

# 15: Letting Genesis Speak for Itself

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## Introduction

We are going to be spending some time in the area of the inductive approach to the Bible. This is a very exciting subject and possibility. We have already talked about the covenant, the everlasting covenant, and then we ran into other passages later in the Bible which talk about another covenant coming along. There is a certain amount of mystery here. I told you this is the fifth mystery, this covenant, but we'd like now today and in the next couple of days to emphasize the text itself.

Dr. Wilbert White, who was the great prime mover of the Inductive Bible Study movement almost a hundred years ago, was himself somewhat fed up with all of the critical conclusions that were in conflict, as a result of the liberal temperament of his time. It is as if he said, "I'm just going to look at the text itself," and he became captured by the text. Today's topic, *Letting Genesis Speak for Itself*, could also be called, *To Be Willing To Be Captured by Genesis*. That would be appropriate, because in an inductive study you need to be willing to surrender yourself to the reality that is there.

This is what is scientific about it. Supposedly, in science you are not imposing order on the universe; you are trying to deduce the order from the creation of God. Science is preeminently the discovery of order that is already there. Art is the human imposition of order on a blank piece of canvas or whatever, on a blank musical score or on a blank computer screen. That is art. But science is to look at what is there and figure out what it is, what it means.

And so we have this gorgeous opportunity to be captured by Genesis. How do we do that? We want to really plunge in. In a certain sense, we want to suspend all of the little things we have read already, study things for ourselves and then expect later on next week that Kaiser will come through. But we will study what he says after we have ourselves plunged into the middle of the reality of the text to see what is there.

Now, inevitably, some of the conclusions that other people have drawn are already in your minds. This is normal and should not be a problem if you do not let these conclusions dictate what you will see in the text. For example, Genesis is just bulging with different topics. You could go off in almost

any direction. Anybody with any penchant for anything could probably take you into Genesis and find things that would buttress his thesis or his concern.

Obviously, we ourselves also have a kind of initial bias. In our own inductive study, those of us who are offering this course, as well as Kaiser, Hesselgrave, Don Richardson, myself—those of us who have had this "Aha!" experience—have already come to some conclusions about the theme of the Bible and the theme of Genesis. We are not embarrassed to say that. But you must suspend, as best you can, the conclusions that we have offered to you. You must ask yourself, "What is the evidence for their conclusions?"

If you were to put all these presumptions concerning the text on the shelf and to study the text yourself, would you be able to come, or would you wish to come, to the same conclusions? That is what inductive approach actually is.

I have already tipped my hand, so to speak, in one of the readings by saying that Genesis 1-11 is the "Introduction to the Bible". Not just to Genesis, but to the whole Bible. Then Genesis 12-50 becomes "Chapter One" of the Bible, with, of course, sections which we used to call chapters. I accept, along with others, that there is a real change of subject between Genesis 1-11 and 12-50. And, then, Exodus is "Chapter Two" and Leviticus, "Chapter Three". So you see, I have already tipped my hand as to the breakdown of Genesis.

But you yourself should have the opportunity and the luxury of coming to that conclusion yourself! You will not be penalized if you do not come to that conclusion. The book of Genesis belongs to you just as much as it belongs to me or to anyone else.

Also, in this study, we have held the concept of *covenant* to be preeminent. That is clear in Kaiser's materials. Therefore, this assumption is the thing which, especially as we go beyond Genesis 1-11, we will try to verify.

## Review

For the purposes of our first full session on Inductive Bible Study I have asked three of the students who have undergone this type of inductive study to relate their experience.

*Students' Personal Testimonies on Inductive Bible Study of Genesis 1-11:*

**Student #1:** I have found that Inductive Bible Study is a good way to get me more excited about studying the Bible and seeing things for myself! Just in looking at the beginning of Genesis, I noticed for the first time that the text builds up to the climactic point of the Lord creating man.

**Student #2:** I just did a quick review of Genesis inductively, and in reading it really fast, I was reminded of an orchestra that can start really soft and quiet and just builds and builds and builds. Sometimes a piece of music that began lightly will get very big and kind of heavy! Using this idea, I divided up Genesis. Chapters 1 and 2 depict God creating, and everything is good. God repeatedly declares that the creation is good. In Genesis 3 through 6 the plot takes on a destructive tone and everything is cursed. The emphasis at this point is destruction and wickedness. And for me, at the end of Genesis 8, there is a climax that happens when God says He is never going to curse the land or the living creatures again, even though man is evil.

But one of the exciting things for me just in studying the Bible — and this is what happens when you study inductively—is to see all the ways that God created. You see that He formed and then let the land produce, and you look at that and see what that means: even though the land was producing loving creatures and vegetation, God was behind it! That is one of the things that we have studied in our discussions about evolution, that even in discussing that, we know that God is behind everything.

