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Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 34)

"IN THE BEGINNING GOD"—SIN—"A COFFIN IN EGYPT"

THE BEGINNING OF THE MESSIANIC PROPHECY

Between the four opening words of Genesis and the four closing words of this first book of the Bible we must write the word, sin. But thank God! Written also on the pages of this marvelous book, in terms that even a little child can understand, is the story of the cross and the empty tomb; yea, the story of our interceding Lord and coming King! "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. . . . And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." But sin entered the world to mar God's perfect creation—sin and death came upon all the sons of Adam. And the close of this book of beginnings finds Joseph "in a coffin in Egypt." But on every page, as it were, of this inspired record is the promise of a Saviour to come, a Messianic hope, a way of salvation from sin and death unto everlasting life.

Adam lost a perfect Eden; and Joseph died in Egypt, a type of the Christ-rejecting world. But for Adam and for Joseph, and for every son of Adam there is hope, by faith in the shed blood of Calvary's Lamb. From the Garden of Eden to the death of Joseph in Egypt, more than two thousand years had elapsed. And from century to century God was teaching His children, in prophecy and in type, that He would one day send His only begotten Son to die for the sinner's guilt. Christ is the theme of Genesis, as He is, indeed, the theme of the whole Word of God. We have sought to present in these lessons what God has said to us in Genesis concerning the Person and work of our Lord. And today, in looking back over these wonderful chapters, by way of summary and review, we want to see Christ Jesus in all His love and perfection and glory and beauty. When

He was on earth, He said in more ways than we may take time here to tell, "Moses wrote of me." And Moses wrote Genesis! Let us never forget to look for the meaning of Calvary and the empty tomb in all our study of the Word of God.

As we think through Genesis today, let us fix in our minds once for all the three definite prophecies of the coming of Christ that stand out above all others. Then let us try to see how the nine great men of Genesis teach us some spiritual lessons for our own lives and for the lives of mankind everywhere; how, during the more than two thousand years covered by Genesis, God was making known to man His ever-unfolding plan of the ages; and how Genesis is fundamental to all Bible truth.

But first let us see if we remember the eight-word outline of the late Reverend James M. Gray, D.D., which we studied in our first lesson in Genesis. It will help us to recall the chief facts of the book in their order.

DR. GRAY'S OUTLINE OF GENESIS

Creation — Fall — Flood — Nations — Abraham — Isaac — Jacob — Joseph; this is a concise, comprehensive way to think through Genesis. We need not repeat here the chapter divisions. And what a story these eight words tell! God's perfect creation; man's fall through sin; judgment upon sin; the beginning of nations and many languages; the beginning of the Hebrew nation, through which God was to send Christ, and through which the Bible was to be written by the Holy Spirit! These eight words tell the story of the title of our lesson for today: "In the Beginning God"—Sin—"A Coffin in Egypt"—The Beginning of the Messianic Prophecy.

THE THREE GREAT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES OF GENESIS

In Genesis we have the promise that the Saviour was to come as:

1. "The seed of woman," from the human race, Gen. 3:15.

2. "The Son of Abraham," from the nation of Israel, Gen. 12:3.

3. Of "the tribe of Judah," Gen. 49:10.

Thus the prophecy was narrowed down, so that we might know Him when He did come into the world. A certain tribe of a particular nation of the human race was to be the channel through which He was to come.

In later books of the Bible God told us that He was to come through a certain family; to be born of a virgin, in a certain city; to be despised and rejected of men; to be crucified; to arise from the dead; to ascend into heaven; to intercede for His own; and to come again in glory. All of these facts were written in the Old Testament before they came to pass, in order that the world might know the Redeemer when He did come. Some three-hundred definite prophecies of the Old Testament were literally fulfilled in His first coming as a suffering Saviour. Only Satan and sin could possibly blind men's eyes, that they should not know Him! This is what we mean by the Messianic prophecy—the promise of the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. And in words that burn their way into our hearts, it writes hope and promise upon the pages of this book of beginnings.

We list these three chief prophecies of the coming Redeemer here, not that they are the only ones in Genesis by any means, but because they are the outstanding, irrefutable statements of the Holy Spirit concerning Him who was to come to die for sinners. To doubt or deny them is to doubt or deny the infallible Word of the eternal God.

We need not repeat in detail here the significance of these three Messianic promises, except to stress the importance of Gen. 3:15 in particular. Not only does it tell that the Lord Jesus was to come from the race of man; but it tells also that He was to be born of the virgin, "the seed of woman," not of man; that, therefore, He was to be the eternal Son of God; that He was to be "bruised" by Satan, crucified; and that He was to triumph over Satan, bruising his "head." Gen. 3:15 is one of the most comprehensive, one of the most important, verses in all the Bible.

