

RCBC – Dispensational / Hermeneutical Study of The Book of Genesis:

The Book of Genesis is foundational to the Christian faith, offering profound theological insights and establishing key doctrines that reverberate throughout the rest of Scripture. In this detailed exegetical study, we will approach Genesis from a **dispensational perspective**.

Dispensationalism highlights distinct periods (dispensations) in God's dealings with humanity, focusing on the progressive revelation of His plan. Our study will consider theological topics, historical context, and practical applications for today's Christian.

Hermeneutics and Dispensationalism

Hermeneutics

- **Hermeneutics** is the science and art of biblical interpretation. In this study, we will use a **literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic**, focusing on the natural meaning of the text, taking into account its grammar, historical context, and authorial intent. We interpret Scripture with an understanding that God's Word is true, relevant for all time, and capable of offering timeless wisdom.

Dispensationalism

- **Dispensationalism** teaches that God has structured history into distinct periods or "dispensations" in which He reveals different aspects of His will and relates to humanity in unique ways. In Genesis, we see the early dispensations like the **Dispensation of Innocence** (before the Fall) and the **Dispensation of Conscience** (after the Fall), followed by the covenants God makes with Noah, Abraham, and Israel.

Genesis Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1: The Creation of the World

Text: Genesis 1:1-31

Theological Topics:

- **Creation Ex Nihilo (Creation from Nothing):** Genesis 1 begins with God's creative act, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). This affirms the doctrine of creation out of nothing, emphasizing God's sovereign power over all that exists.
- **The Image of God (Imago Dei):** In Genesis 1:26-27, humanity is created in God's image, distinguishing mankind from the rest of creation and establishing humanity's unique role as stewards of God's creation.
- **The Sabbath Principle:** Genesis 2:2-3 introduces the Sabbath as a divine institution, establishing a rhythm of work and rest, pointing forward to God's eventual rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-10).

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths:** The Genesis creation account stands in stark contrast to the violent, polytheistic creation myths of ancient cultures. Instead of gods fighting or creating through chaos, God creates by His will and Word, establishing order and goodness.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **Work and Rest:** The principle of the Sabbath reminds Christians today to balance work with rest, honoring God's design for physical and spiritual restoration.
- **Stewardship of Creation:** Humans are stewards of God's creation. This calls Christians to care for the environment responsibly.

Study Questions:

1. How does the doctrine of creation ex nihilo emphasize God's sovereignty?
 2. What does it mean to be created in the image of God, and how does this affect our understanding of human dignity?
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Chapter 2: The Creation of Man and Woman

Text: Genesis 2:1-25

Theological Topics:

- **Man's Special Creation:** Unlike other creatures, Adam is formed from the dust of the ground (2:7), showing God's intimate involvement in creating humanity.
- **Marriage and the Role of Woman:** Genesis 2:18-25 presents marriage as a divine institution. Eve is created as a "helper" suitable for Adam, signifying complementary roles for men and women in marriage and society.

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **The Complementarity of Man and Woman:** Ancient cultures often depicted women as inferior, but Genesis 2 affirms the equality and complementary nature of man and woman.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **Biblical Marriage:** This chapter provides the foundational understanding of marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman, challenging modern cultural definitions of marriage.
- **God's Purpose for Work and Relationships:** Work is sacred and not a result of the Fall, and marriage is essential to God's plan for creation.

Study Questions:

1. What is the significance of God creating Eve from Adam's side?
 2. How does the concept of marriage in Genesis 2 impact our understanding of gender roles today?
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Chapter 3: The Fall of Man

Text: Genesis 3:1-24

Theological Topics:

- **The Fall and Original Sin:** Adam and Eve's disobedience introduces sin into the world (Romans 5:12), affecting all of creation. This chapter explains why suffering, death, and corruption exist in the world.
- **The Protoevangelium (Genesis 3:15):** The first promise of a Redeemer, "He will bruise your head," points to Jesus Christ's victory over Satan and sin.
- **The Curse:** God pronounces consequences for the serpent, the woman, and the man, including pain, suffering, and death. However, the Fall also introduces God's redemptive plan.

