

ISSUE

20.16

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

April 22,
2018

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Do Christians Still Need Genesis?

By Kyle Pope

In spite of all attempts by modern critics to dismiss, discard, and discredit it, the importance and impact of the book of Genesis continues. Few books have had more influence on art, music, literature, language, and culture than this beautiful book of beginnings. Modern man has imagined that faith in Christ can be divorced from an acceptance or emphasis on Genesis, but this is a misguided fantasy. Stanley Leathes put it well:

The book of Genesis does that for the Pentateuch which the Pentateuch does for the rest of the Old Testament, which the Old Testament itself does for the rest of the Bible, and which the Bible does for the history of the world. As human history is unintelligible without the Bible, so is the New Testament without the Old, so is the Old Testament without the Pentateuch, and so would be the Pentateuch without Genesis (185).

Matthews is correct, "If we possessed a Bible without Genesis, we would have a 'house of cards' without foundation or mortar" (22). To study Genesis is to consider not only the origin of life, but the foundation upon which faith in Christ is built.

Authorship of Genesis

While many attempts have been made in modern times to reject Mosaic authorship of Genesis, the biblical text repeatedly affirms it. Genesis was the first of five books considered the *Torah* or "Law" by the Jews. The first century Jewish historian Josephus, in writing about the Hebrew Scriptures, said they are, "... justly believed to be divine, and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origins of mankind till his death" (*Against Apion*, 1.8.1). After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the Bible says God revealed these texts to him. In Leviticus we read: "These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai" (Lev. 27:34). In Deuteronomy we read, "These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel" (Deut. 29:1a). The last book of the Old Testament declared, "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" (Mal. 4:4).

Evidence for Mosaic authorship is seen in the fact that the Law is ascribed to Moses. Jesus asked, "have you not read in the book of Moses" (Mark 12:26). He asks, "Did not Moses give you the

law” (John 7:19). It is the “Law of Moses” (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 23:25; 2 Chron. 30:16; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh. 8:1; Dan. 9:11, 13; Mal. 4:4; Luke 2:22; 24:44; John 7:23; 13:39; 15:5; 28:23; 1 Cor. 9:9). Although it was given by God, “the law was through Moses” (John 1:17).

Does attribution to Moses confirm Mosaic authorship? Someone might argue that he wrote something, but not the books of the Pentateuch. The problem with this view is that in citing passages from the Pentateuch writers claim that Moses wrote it. When the Sadducees tested Jesus, in referring to the Levirate law of Deuteronomy 25:5-10, they begin by declaring, “Teacher, Moses wrote to us...” (Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28). Quoting Leviticus 18:5, Paul asserts, “For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them’” (Rom. 10:5). Paul and the Sadducees say Moses *wrote* what they could read.

When Jesus confronted the unbelieving Jewish leaders, He told them, “if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46). Jesus and the Jewish leaders had the texts we still have. Jesus affirmed that what they could read, Moses *wrote*. The same is seen when Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus—“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45). Philip and Nathanael had the Pentateuch we still read. Philip claimed Moses *wrote* about Jesus. What is true of the Law as a whole applies to Genesis also—it was written by Moses.

Witnesses to the Text of Genesis

The manuscript evidence for the text of Genesis is remarkable—especially considering that it was originally written

around 1400 years before Christ. The scribal traditions of the Jewish copyists known as the Masoretes provided an amazing level of consistency within the Hebrew text used by Jews throughout the world. Counting the letters used in a text and scrupulously copying and checking every nuance within a manuscript produced two manuscripts of the Hebrew OT that continue to serve as the basis for most Hebrew editions of the OT: the *Aleppo Codex* (AD 920) and the *Leningrad Codex* (AD 1008). These wonderful manuscripts establish the basis for the form of Hebrew text known as the Masoretic Text (MT).

While the Masoretic scribal tradition was highly commendable, it also had its drawbacks. By insisting that any manuscript that became damaged must be completely destroyed to avoid corruption, the Masoretes left us with no Hebrew manuscripts earlier than the end of the first millennium AD. This changed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the middle of the twentieth century.