As we add to these three outstanding prophecies all the beautiful promises and types of Christ that we have seen in connection with the lives of His children, as set forth in Genesis, we begin to realize something of the extent to which God has presented the Person and work of the Lord Jesus in this first book of Moses. The writer to the Hebrews may well have had in mind Genesis when he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, saying,

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . ." (Heb. 1:1, 2).

MOSES WROTE OF CHRIST THROUGH NINE GREAT MEN OF GENESIS

It would take too long to review, even hurriedly, all the great characters of Genesis; we select the nine which teach us, perhaps above all others, some valuable lessons for our own hearts. Four of these lived before the flood, and four lived after the flood. Then there is another, without recorded "beginning of days" or "end of life," Melchizedek, a type of our Lord. Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah—these four lived before the flood; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—these four lived after the flood. And Melchizedek might well stand between the two groups. While he lived in the days of Abraham, yet there is no record of his birth or death; and he towers above them all.

1. *Through Adam—Sin and Death; in Christ Salvation and Eternal Life.*

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22).

God had told Adam in the Garden of Eden that, if he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would "surely die." And Adam brought sin and death into the world. We need not remind ourselves this morning that men die. Kings, with all the medical skill known to men at their disposal, die. Poor men die. Because Adam was the federal head of the race, "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

But "in Christ shall all be made alive." Adam gave us death; Christ gave us life. Death was the end of Adam's work; death was the beginning and the finishing of Christ's work of redemption, for on the cross He said, "It is finished!" By Adam came the physical birth; by Christ comes the new birth. Christ is the Second Adam, the new Head of the race, the Life-giver.

2. *Abel—An Example of How to Approach God.* "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain . . ." He presented the shed blood of "the firstlings of the flock," by faith in the Lamb of God who was to come, even Jesus, the Lord. And by his act of faith Abel, "being dead yet speaketh."

My unsaved friend, there is only one way to God; it is "the way of the cross." And "the way of the cross leads Home!" If you are not sheltered beneath the blood of Jesus, if you refuse to accept Him as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," then all your study of Genesis will but add to your condemnation before God. The more light, the greater the responsibility. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin.

3. *Enoch—A Type of the Church.* Enoch walked a very long time with God, in the midst of "a crooked and perverse generation." Then God took him to heaven without dying, "translated him that he should not see death." Thus Enoch is a beautiful picture of the church. Let us ever remember this "blessed hope" that is ours, as we look for our soon-coming Lord. And when He comes, may He find us, like Enoch, walking very closely to Him.

4. *Noah—Deliverance from Judgment.* The waters of judgment brought death to all save Noah and those that were with him in the ark. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord"; and by faith in the Ark of Safety from the righteous judgment of a holy God, even Jesus, Noah was saved for all eternity. Christ bore the awful penalty of sin for us; and if we have put our faith in His cleansing blood, we "shall not come into judgment"; we have passed "out of death into life." Death holds no fear for us. The prospect of

standing before the Lord holds no terror; rather, we long to see Him "face to face," to look upon His nail-scarred hands, and to behold Him in all His beauty throughout the endless ages.

5. *Melchizedek—A Type of Christ, Our Great High Priest.* This strange personage, who brought forth bread and wine to Abraham and blessed him ever reminds us that, in the glory, there is the Man, Christ Jesus, whom we remember at the Lord's Table with the emblems of His broken body and shed blood—"till He come." After He comes for us, we shall not need emblems to remind us of His atoning work on the cross; we shall have His very Presence! But as He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He "ever liveth to make intercession for us," to bless us, and to minister to our every need.

Melchizedek had no recorded genealogy; our Lord had no beginning; and He lives forevermore! He is the eternal God, and able to be our Great High Priest. Having offered one sacrifice forever, He is now our Advocate with the Father, our Intercessor, our Mediator between God and man. Melchizedek was both priest and king; even so the Lord Jesus is not only our Great High Priest; He is the everlasting "King of glory."

6. *Abraham—Justified by Faith.* From all the many lessons we have sought to learn from the life of Abraham, we would emphasize just one; the guilty sinner is justified by faith before a holy God, and by faith alone. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." You and I believe God, that He has died to redeem our guilty souls; and we are forever justified in His sight.

This is a lesson the self-righteous world refuses to learn. Satan blinds men's eyes to think that their own paltry works can save their souls. Sinner, believe the Saviour! Look to Him alone; rest in His finished work; and live forever with Him, made like Him by His grace and power.

