **Genesis 1** until we read the entire **Pentateuch** as it explains the events unfolding during the entire life of **Moses** who was living during the period of the **Exodus**
- **Genesis** will make more sense once we fully understand the Book of **Exodus**
- **Moses** was not writing for us, but for a particular people from a particular period with a particular purpose

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- He was **providing a catechesis** for the people of *Israel* having left *Egypt* while heading for the **Promised Land**
- He choose to provide this extremely important information from the Oral Tradition to assist them during their journey

Word Introduction

- *Debar* – Hebrew for the Divine Word
- *Logos* – Greek for the word
- *Lego* – Greek for to speak
 - *Affirm*
 - *Teach*
 - *Exhort, advise, command, direct*
 - *Point out with words*
 - *Call by name*
 - *Speak out*
- *Ex nihilo* – Latin for out of nothing

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:1**

- Some today falsely see **Genesis 1** as an anti-Darwinian argument against Evolution as an explanation of the creation of the world
- In the ancient world the questions included:
 - Who created the world?
 - How did He create it?
 - Why was it created?
- These are the questions being addressed in this text
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Genesis 1 (Cont)

- According to ancient Jewish tradition, the Jews in the 1st century A.D., the early Christian Church, and the early Church fathers, **the author was Moses**
- Understanding this will help us get a general sense of the purpose of his writing it, and the dating of the text

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- We are therefore looking at a text that has to do with the time of **Moses** (1500 B.C. and beyond) and the people of *Israel* living at that time
 - Question of that period included:
 - Who was the God of the world?
 - Who was the God of Israel?
 - Why did He create things?
 - What was the propose of the creation?
 - Why they should worship Him as the only true God as opposed to the “god Apes” (the Golden Calf)
 - These are the questions that this text will address

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- “God” in this passage is “*Elohim*” not the divine name *Yahweh* which we will not learn until **Exodus 3**
- Even though *Elohim* is a plural noun (*im*) in *Hebrew*, we are to understand it as being singular
- Sometimes the *Hebrews* used the plural to indicate that something was really big or overwhelming*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:2**

- The term “earth” is not the big blue ball of NASA
- It is referring to earth as in “dirt”
- A better translation would be the “land”
- This “land” was without form and void because it originally was under the water *₁
- “Moving” can be understood to mean “hovering”, indicating a sign of hope in the midst of this form because the “Spirit of God” (*Pneuma*) was within it
- If the “Spirit of God” was in the air, then we know that creation was about to happen*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:3-5**

- God created the “light” on this, **Day 1**
- Notice that He called the light “**good**”
- The source of salvation begins with God creating the light
- St. John closes the book of **Revelation** (Revelation 21:22-27)* with a reversal of this story when God will be our light as we dwell with Him forever*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:6-8**

- On **Day 2**, God separated the water that was over the land causing there to be water above and below
- Imagine that you have two realms of existence, mud and on top of that mud, and water
- What happened here was that the water was being separated with a space being placed within the water

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- This means that the water was being pushed up and pushed down creating a space of air which today we call the “**atmosphere**”
- The ancient man observed three realms of existence
 - The stuff above (which we call clouds and sky) from which rain comes (the water from above)
 - This is distinct from the waters below
 - We are always looking down on lakes, rivers and the ocean
- Between these there is the “land (earth)”
- They wondered where the land, the thing they were standing on, came from?
- The water was the scary place where one could drown*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:9-11**

- It is on **Day 3** that the “dry land” came forth
- The water below was parted and the dry land came forth
- Why did we need dry land?
- It became a place where **God could put stuff**
- He brought forth **vegetation** which had **seeds** and **fruit**
- Vegetation was not just something to look at, it had a purpose of bearing fruit

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- Thus, the purpose of the water below was to bring forth the land, which brought forth vegetation, which brought forth fruit
- God said that the vegetation was “**good**”*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:12-13**

