

## JANUARY 3

### Genesis 5-7

God is still having Moses write about "beginnings" in Genesis. There is a lot in these chapters, so enjoy reading and making notes of observations. Then write down your questions. If you're reading this for the first time, as these texts are read, a lot of questions will pop up that are hard to answer. The questions are valid and they are what the Lord will use to set your heart seeking for answers. It is how you begin to make this truth your own possession. And reading this is how you slowly begin to learn to know, and "internalize," who God is.

#### Genesis 5

Vs. 1-2 This is the summary of the creation of man and purpose statement for all the genealogies to follow. It is tracing only the godly line from Adam that kept the faith and hope of the promise made to Eve. This is tracing the plan of redemption in the very early days of mankind.

Notice that God blessed them. It is important to note that in every beginning, there was a special blessing to get things going. There were miracles and wonders and special provision in the beginning of the nation of Israel. It went from the ease of birth for the Jewish women, to the birth of Moses, to the manna in the wilderness, to the fact that the shoes and clothing of the people never wore out. There was blessing in big and little things. The same is true of the birth of the church in Acts. There were all sorts of miraculous workings and little wonders that brought the church quickly to growth and to organization. Here also there were blessings given to launch mankind. All of these blessings were for those beginnings.

Vs. 3-4 For example, in today's reading it doesn't mention the births of Abel or Cain, but Adam and Eve could have had many other daughters and sons, before and after the birth of Seth, numbering possibly into the hundreds. We can ask God when we get to heaven, but I'll bet that God made conception and birth very easy processes back then. I'm thinking their hormone levels were normal, fertility was high, and they didn't have TV, so what else did they have to do?

Notice that God is only interested in tracing the line of Seth, although it says that Adam and Eve had many other sons and daughters.

Vs. 4-31 As a fun sort of thing, try to figure out the actual time to the flood using the ages, the births and deaths of the line of Adam. The overlap of men up to the flood is interesting. If you do this right, you'll see that a very famous guy dies the year of the flood, and that all of the other godly guys were dead just before the flood. God does a good job of planning, even planning funerals.

Obviously, brothers and sisters married. Notice that they *married*. Cain knew his *wife*. That's a bit different than "had sex with his sister." Lamech, who had rage issues like his great grandpa Cain, also had 2 *wives*.

At the creation of Eve, Moses adds an explanation saying (my paraphrase), "so now you understand where this phenomena came from, this irresistible pattern engraved in the human race that a man will leave his father and mother (one socially identifiable entity) and be joined (married into another socially identifiable union) and become one flesh (have sex!). This order seems to have been established from the beginning - leave, marry, become one flesh. God ingrained in them from the start, that the bond of marriage happened in an identifiable manner. The woman was socially identified as a *wife*, and the man, as a *husband*. Then, after that was established, they could become one flesh, as the Hebrew expresses it, "to know" one another. Under God, even from the beginning, there was no sex without marriage.

Later, God gives the law and forbids incest. But also, later, God put the fear of man in the animals. Later, after the flood, the ages of men began to shorten, drastically. Things changed, guided by God, to the situation we have today.

V. 32 Notice that Noah was 500 when he had these three sons. That doesn't mean these were the only sons he had, not to mention daughters. However, these are the only ones who followed the Lord. That makes for a very sad reality. The times must have been terrible and God's punishment had to come to that culture.

## Genesis 6

The knowledge of God became more distant. When God spoke to Cain, Cain wasn't amazed. He was irritated. He 'knew' God. The progress of those generations shows the drifting from God to the day of Noah. Only the line of faith, those who looked for God's answer to the tragedy of the Fall, as promised to Adam and Eve, are mentioned. Notice that in Genesis 4:26 that *people began to call upon the name of the Lord*, but which Lord (God)? The fact that *the sons of God* (fallen angels) mixed with humanity (see Jude 1:6), speaks also to the openness and need of humanity to seek and receive spiritual input, but not from the right god. Noah lived and preached (2 Pet. 2:5) for 100 years and there were no "takers" apart from his own family. Imagine how bad he must have felt about his preaching ability.

As disciples we need to lead the way, thinking through this record of fallen reality to give good sincere answers to people who ask. We need to realize, following in Noah's sandals, that our job is to follow Christ and proclaim His Word, not to be "successful" in anyone's eyes but His. *Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.* (1 Tim. 4:16)

Vs. 1-4 If you do a search on *sons of God* it turns out they are angels. Job 1:6 and 2:1 show this. I have the same question as you do, and I don't know how they could do it. Apparently the angels who did were stopped and are mentioned in Jude 1:6.