7. *Isaac—The Son and Heir—and His Bride.* In the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah and in his restoration to

his father we saw a picture of Christ on the cross and raised from the dead. Isaac was the heir to his father's possessions, typical of our Lord Jesus, the "Heir of all things." Isaac received a bride, going out to meet her. The father's servant had told Rebekah of all the glory of the father and of the son; she believed him, and was willing to go to be a joint-heir with the son, even though she had not seen him. The Holy Spirit is telling lost men today of the glory of our Heavenly Father and of His only begotten Son. And all who believe His word and receive the Son become joint-heirs with Him of all the Father's glory. He is the One, "whom having not seen," we love. He is the One who will one day come forth to meet His bride, the blood-bought church, to take her to share His eternal glory which He had with the Father before the world was. That is the message, above all others, that Isaac teaches us, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

8. *Jacob*—"A Prince with God." That God could take a selfish, mercenary man like Jacob and make him to become "a prince with God," offers encouragement to us in our weakness and frailty of the flesh. And Jacob is the only man in Genesis whom the Lord calls "a prince." What God did for him, He can do for us. His grace can triumph over all our selfishness and sin. Indeed, it is only when we realize that "it is not by might, nor by power," but by God's Holy Spirit alone that we can be saved and useful in His service—it is only then that God can work on our behalf. It took Jacob a long time to learn this lesson; may we not be slow in learning it ourselves!

9. *Joseph*—*A Portrait of Christ*. Joseph's brethren who had betrayed him had to "go unto Joseph" for life-giving bread. The Egyptians had to "go unto Joseph" for that same food for their physical sustenance. Likewise, Jew and Gentile of all ages, of every race and tongue, must "go unto Jesus" for the Living Bread sent down from heaven, which satisfies the heart for all eternity. Beloved by His Father, hated by His brethren, betrayed into the hands of sinners, sold for silver, a lowly Servant, falsely accused, imprisoned,

crucified, raised from the dead, exalted, and honored by all, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Revealer of the love of God, the Bread of Life, and the Saviour of the world. Of all these marvels concerning His Person and work, Joseph was but a type. He points us on to Christ.

Surely, in all of these nine great characters of Genesis, God was preaching the Gospel unto the men of old, even as He is preaching it unto us today. On that never-to-be-forgotten walk to Emmaus, the risen Lord began "at Moses and all the prophets" to expound unto the two disciples "the things concerning himself." And Moses wrote Genesis. Without doubt, Christ took these wonderful stories which we have been studying in Genesis, and explained how all these New Testament teachings were set forth in prophecy and in type "concerning himself." No wonder the disciples' hearts burned within them as He talked with them by the way, and as He opened to them the Scriptures!

GOD'S EVER-UNFOLDING PLAN OF THE AGES AS SEEN IN GENESIS

In round numbers we say that two thousand years passed during the period from Adam to Abraham; two thousand years from Abraham to Christ; and now it has been nearly two thousand years from the time of Christ on earth to our own day. According to Bible chronology, it was 1689 B. C. when Joseph died and the story of Genesis closed. Adam lived 4004 B. C.; so that the time covered by this first book of the Bible was two thousand, three hundred and fifteen years.

As we stop to consider just what is implied by that fact, we are brought face to face with the wonders of the book of Genesis. Fifty chapters to cover nearly two thousand years! God devoted all the remainder of the Old Testament, thirty-eight books, to the two thousand years from Abraham to Christ; and twenty-seven books to the New Testament. As we think of how much of history and prophecy Genesis comprises, we acknowledge with conviction that only God could have produced such a masterpiece! Had man attempted to write a history covering such a scope, he

would doubtless have given a whole library, volumes upon volumes, to the record. Yet the Holy Spirit, with divine wisdom and all knowledge, has put into fifty chapters one of the most priceless portions of the Word of God. There is not a superfluous word. There is much detail in parts. But with a vision that sweeps all eternity, God has set out in beautiful order His ever-unfolding plan of the ages.

He takes us back to the past eternity with the majestic words, "In the beginning God . . ." He lets us see His perfect creation, with man in a beautiful paradise. He shows us the author of sin, even the devil; how he caused the fall of the human race, and brought in chaos and sin and death. But He shows us more—the promise of a Saviour, His only begotten Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. He pictures Him to us as Prophet, Priest and King, with all that these names imply. He shows us how man innocent fell and had to have such a Saviour, if he was to be brought back to Himself. He showed us that judgment inevitably follows sin—that guilty Adam was driven out of Eden; that a guilty world was destroyed by the flood; that the guilty schemers at Babel were scattered and made to speak many different languages; that the guilty brothers of Joseph had to confess their sin, and with fear and trembling, bow down to the one they had wronged, going to a strange country where their children were to become slaves!

