

## Foundations of Faith • Hebrews 11:1-22

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There is something that is on my wish list that I've not touched yet – to use one of those DNA ancestry services to find out my family origins.

2 reasons I've hesitated:

—I don't really want to spend the money

—What if I'm really surprised? What if I'm not as Italian and Irish?

Our next study in Genesis is a bit like using a DNA ancestry service—yet it's totally free, and totally accurate.

And if there are surprises, it is only for our spiritual good.

- Today we begin what I'm calling an "Epic Expositional Voyage" through the book of Genesis.

Genesis is the longest book I've ever set out to preach —it's the second longest book in the Bible.

Top 3 Longest Books in Bible (by word count in original languages):

Jeremiah (33K)

Genesis (32k)

Psalms (30k)

*Not only is Genesis epic, its also essential.*

Why do a study in such a large book?

First, 2 Tim. 3:16

**2 Timothy 3:16 ESV**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Secondly, we are living in a time where the core foundations of society seem to be coming apart rapidly.

You may feel the distress that David did:

**Psalms 11:3 ESV**

if the foundations are destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?"

- › Genesis is given to God's people to prevent foundation decay and destruction.

**The Foundation: Intro to Genesis**

- First, Genesis is part of a larger unit—the Pentateuch.
- I follow the tradition that it's written by the human author Moses.

Aside from tradition, there is just a literary continuity —if you read the 5 together, they feel like the same author.

*And let's not forget the ultimate author is God, Christ through the Spirit.*

There are two main ways to divide, or outline the book (not 50 chapters):

—Most common: There are 10 genealogy sections (toledot) - "The generations of...."

—Or, a broad two-way division: Gen. 1-11 (world before Abraham) 12-50 (world after Abraham's call)

- I'll be approaching it with the second; we will go at a slower pace the first 11 chapters that takes us into Jan 2024, then likely pick up the pace.
- I believe that Gen. 1-11 is just as historical as Gen. 12-50.

## 7 Major and Common Themes in Genesis

### 1) Creation

- Creation —this is obvious from the opening chapters.

It's also tied up in the title (Genesis in Greek: beginnings; Jews followed the Hebrew: "In the beginning").

In Gen, we get a starting point of why there is green grass, a blue sky, water, a sun, moon, birds, beasts...other people.

- › This starting point has one purpose for us: thanks, praise, and glory to him.

#### **Romans 11:36 ESV**

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

### 2. Image of God/Humanity

Image of God/Humanity—also tied to creation, we get a distinct take on why life has value and meaning; why people carry an inherit dignity and worth

#### **Psalms 8:4–5 ESV**

what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.

### 3. Sexuality and Marriage

- Sexuality and Marriage—a third major theme that gives substance and structure to these important parts of human existence which are foundational.

The first three themes have distinct application for Christians.

*We have a foundation for why we exist, and what to do with our bodies.*

*If those foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

#### 4. Good and Evil/Blessings and Curses

- Good and Evil (Blessings and Curse) —these themes are woven throughout Genesis.
- From the very start God declares his creation “good” — evil soon becomes a reality, and going forward there is a major conflict between the two.

Blessing is a major theme in Genesis. If you are a Bible highlighter, take note!

#### 5. Sin and Grace

- Sin and Grace —separation and alienation from God becomes a major theme from Ch. 3 and following.

It helps to answer a foundational question: *what’s wrong with the world?*

I find that most people feel open to speak freely about what they think is wrong with the world.

Often it comes down to politics, their job, the economy, certainly other people, etc.

What’s wrong is sin.

- But we don’t see God just leaving his creation to wallow and sink. He takes decisive actions to redeem a people from this fallen world.

*Grace—grace becomes a major thread that ties the book and entire Bible together.*

If God did not act in radical, undeserving grace, the Bible would be a very short book—3 chapters.

#### 6. Covenants

- Covenants— Covenants form the backbone of the storyline of the Bible. They keep the Bible from becoming a disjointed collection of random writings.

In Genesis we get 3 Major Covenants:

-Adam in the Garden

- Noah after the flood,
- Abraham and his offspring.

These are foundational in understating who God is, and how we can relate to him.

## 7. Faith and Obedience

Faith and Obedience—

- How people respond to God is key.
- The chief sin of Adam is unbelief...chose to obey the serpent above God's Word.
- From Ch.12-ff, Abraham is a foundational figure and is marked by faith.