V. 4 The Nephilim were giants, like Goliath.

Vs. 5-7 This is God's decision. He apparently locked up the angels that did this and prevented this from happening again. Then He had to cleanse mankind and begin again. Interestingly enough, this genetic line of the Nephilim must have continued through Noah's wife or one of the wives of his sons because the Nephilim are mentioned later. And if you add the sin nature to this genetic material they were bringing in to the post-flood world, it wasn't a completely clean start.

God was sorry, not in that He regretted His decision, but He was grieved at the evil He witnessed. We say "evil," but I'm sure it defied the imagination. We see what happens today. Back then it would have been as bad, if not worse.

Vs. 8-10 Noah is in the godly line from Adam, looking for the redemption of man through the promised child. Although Adam and Seth had died, there were many men around Noah who would have personally known Adam. Because we know that Noah was 500 when he had these three sons, it was very probable that he had other sons and daughters, but the others had become part of the culture and had no interest in the promise or in heeding their father's message.

Vs. 11-22 Noah's Ark!

Don't miss v. 22.

## Genesis 7

Vs. 1-5 Notice how often Noah does what God commands. God spoke to Noah and I'm sure there was a lot of encouragement along the way, especially when the animals began to show up. On the other hand, no one listened to Noah. He preached (2 Peter 2:5) for 100 years. Noah's only "success" was his obedience and the ark.

Vs. 6-10 Noah worked on the ark 100 years.

V. 7 You would have thought that with all of the offspring of the godly line, there would have been more people on the ark. Surely there were other kids of Adam and Enoch and others of the godly line who were still alive. Apparently sin was that bad. Also, there was a spiritual thing going on with the "sons of God" and the rise of powerful leaders. It is very possible that Noah had many other children who didn't follow God. The promise of redemption must have seemed as unnecessary as worshiping the true God. I think this shows how deep the evil was. Everyone but eight people was corrupted.

Vs. 11-16 This restatement shows that God was supernaturally taking care of man and animal. Notice the very exact time reference in v. 11. God had to have revealed this to Moses, especially since Moses was now using the new dating system God gave them after the Passover. It is also here in v. 11 that it is suggested that the protective layer of moisture in the atmosphere was dissolved and added to the general disaster. The final verse is interesting. God shut them in, protecting them, and shutting out all of the wicked.

Vs. 17-24 Notice the world *prevailed*. Apparently the flood not only rose, but it lasted this long without beginning to go down.

One of the questions is, "Why didn't God just kill everyone but Noah & Co. with some plague or just vaporize them?" Of course, because of the flood we have great sermon illustrations, children's stories, movies and action figures. But really, it had something to do with mercy, judgment and guilt. The fact that Noah built the ark for 100 years gave everyone the opportunity to come and inquire. The fact that no one came made the righteousness of the judgment obvious. Also, it shows that God is patient but means business. Jesus and Peter both referred to the days of Noah as being an illustration of coming, inevitable judgment, patiently marching forward. (Luke 17:26, Matt. 24:37 and 1 Peter 3:20)

It is the same for us working in the harvest following the Lord. We do what the Lord says, sharing His Word and making disciples. Chances are we won't do worse than Noah, and God will bless us for following and obeying. He'll take care of the rest.

### **Matthew 3:7-4:11**

Matthew 3:7-17

Vs. 7-12 Talk about how not to "win friends and influence people." Note the contrast between the description of John (camel hair and locusts) and the Pharisees and Sadducees who were rich and well-dressed. John unloaded on them, but Luke 3:7 tells us John also addressed the multitudes of people who were there for baptism. John saw the P&S, then turned to the people and issued this blast. Here is the deciding factor in this very rough sermon. We don't know what the P&S did, but the people responded in Luke 3:10, saying, "*What then shall we do?*" The Spirit led John to address the leaders and people like this. The people responded with open hearts. The reason the Spirit led John to be so harsh was to reveal and draw those who were spiritually hungry and thirsty. They kept listening.

As disciples we should be tactful, where appropriate, but never hiding the truth. John spoke like this and the people who were drawing near in faith did not run; they came closer, unlike the people in Noah's day. Is it OK to tell people about judgment and hell? Both John and Jesus did.

Vs. 13-17 Jesus' baptism is the first event that all four Gospels refer to with the same specific detail, the Spirit descending as a dove and remaining on Jesus. Properly understood, it was His anointing as King; and, just like David, there was/will be time between His anointing and His earthly throne. This anointing and presentation of the Messiah to Israel was the fulfilling of the ministry of John the Baptist as seen in the Gospel of John, chapters 1- 3. This might be behind

the words of Jesus. To fulfill all righteousness, here, was to have John fulfill his purpose in God's plan.