The fifty chapters of Genesis present, therefore, the age of innocence, the age of conscience, the age of human government, and the age of promise—four of the seven periods of God's dealings with man. Moreover, they set forth in type this church age of grace and the millennial kingdom of our Lord, as we have abundantly seen in our studies. In this connection, we must remember that this church age, though known unto God in His eternal purpose, was not made known unto man until He gave the special revelation to Paul. But looking back, we can see the prophetic picture of Christ and the church in Isaac and Rebekah, to say nothing of other types of Christ and His blood-bought bride. And in Genesis we see the coming of the King—from the royal tribe of Judah, exalted far above all earthly monarchs, above all principalities and powers in all God's universe!

In Genesis we see in prophetic outline God's plans and purposes for Israel. Called out of idolatry, Abraham became the father of the nation which has given to the world Christ and the Bible. In spite of the prophetic teachings, in Genesis, concerning Israel's rejection of her Messiah; yet her faithful God blessed the tribes with a prophecy that subsequent history can not refute; and He will yet fulfill every jot and tittle of all His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All the persecutors of the Jew, of all the ages, will one day see that God loves His ancient people with an everlasting love!

In God's great plan of the ages, as set forth in Genesis, we see also the doom of Satan. For in Gen. 3:15 God said to the serpent that "the seed of woman" should bruise his head. One day Christ, the virgin-born Son of God, will cast Satan into the lake of fire, which was "prepared for the devil and his angels." Already our Lord has robbed Satan of his power over death and the souls of men who will accept His atoning blood to cleanse them from all sin. And in that yet future day, when Satan meets his final doom, there shall be "no more curse," no more sin, no more sorrow or tears.

The God of Genesis is seen in limitless grace, as He makes known, step by step, His ever-unfolding plan for a sinning world, which He loves with an infinite love. He calls Himself by many beautiful names—we shall not try to repeat them all here; and in these names He made known to Adam, and to all the sons of Adam who would listen to His voice, "treasures old and new" concerning His Person and His mighty work. Jehovah—Jehovah-jireh—The Most High God—The Almighty God—these are but a few of the beautiful names that speak volumes to the sinner saved by grace.

GENESIS—THE FOUNDATION TO ALL BIBLE TRUTH

We hardly need add here that Genesis is fundamental to all Scripture truth. The remainder of the Bible is the unfolding of the teachings outlined in this "Book of Beginnings." How should we know of God's perfect creation if we did not have Genesis? How should we know that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but for Gene-

sis? How could we account for Satan's power in the world today, but for Genesis? How could we account for "Paradise Lost," for sin and chaos in the world, war and cruelty and strife, if we did not have Genesis? How should we understand what our Lord meant when He said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man"—a prophecy of the evil that will exist on earth when He comes in glory—if we did not have Genesis? How should we know about the beginning of nations and many languages, but for Genesis—and Babel? What would Israel be without Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, to say nothing of the fathers of the twelve tribes? And what beautiful lessons of prophecy concerning the Saviour who was to come, who has now come and died and risen to live forevermore—what beautiful lessons concerning the Lord Jesus we should miss if we did not have Genesis. And let us ever remember that Genesis will not be finally and completely fulfilled until the closing chapters of Revelation have also been fulfilled, until Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords! Without Genesis, much of the Word of God would be a closed Book.

My dear radio friends, it is our prayer that this study of the book of Genesis has meant much to each one of you; that it will be a blessing to your souls as, through the years, you continue to read it and read it and read it again, with the Holy Spirit of God as your infallible Teacher. And as you study this precious portion of the Word of God, may you tell it to others, very many others, whose paths you cross. One day our Lord will take us home to heaven. Then we shall learn much more about this wonderful first book of the Bible. We shall see Adam and Abel and Enoch and Noah; Melchizedek; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. We shall hear them "tell the story saved by grace," for they went to heaven by faith in the Lamb of God who was to come. There will be others there, many others, of whom we have read in Genesis.

But the One whom we shall rejoice most of all to see is our Lord Himself. "We shall see the King in his beauty!" And seeing Him, we shall praise Him for redeeming our

sinful souls, and for letting us behold and share His glory. Meanwhile, by faith we look, with wonder and awe, yet unafraid, into the face of the God of Genesis, even as we sing, in the words of the much loved hymn:

“When I stand before Thy throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart—
Then, dear Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe!”