There are twenty manuscripts within the Dead Sea Scrolls that contain portions of the book of Genesis: **1QGen=1Q1** (ca. 1st BC) has Genesis 1:18-21; 3:11-14; 22:13-15; 23:17-19; 24:22-24; **2QGen=2Q1** (ca. 1st BC – 1st AD) has Genesis 19:27-38; 36:6, 35-37; **4QGen(+Exod)**^a (ca. 125-100 BC) has portions Genesis 22, 27, 34-37, 39-40, 45-49; **4QGen^b** (ca. AD 50-68) has Genesis 1:1-27; 2:14-19; 4:2-4; 5:13 or 14; **4QGen^c** (ca. 1st BC – 1st AD) has portions of Genesis 40 and 41; **4QGen^d** (ca. 50-25 BC) has Genesis 1:18-27; **4QGen^e** (ca. late 1st BC) has portions of Genesis 36-37, 40-43, 49; **4QGen^f** (ca. 1st BC) has Genesis 48:1-11; **4QGen^g** (ca. 1st BC) has Genesis 1:1-11, 13-22; 2:6-7 or 18-19; **4QGen^h** (ca. 1st BC – 1st AD) has Genesis 1:8-10; 2:17-18; 12:4-5; **4QGenⁱ** (ca. 1st BC – 1st AD) has portions of Genesis 41-43, 45; **4QGen^k** (ca. AD 1-30) has Genesis 1:9,14-16, 27-26; 2:1-3; 3:1-2; **4QpaleoGen(+Exod)^j** (ca. 100 BC) has Genesis 50:26; **4QpaleoGen^m** (ca. 150 BC) has Genesis 26:21-26; **6QpaleoGen=6Q1** (date uncertain) has Genesis 6:13-21; **8QGen=8Q1** (ca. 1st BC – 1st AD) has Genesis 17:12-19; 18:20-25; **MasGen** (ca. AD 66-73) has Genesis 46:7-11; **Hev(?)Gen** (before 2nd AD) has Gen. 35:6-10; 36:5-12; **MurGen=Mur1** (ca. AD 132) has Genesis 32:4-5, 30; 32:33-33:1; 34:5-7; 34:30-35:1, 4-7; **MurGenⁿ** (date uncertain) has Genesis 33:18-34:3 (Scanlin 49-85).

In addition to this, the Greek translation of the OT produced before the time of Christ, known as the Septuagint (LXX) serves as an additional witness to the text of Genesis. Three of the most familiar Greek manuscripts that give witness to the NT also contain portions of Genesis: *Codex Sinaiticus* (ca. AD 300) has Genesis 21:26-22:17; 22:21-23:16; 23:19-24:20; 24:23-24:46; *Codex Vaticanus* (ca. AD 300) at some point lost the first leaves containing Genesis 1:1-46:28a, but has 46:28b-50:26; *Codex Alexandrinus* (ca. AD 400) has all of Genesis with some damage to portions of Genesis 1:20-25, 1:29-2:3; 14:14-17, 15:1-5, 15:16-19, 16:6-9. There are other fragmentary texts of the Greek OT that also attest to the text of Genesis: Greek papyrus Fouad 266=Göttingen 942 (ca. 100 BC) has Genesis 3:10-12; 4:5-7, 23; 7:17-20; 37:34-36; 38:1, 10-12; Berlin Genesis=Göttingen 911 (ca. AD 200-300) has Genesis 1-35. Chester Beatty P961 (ca. AD 300-350) has portions of Genesis 9-15; 17-44; Chester Beatty P962 (ca. AD 200) has portions of 8-9; 24-25; 30-35; 39-46 (McCarter 88).

If we add to this the witness of the Samaritan Pentateuch (a Hebrew textual tradition independent of the MT perhaps beginning around 400 BC), ancient translations (such as the Latin and Syriac), and Jewish rabbinical and early church writings (which offer commentary on the biblical text) we have mountains of evidence confirming the validity of the biblical text. The student of Scripture can be confident that the Genesis we read is exactly what Moses wrote.

The Use of Genesis in the New Testament

There is no question that New Testament writers believed Genesis was accurate, authoritative, and part of the inspired canon of Scriptures. Thirty passages from Genesis are quoted by New Testament writers (Archer 2-12). Matthew and Mark record Jesus' quote from Genesis 1:27 and 5:2, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female'" (19:4b; cf. Mark 10:6). With this, Jesus (and the Gospel writers) not only affirm a belief in God's creation of human life, but the divine origin of gender distinctions.

The Hebrew writer, in arguing for the hope of a future "rest for the people of God" quotes Genesis 2:2, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works" (Heb. 4:4). Paul, in discussing the resurrection, quotes from the LXX text of Genesis 2:7, "So also it has been written, 'The' first 'man,' Adam, 'became a living soul'" (1 Cor. 15:45a, GLT). This affirms a clear belief in a six-day creation and a single human ancestor of all mankind.

Matthew, Mark, and Paul all quote from the LXX text of Genesis 2:24—"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Brenton). The Gospel writers both quote Jesus' use of it in His discussion on divorce (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7-8). Paul uses it first to discourage sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:16) and then to explain the relationship of Christ to the church in comparison to a husband and wife (Eph. 5:31). In each of these passages the use of the wording from the LXX—"two shall be one flesh" (a reading also attested in the Samaritan Pentateuch)—stands in dramatic contrast to the wording of the Hebrew Masoretic text—"they shall become one flesh" (NKJV). This likely indicates an early textual variant that predates the Hebrew Masoretic tradition.