For example, I noticed that even Eve said, “*With the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man*” (Genesis 4:1). Even at that time, at the first birth, she acknowledges that God was the one who helped her. So in all of these creations God is very evident. So it is interesting to just look at the different forms of creation.

**Student #3:** Two things stood out to me in the beginning verses of Genesis. One was that God kept *saying* things, and the other, that He kept *seeing* things. Everything He saw was good, and at the very end it was very good. So I named chapter 1, *God Said and God Saw*, because those were the two things in the chapter that stood out to me.

Then in chapter 2, it tells us this is an account or a story of how it happens. So I have paragraphs named *Accounts* and *Man and Garden* and *Rule and Woman*, because those are the parts of the story that are told in the chapter. Then I named the chapter, *Story*, because that is what it says it is. And those two chapters together I called *Beginnings* or *First Things*, which is not very

original, but I couldn't think of any other name for what was in there.

Then, the next section of chapters, 3 and 4, I placed together. The first one is *The Fall*. That is not a very creative name, but that is what the chapter is about. There is sin and the discovery of the sin. Subsequently, we read that there are the curses and the consequences of the sin when Adam and Eve are kicked out of the garden.

And then chapter 4 tells about the children who are born, and the rivalry between them, which leads to murder. Then we read about Lamech. He has these three wild kids: Jubal, Jabal, Tubal—interesting names. I named this chapter *Consequences*, because it seemed like this chapter described the world in a very depressed stage. It includes all the negative things—you know, polygamy and murder. Chapters 3 and 4 I placed together and called them, *Reality*, because the same situation described here is true for today. People are sinners today, and we still have the negative consequences of sin.

During the inductive Bible Study I even noticed new things in the genealogies. Two of the men in the genealogy I noticed because the Scripture says they walked with God. One of these was Enoch. It is hard to understand how he walked with God and then was simply taken from the earth. And then there was Noah. Chapter 5 says that Noah also walked with God. So I put a little star next to those two guys, because it said something extra about them that was not there about the other two. And I named the section *Genealogy*.

Then there is all the other stuff about Noah. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 are one big section that I just called *Noah*. Chapter 6 seemed to tell me why and how—why God decided to send the flood, and how Noah was supposed to escape it. It is talking about the life span of people and how God cut it down, and the Nephilim (whatever they are), and the Judgment. There is this really emotional phrase in there: “God’s heart was filled with pain when He saw what man was like.” You can really picture what is going on.

Chapter 6 goes on to describe the ark just exactly how Noah was supposed to build it. And at the end, Noah did it! Noah actually obeyed the Lord in this crazy thing. Nobody had ever built a boat before, and he went ahead and just did it.

And then chapter 7 is the story of the Flood. Noah’s family was shut inside of the ark for 40 days of rain and 150 days of flooding. Chapter 8 tells what happened after the Flood, so I called it *Then*, as in now and then. As the waters receded, birds were sent out to find dry land. And then I put down the word *OUT!* with a big exclamation point

after it because I realized they were in that boat 110 days with all those animals, and I know that for them now it was time to get OUT!

The very last verses of chapter 8, which talk about the times and the seasons, were special to me because it seems like they introduce something new. The way that these verses are worded makes me wonder whether there had not been times and seasons before. Anyway, that was just an interesting thing to me.

Then in chapter 9, there was again the rule of men. But it was changed this time. God added that the animals would be afraid of man, which made me wonder if maybe before the Flood the animals were not afraid. That is just a question, and I have not answered it yet. Then there was the covenant with the rainbow, and the sons of Noah and what they did, and so I named this whole chapter *Moving Ahead*. After the Flood, mankind moved ahead.

Then the final Section was chapters 10 and 11. Ten lists the different nations that came from the three sons of Noah, so I have paragraphs called *Japheth, Ham, Nimrod, the Semites*, followed by a paragraph about the nations that spread out from all those three sons. Therefore, I called chapter 10, *Nations*.

Then in chapter 11 there was the Tower of Babel. And I gave a paragraph to each of the people in the long genealogies from Shem to Abram, and then the wives of Abram and Nahor and the move to Haran. There are lots of paragraphs in chapter 11, and I named it *Genealogy*.

I gave the title of *Prehistory* to all of this section, from chapter 1 to chapter 11. I did this not because that is my own idea, but because of the other things I have read in the course, which say that we can not establish firm dates for any of the events that happened before chapter 11. So I believed these guys, and I called it *Prehistory*.

That was the chart that I got as I looked at Genesis 1-11. I found many interesting things there and have many questions. But I really enjoyed myself.

*Dr. Winter:* Okay. Now my wife had some thoughts that she picked up going through these chapters. Therefore, I will have her give a little report on that. And then we will sit back and see what has happened to us all.

*Roberta Winter:* As I was looking through the text, I was looking in terms of some of the things I thought were very, very important in this whole section. Of course, you have the Fall, which is very important.