- God frequently said that these things were “**good**”
- Each day was deemed “**good**” except for **Day 2** which **was not finished**
- The purpose of parting the waters above and below was so that the waters could be parted and bring forth the “dry land”
- In order to keep up with the correct number of the word “**good**” (the text is very systematic) “good” was used twice on **Day 3** *

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:14**

- **Day 4** begins the second part of the structured story
 - We have seven days
 - The first six days structured into two corresponding parts, the first three and the second three
 - On **Day 1** we have the creation of the light and on **Day 4** we see the light manifested in the sun, moon and stars
 - God creates the **greatest light** for the day and the **lesser light** for the night and then there are **the stars**
 - Why does he not simply say the sun, moon and the stars?

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- These words in *Hebrew* were names for ***Canaanite gods***
 - *Shemesh* meant Sun
 - *Yareach* meant Moon, the wife of *Shemesh*, a goddess
- Thus, the author of this text was avoiding using these Hebrew words for the gods and goddesses of the *Canaanite* pantheon

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- Later in the Old Testament these names of pagan gods will no longer carry this association (similar to our use of Saturday which is no longer associated with the roman god *Saturnus*)
- But here the author is being very careful to avoid any reference to these pagan gods
- As discussed earlier, we need to be conscious of the **Exodus** story and the entire Old Testament when reading Genesis

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- The questions of the people of *Israel* at the time of the **Exodus** were:
 - Was there only one God who was the God of Abraham or were there many gods?
 - Who created the world?
 - Who ran things?
 - Who was the most powerful?
- Again, the audience of **Genesis** were primarily polytheists who (according to **Exodus 12:40**) had spent **430 years in Egypt** (U.S. will be 242 years old on July 4, 2018; $2018-430 = 1588$)

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- *Moses* was pointing out that the:
 - *Canaanite* gods did not create anything
 - Sun and moon in the sky were not gods
 - These were things that the one **God of Abraham created** and they had a **specific purpose** - to give light to the earth
 - From these lights in the heavens were given to mankind so that man could tell time
- This was a very anti-polytheistic passage
 - Look at the view of two fathers of the Church *₂*

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1: 20-23**

- Then on **Day 5**, God filled the water above and the water below with birds of the air and fish of the sea
- He blessed them and called them to be fruitful and multiply

- **Genesis 1:26-31**

- Finally, on **Day 6** the land (revealed on **Day 3**) found its ultimate purpose which was to serve as a place for the land animals to dwell

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- Now we learn that the purpose for the vegetation was to provide food for the animals
- **Day 1** was fulfilled in **Day 2**, which is fulfilled in **Day 3**, which is then fulfilled in the **next set of 3 days** of creation
- Then on **Day 6**, we learn about a very special animal created by God called “man”

Genesis 1 (Cont)

Formless

- 1 = Light from Darkness
- 2 = Sky and Waters
- 3 = Land with Plants

Filling the Void

- **4 = Sun, Moon & Stars**
- **5 = Birds and Fish**
- **6 = Animals, Man**

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- **Genesis 1:26 (Cont)**

- Created in the “image and likeness of God” means that this animal was different than all the other animals created by God as he was to be a “son of God”
- We will see this same language later in **Genesis 5** where Adam has a son in his own “image and likeness” *₃
- Then we see that God gave man **dominion over everything else that He created**
- This is what an earthly father does for his children, who, as they get older, are able to accept more responsibilities within the family

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- Next, we hear about the blessing to man to be “fruitful and multiply” and fill the earth
- This is followed by God’s menu
 - God gave the animals green plants to eat
 - He gave man the fruit of the plants indicating that originally man was a vegetarian (death did not exist in the Garden of Eden)
 - The Israelites, at that time, saw movement as an indication for life
 - If an item (a plant or an apple) had no ability to move they believed that it was not alive

Genesis 1 (Cont)

- Finally, we hear in **Day 6** the modified proclamation of God that this day was “**very good**”