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **Ancient Myths of the Fall:** Unlike other ancient creation myths, the Genesis account gives a clear explanation of human suffering through the fall into sin, and the need for redemption is immediately introduced.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **Understanding the Fall's Consequences:** The Fall explains much of the evil and suffering we encounter today, pointing to the need for redemption.
- **Hope in Redemption:** Christians are reminded that despite the effects of sin, God has promised victory through Christ, fulfilling Genesis 3:15.

Study Questions:

1. How does the fall affect the relationship between God and humanity?
 2. What role does Genesis 3:15 play in the overall biblical story?
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Chapter 4: Cain and Abel

Text: Genesis 4:1-16

Theological Topics:

- **Worship and Sacrifice:** Abel's offering is accepted by God because it is offered in faith, while Cain's is rejected because of his lack of sincerity (Hebrews 11:4). This teaches that God desires genuine worship.
- **The Consequences of Sin:** Cain's jealousy leads to the first murder, showing the destructive nature of sin in human relationships.

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **Sacrificial Systems:** The concept of acceptable sacrifice is crucial in understanding Israel's sacrificial system and, ultimately, Christ's atoning death.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **Worshipping in Spirit and Truth:** Christians must offer their worship with a sincere heart and according to God's will.
- **Dealing with Sin:** Cain's story serves as a warning against harboring sin in our hearts and the need for repentance.

Study Questions:

1. What does Cain's attitude reveal about the nature of sin?
2. How can we ensure our worship is sincere?

Chapters 5-9: The Generations of Adam and Noah

Text: Genesis 5-9

Theological Topics:

- **The Genealogies:** Genesis 5 traces the descendants of Adam through Seth, showing the continuity of God's plan.
- **The Flood (Genesis 6-9):** The Flood is a divine judgment on a corrupt world, but Noah finds grace in God's eyes, leading to the preservation of life through the ark.
- **The Noahic Covenant:** After the Flood, God makes a covenant with Noah, promising never again to destroy the earth by water (Genesis 9:8-17).

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **Ancient Flood Myths:** Similar flood stories exist in other cultures (e.g., the Epic of Gilgamesh). The Genesis account, however, emphasizes the moral reasons behind the Flood—human sin and corruption.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **The Need for Repentance:** The Flood is a reminder of God's judgment on sin and the need for repentance.

- **God's Faithfulness:** God's covenant with Noah assures Christians of His faithfulness and care for His creation.

Study Questions:

1. What does Noah's faith teach us about obedience to God in difficult times?
 2. How does the Noahic covenant relate to God's broader plan of redemption?
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Chapters 10-11: The Tower of Babel

Text: Genesis 10-11

Theological Topics:

- **The Dispersion of Nations:** The Tower of Babel represents humanity's attempt to make a name for themselves, and God disperses them by confusing their language (Genesis 11:7).
- **God's Sovereignty Over Nations:** This event marks the beginning of the nations and cultures, showing God's control over human history.

Cultural and Historical Context:

- **Babel and Ziggurats:** The tower in Babel was likely a ziggurat, a common architectural form in the ancient Near East, symbolizing man's desire to reach the heavens.

Application for Today's Christian:

- **Pride and Unity:** The story warns against the pride and self-sufficiency that causes division. Christians should seek unity in Christ, not in human achievement.
- **Embracing Diversity:** God's creation of different languages and nations should lead Christians to embrace cultural diversity while recognizing God's sovereignty over all.

Study Questions:

1. What does the Tower of Babel teach us about human pride and ambition?
 2. How can Christians promote unity in the midst of a diverse world?
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Chapters 12-50: The Patriarchs and Covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

The remaining chapters in Genesis focus on the **Abrahamic Covenant**, the covenant of promise (Genesis 12:1-3, 17:1-8), and the fulfillment of God's promises through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The **covenant with Abraham** is central to dispensational theology, marking the beginning of God's plan to bless the nations through Israel. Through the patriarchs, we learn of God's faithfulness, His choosing of Israel, and the unfolding of His redemptive plan.