### Galatians 3:9 ESV

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

*If people are going to be God's people, they must be marked by faith.*

Central Idea of Genesis:

**Genesis lays foundations for a God-centered world that points sinners to the way of grace, faith, and blessing.**

### By Faith (Heb. 11:1-22)

Back when I first became a Christian there was a radio program called *The Bible Answer Man* that I enjoyed.

As a new believer, I loved the program.

It was listener-based where callers called in with their questions.

Most questions were centered around what the Bible means, especially some of the difficult and tricky parts to interpret.

A caller rarely, if ever, called in asking: “How do I live?”

- I mention that for those who are wondering why we are looking at Hebrews for a Gen. intro.

When the biblical history of Gen. is recorded, the focus is on the question: How do I live?

- First, we get a definition of faith (v1)
- What is noticeable is the behavior—assurance and conviction.

Faith also moves people to two things: understanding and pleasing God.

- v3 Faith is how we understand.

God’s question to Job is a good one for every person: (Job 38:4)

**Job 38:4 ESV**

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.”

› *Faith is how we understand*

Often that gets reversed; some think that you have to understand something (even scientifically verify it—in order to have faith).

Here, faith is the starting point.

Let me illustrate it like this. I had a conversation with a young woman once who was not a Christian.

Her biggest hang up was “How did all the animals fit on Noah’s Ark?”

She was trying to do the math and said it just does not add up.

But do you see what she was doing? Understanding was her starting point. But what if faith was the starting point—like it is for many?

2. Faith is how we please God (v6)

- Just like a very well-known verse states the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the starting point to pleasing God is drawing near... it is faith.

## 5 Foundational Examples in Genesis

I'm just struck with how many of the OT examples are clustered in Genesis; we are not even covering all of them.

1) Noah (v7): An example of reverent fear.

Gospel: Noah is an example for every Christian.

To be a Christian means you take God's word at face value that says there is a real future unseen event called the final judgment.

The only way to escape is to trust in Jesus Christ—righteousness comes by faith in him!

2) Abraham:

—obeyed God's Word (v8)

—had miraculous, resurrection-centered faith when he was tested (17)

3) Sarah (11):

"Considered him faithful who had promised"

As we take this epic voyage, I'm estimating it will take well over a year of our church calendar life—including some breaks.

No doubt, some people's faith will be tested, possibly in major ways.

*It's a major victory if you come away saying, "I consider God faithful—that's a secure foundation!"*

4) Jacob (21)

- Jacob may not be the best example in some areas of family life...but he shines as an example of dying well—blessing and worship with his last breath.

## 5) Joseph (22)

- Genesis ends with funeral plans and a funeral.
- What Joseph models is a forward looking faith.

*\*\*Faith cares about God's people even when we are gone.*

We live in a secular age, which is concerned only with the immediate and immanent.

One thing that Genesis does is cause us to look beyond the now to the future.

As I read that list of names—if you know your Bible decently, you might think: “what a group of flawed people.”

-Didn't Noah get drunk after the Flood?

-Wasn't Abraham a bit dishonest about being married to Sarah?

-Didn't Jacob use some deception in a few of his relationships?

Wasn't Joseph a tad arrogant in his youth?

The Bible shows even the examples with their flaws...in a way that magnifies the mercy and grace of God.

\*All these examples have one critical thing: faith

*And their lives laid major foundations of what it looks like to hold fast to God's promises by faith.*

Conclusion:

*Genesis lays foundations for a God-centered world that points sinners to the way of grace, faith, and blessing.*

As we begin this voyage ,it doesn't matter what way you divide the book, or how long it takes to complete the voyage.



What matters most is seeing the same God throughout.

—The same God who creates and calls good, also sends a flood of destruction on his creation.

—The same God who blesses, also swiftly curses rebellion.

—The same God who calls Abraham and prospers him, also sends his great grandson, Joseph, into Egyptian slavery.

Seeing the same God, and worshiping him is key.

Seeing the same God, and drawing near by faith is the main thing.

On this voyage we don't set out to just study a book of ancient history that lays good foundations.

We set out to see God.

We set out to behold him with the eyes of faith.

To see him and his glory exalted over all things.

That's the only secure foundation we can ever build our lives on.