In Hebrews 7:1-2 the writer appeals to details in the biblical account of Melchizedek recorded in Genesis 14:17-20. He quotes the record of Genesis 5:24 regarding Enoch—he "was not found, because God had taken him" (Heb. 11:5). The Hebrew writer does not see these as mythical figures, but real souls who actually lived and demonstrated a faith pleasing to God.

In Luke's account of Stephen's speech before the Jewish Council, Stephen quoted the Lord's instruction to Abraham in Genesis 12:1—"Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you" (Acts 7:3). The Hebrew MT adds the phrase, "And from your father's house," but the sense remains the same. Luke also records Stephen's appeal to the land promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:7, 17:8, and 48:4—"He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him" (Acts 7:5). Genesis 15:13-14 recorded the remarkable prophecy to Abraham that his descendants would face servitude and affliction for four hundred years in a foreign land. Luke records Stephen's citation of this promise to the Jewish Council (Acts 7:6-7), understanding it to have been fulfilled in the Israelites slavery in Egypt.

In affirming Jesus' fulfillment of promises made to Abraham, Paul quoted the promise made in Genesis 12:3, and referenced in 18:18—"In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Gal. 3:8b). Luke records Peter's similar teaching that quoted from Genesis 22:18 and 26:4—"And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed"

(Acts 3:25). Paul even quotes the promises to Abraham found in Genesis 13:15, 17:7, 22:18, 24:7, and 26:4 arguing that they are specific prophecies pointing to Jesus. He tells the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). This appeal to the singular rather than the plural wording in the text demonstrates the unquestioned confidence Paul had in the authority and reliability of the text of Genesis.

Paul quoted the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 of descendants as numerous as the stars—"So shall your descendants be" (Rom. 4:18). He also quotes the promise connected with Abraham's name change in Genesis 17:5—"I have made you a father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17). The Hebrew writer, in a similar way, quoted the first part of God's blessing to Abraham reaffirming the star and sand promise of Genesis 22:16-17—"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you" (Heb. 6:13).

James and Paul both cite the account of Abraham's faith in Genesis 15:6 as an appeal to the basis of justification by faith in Christ—"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Jas. 2:23; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; cf. Rom. 4:9; 4:22). If we believe in saving faith in Christ, we must also accept what Genesis records about Abraham.

New Testament writers demonstrated a clear confidence in the prophetic promises recorded in Genesis. Paul in his letter to the Romans devoted three chapters (9-11) to a discussion of how the Jews could fail to accept Jesus as the Messiah. To illustrate the fact that those who are physical descendants of Abraham could be excluded from the blessings promised to him, Paul appealed to the prophecy made to Rebekah in Genesis 25:23—"The older shall serve the younger" (Rom. 9:12)—a prophecy of

the Israel's covenant with God and their dominion over Edom.

Paul quoted the promise God gave to Abraham to return and allow Sarah to have a child in Genesis 18:10-14—"At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son" (Gen. 9:9b). Paul and the Hebrew writer both quote God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 21:12—"In Isaac your seed shall be called" (Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18). This affirmed the writers' confidence that God had a plan involving Isaac that would ultimately lead to Christ.

New Testament writers demonstrate not only a confidence in the reliability of the text, but a trust in details preserved in the record of Genesis. For example, the Hebrew writer cited Jacob's blessing his children, "leaning on the top of his staff" (Heb. 11:21), a reading also found in the LXX. The Hebrew Masoretic text renders this "on the head of the bed" (Gen. 47:21), but this difference is easily explained. The Hebrew words "bed" (*mittah*) and "staff" (*matteh*) were spelled with the same three consonants. Before vowel points were added around AD 700, only context could determine the appropriate vowel pointing. The use of "staff" in the NT and LXX show an early understanding of the proper sense that predates the MT tradition.

Finally, Paul even used Sarah's charge to Abraham in Genesis 21:10 as an allegorical comparison of those walking according to the flesh as opposed to those walking according to the Spirit—"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Gal. 4:30). If Sarah and Hagar were merely a fairy tales the comparison would be mean-

ingless. Clearly, if we accept the New Testament we must accept Genesis just as the first Christians did.

A Book Worthy of Study

We have seen that Genesis was considered an important foundation for the faith of Christians in the New Testament. We have seen the abundance of evidence that allows us to have confidence in the reliability of the preserved text and Mosaic authorship of Genesis. In discussing Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, William Hamilton affirmed:

...Genesis, must also, necessarily, have been written by the very same author, since it bears the closest connection with those other books; and if you take Genesis away, you will have a work incomplete and headless; a work without a proper commencement.

Without Genesis the Hebrews could not know who was the God of their fathers... Without Genesis, they would be in utter ignorance as to what were those promises made by God to their ancestors... (120)

Just as it did for the Israelites who first read it, Genesis allows men and women today to know the God who made us and to see the promises He has made from the beginning that point us towards the relationship we can now enjoy with Him in Christ.

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