Matthew 4:1-11

Vs. 1-3 Dwight Pentecost mentions that one of the reasons for the 40 days might have been to make sure Jesus faced off with Satan. It took that long to smoke Satan out. Jesus, the real ruler of humanity, confronted the present ruler/guardian/rat. The Spirit was the aggressor. The temptation of man was in the garden. Afterward Satan turned the world into a wilderness. Jesus is challenging Satan in the wilderness. Another thought here regarding the wilderness is that Israel was in the wilderness being formed into the nation that was to reach the world; but as Paul says in that famous passage on temptation, 1 Corinthians 10:5-13, they failed.

*Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

V. 4 Notice that Jesus, unlike Eve, correctly quotes Scripture and uses it against Satan. Interestingly enough, all of the Scripture Jesus quotes to Satan comes out of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy was written at the end of the wilderness experience of the children of Israel.

Vs. 5-6 This temptation is in a different order between Matthew and Luke. Personally, I would go with Luke, but I understand the Spirit having both men place this in a different order. Matthew builds up to showing Jesus is the Messiah, the King. Luke was painstakingly chronological and shows that Jesus is God the Son and superior to Satan. In Luke you get the sense that Satan was frustrated with Jesus quoting Scripture so he tried to trick Jesus by quoting Scripture himself. Notice that Satan correctly quotes the verses, understanding their meaning, but incorrectly applies them to that situation. That tells me that we also need to know the heart of God and honor Him alone. That is why we are reading the Word, not to promote ourselves, but to know and serve Him.

Vs. 7-11 Note that Jesus does not dispute Satan's claim to rule. There is no room here for a long discussion, but just to say that the claim is legitimate and supported by Paul's *god of this world* (2 Cor. 4:4) and *the world rulers of this present darkness*. (Eph. 6:12, RSV)

Also, Jesus doesn't really have a discussion with Satan, He just quotes Scripture and ends it. Maybe there is a godly stance before aggressive unbelief that is simply silent, not giving dogs what is holy or throwing pearls before swine.

V. 10 Notice that worship equals service. If you don't serve you are not truly worshipping, because true worship leads to service. Jesus wasn't tricked by thinking you could have one without the other.

V. 11 I don't think Satan understood the full impact of this confrontation. When a demon possesses a person, it binds and dominates the human spirit. It could be that Satan assumed there was a separate human spirit in Jesus that was being dominated by the Spirit of God the Son, and he was trying to get that human spirit to rebel against God.

I think that Satan and his angels saw the man Jesus, but assumed it was the spirit of God the Son, merely dominating a human. That is how they work. In that case the human spirit would not have been free to choose to die for mankind. That possessed human would have been forced to do so. That would have made God's plan invalid. I think that Jesus, as incarnate God, fully man and fully God, was still veiled in mystery and hidden; for as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:8, *None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

### **Psalm 3**

Vs. 1-2 I hate to say this, but I don't think you can grow past a certain place as a disciple until you experience something like this. These are only words until you have contended for God and been taken out by unfriendly fire, whether from believers or unbelievers. Paul promised Timothy, *All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived.* (2 Tim 3:12)

Vs. 3-4 This is where you learn to truly cry out as a disciple and where you truly realize that the Lord, and no one else, can save and satisfy. Selah!

Vs. 5-6 You get the idea that David learned to trust and rest in the Lord over time. He was in constant danger for years, yet he slept and rose and God was still protecting him.

Vs. 7-8 Punishment comes to the rebellious. That is certain and David could rest in that. Salvation comes from the Lord. That too was certain and worth waiting for.

### **Proverbs 1:10-19**

I think the message of Solomon to his son is "Beware of shortcuts." I know none of us is going to sneak up on someone and mug them for their wallet. But there is a temptation, for the sake of God, to press the "easy" button in relationships, money and honesty.

Jesus told His disciples to make sure they were on the right way. How do you know which way is the right one? The gate is narrow, you are pressed getting through it, and the way is hard. It takes work and focus. Honest work, paying taxes, honoring city codes, telling the truth, honoring copyrights, being authentic are all work. If our faith costs us nothing, it could be that we are not following Christ in the harvest at all. We're just being good clean church people.

For the sake of the Kingdom we get tempted to take shortcuts. We are not to be in the company of, or enticed by, those who want to disobey God in order to "serve" God and "build" His kingdom. Many disciples have stumbled and many ministries have been destroyed by this nonsense. Worst of all, Christ Himself and His church become held up to ridicule by the behavior of His own people.