

What are some over-all lessons to treasure from our studies in Genesis? May the Lord greatly encourage us as we savor some of the memorable moments from this book this week, focusing on the work of the Triune God in keeping our world from evil.

Monday/Tuesday: Read Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 40:27-31, John 1:1-4

A New Creation

The first lesson in Genesis is about the powerful Creator-God, who by the “word of His power,” first created all things and then preserved and governed them for His glory and His people’s good (WSC # 9). In short, the message of the whole Old Testament is that we can trust in God the Father because He is “the Creator of the ends of the earth who does not grow tired or weary” (Isaiah 40:28). “The knowledge of God the Creator is the answer to our doubts and complaints... He has made everything, sustains everything, watches over everything. He does not diminish in energy as we do. He is the Creator! He will give us strength and power” Sinclair Ferguson, *A Heart for God*.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ is granted the power *to create* and *to rule over* the creation. As the Eternal Word of God, He was there at the beginning with His Father to give form and order to the whole creation. In fact, John insists that without the Son of God, whom he calls the Word, “nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). The all-powerful, creative word which made the world in the book of Genesis is the same all-powerful word of salvation which Jesus speaks. Just as God created the whole universe with His mere word out of nothing, from the mere emptiness of the void, so the Son of God accomplishes salvation by calling from the dead sinners who have no potential to amount to anything in themselves – all by the word of *His* power. Such is the immense power of the Son of God! He is nothing less than the all-powerful Creator God, who has come down not only to die for us, but to renovate and to inhabit our lives. Truly, “if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17)!

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank God the Father for giving us such a strong foundation to our lives of faith by the creative power of the Son of God. When we are tempted to be discouraged at the weakness of our Christian lives, when we are dismayed at the lack of fruitfulness in our own Christian walks, may the Lord lift our eyes to the fruitful purposes which the Son of God has for us. As He promised fruitfulness in the lives of His Apostles, so He is determined, in the end, after much patient, cultivating work in our lives, to produce the fruit of the New Creation in us as well: “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last” (John 15:16).

Dear Lord, help us to appreciate the *real* fruit which you are producing in our lives, over time, small as that fruit may seem or even actually be. Help us to value you as the powerful Gardener in our lives, and let you work at the pace which you desire, instead of vainly insisting that we become fruitful according to our own timetable and our own desires. Thank you that the vineyard of the Son of God has deep roots, and eternal, strong limbs. Thank you that we are part of that vineyard which *will* produce fruit that will endure. Amen.”

Wednesday/Thursday: Read Genesis 6:1-8, 1 Peter 3:18-20 and John 16:7-11

The Restraining Spirit

Just as God the Father and the Son are pictured in Genesis as creating and preserving all things by the word of their power, so the Holy Spirit is busily at work in Genesis. The wickedness of mankind would destroy the whole creation if not restrained by this third member of the Trinity. Genesis 6:3 describes this Spirit as “contending” with men in their evil thoughts and stratagems. Also, by that Holy Spirit God calls Noah, choosing him to be a “preacher of righteousness” in his evil generation (2 Peter 2:5). By the Holy Spirit, Noah effectively testified against the disobedient men of his day, so that the spirits of those rebels were confirmed in their guilt when Christ visited them in hell after His victorious death on the Cross (1 Peter 3:19-20). In sum, just as God

the Father *ordained* the creation; just as God the Son carried out the Father's will and created all things *by His Word*, so the Spirit of God *defended* God's creation against the unbelief and hostility of men in their fallen rebellion in Genesis 6. Think of how the whole Trinity was working to vindicate his witness and work as Noah built the ark for those many decades! My, how secure Noah was even amidst the flood of unbelief and rebellion in his day!

Is God's Spirit at work in our day in the same way as He was in Noah's? The answer is yes! Jesus promises us that He would send the Spirit to prosecute men's guilt, vindicate Christ as the Ascended righteous One and convince the whole world of coming judgment by condemning the Evil One himself (John 16:10-11). The word for the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and translated "Comforter" actually comes from the Latin meaning "strong, like a **fortress**" (same root). As Tom Swanston put it: "The Spirit does not comfort us by sending us to sleep, but by stirring us up and keeping us awake!"

Meditate and Pray: Ask the Lord to stir us up as His church, just as He by His Spirit stirred up the courage of Noah to stand alone in his generation. Use the words of this great, ennobling hymn, # 571 in our red hymnals:

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed.*

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.*

Friday/Saturday: Read Gen 9:8-11; Heb 9:14 & 1 Peter 3:18

The Offering of the Son

In conclusion on the book of Genesis, the Triune God is at work in His mighty power as Father, Son and Spirit both to create and to govern His creation – including restraining sinful men and devils who would destroy all that He had created. But it is especially the Son of God who, even in Genesis, comes to the fore as the One who must be sent down to bear the ultimate cost of setting this world aright.

For example, how is it possible for the very same God who in justice destroyed the wicked world of sinful men with a flood in to then spare that same wicked world three chapters later in Genesis 9? Not even the flood waters could wash away the wrath-deserving sinful nature of man. As Genesis 8:21 makes clear, man's inclinations remained just as evil after the floodwaters receded! How then could Grace be shown to such an undeserving world of men? The answer is that, before God made a covenant with Noah, God had already made a covenant with His Son to *pay for the sins already committed*. It was the smell of the smoke of sacrificial worship offered by Noah which pleased God after the flood (Genesis 8:20-22). Noah's altar pointed forward to the greater burnt offering of Calvary, where Jesus Christ would finally pay for the sins of men, bringing for the first time since the fall the real cleansing from sin which all the flood waters of judgment could never achieve.

Meditate and Pray: Thank God this weekend for all the altars which the patriarchs set up in the book of Genesis, pointing to that One Great Sacrifice to come. May the Lord make our devotion to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross as distinctive and clear in our sin-weary world as Noah's altar was in his. As Isaac Watts put it in hymn # 242:

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.*

*But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And there confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.*

*Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.*