But I was looking in particular at chapter 4, where you have the story of Cain and Abel and the

vengeance pattern, which has been one of the things that has bedeviled man ever since. Israel's conflict with the Palestinians immediately comes to mind. The vengeance pattern is so strong there. In certain parts of the United States you have had this vengeance pattern. Everyone has heard of the infamous family feud.

You have this same pattern in the story of Lamech. Lamech stated that if Cain was to be avenged, then how many more times he would repay such an offense. Now this pattern, as much as anything you can think of, has really bedeviled mankind. Lamech has within him this insistence that he is going to fight back! Not only Lamech, but his children after him, and his children's children, etc. It is a terrible thing!

I was also thinking that this is very important for us when we think of missiology. When we go overseas as missionaries, one of the things we have to deal with is this problem of vengeance, and we need to demonstrate how the redemption of God digs that out of our souls. Yet even as Christians, sometimes when we are harmed and hurt, we face the temptation to repay in kind! And God has to deal with this in us. We have to yield our right to repay before He is able to make us over into the kind of people He wants us to be. We cannot hold on to this vengeance pattern that comes up so early in the Bible.

I also thought about Cain and Abel in reference to God's judgment of Cain. There was mercy even in the judgment because God made it possible for Cain to continue to live and be somewhat protected despite his sin.

There is also much to learn from what God first said to Cain after he had killed Abel. God said, "Why is your countenance so cast down? If you were doing well, your countenance would be lifted up." I have thought many times of this truth. People whose countenances seem to be cast down may be bothered by some feeling of guilt. And if you can deal with that guilt and get them to come to the Lord and let Him release them of it through forgiveness, then their countenances will change. In a sense, this passage borders on the field of psychology.

One other thing I wanted to point out concerns the story of the Tower of Babel. While one might say that the scattering of the people and the diversifying of languages was God's judgement in action, there is also a missiological lesson to be learned in this incident. As we know today, one of the ways in which God reaches people is through their different languages which are set up in family groups through which, as they respond to the Lord, they can reach out to their whole family. If the whole earth contained only one widespread

language, spoken by billions of people, it would be much more difficult to reach them all.

Missiologically speaking, we can say that the result of the Tower of Babel, while it was judgment, was also mercy—mercy for the nations!

*Dr. Winter:* The vengeance pattern continues today in a variety of cultures and locations. One only has to reflect on the gang culture in Los Angeles to realize the continuing influence of vengeance. The Bible, of course, condemns this pattern. Gang wars are fueled by the vengeance pattern. In Papua (formerly called Irian Jaya), one will find tribal warfare that follows this same pattern of vengeance. The same situation is in North Ireland. It is also true if you go to the Gaza Strip, as Roberta said. So this is really a very basic theme through the whole Bible and through the whole of human history.

And then, of course, we have commented on the matter of different languages. I know that as we lived for ten years in Guatemala, Roberta and I used to reflect and lie awake at night wondering if all the different tribal groups there should merge into one. There are 33 different languages in the Mayan family alone. What is a missionary to do? Is he supposed to condense all these tribes into one? But if you are going to do that, you might as well merge them into Spanish—have them learn Spanish and forget the Indian language altogether. But if you are going to do that, you might as well come all the way over to the really Christian language, which is English! I'm just joking, of course.

So, missionaries have to ask themselves, what is their purpose? Are they trying to reduce linguistic and cultural differences in the name of missions? Or are they trying to assist those people despite those differences? We often think, especially in the United States, that any linguistic differences or culture differences are the source of difficulty and that all of our problems come from such differences. If everybody spoke the same language, there would be no misunderstandings. There wouldn't be Koreans versus Blacks, etc. Well, think again! A large percentage of all the murders that take place in the United States do not take place between races or even between families, but within families, where the problem is not linguistic differences or cultural differences.

So, the whole Tower of Babel story has to be seriously considered. It was, of course, a punishment. Maybe it was also protection. Maybe it was just part of God's tremendous creative

penchant for diversity. If He created 20,000 different kinds of butterflies, why wouldn't He have wanted to create 20,000 different kinds of languages? And there are 20,000 different kinds of languages even today—Even, after all the assimilation and merger of the Scandinavian tongues and different tribal groups. There are still thousands and thousands of subtle differences. Is this good? Is this bad? Is this representative of God's diversity and the profusion of His creativity? Or is this something which missionaries are supposed to get rid of?

This is a real question which I thought about for years and years. Now I will have to give you my own conclusion: that God is not trying to dispel the differences. You can imagine even in the end of time the creativity of God and the different physical types and facial features and skin colors and hair. Did you know that the strands of hair come out of the scalp at a different angles for different races? Interestingly, this physical characteristic is actually the most durable racial distinction: the angle of the hair coming out of the skull! Skin color is not as durable a racial distinguishing point as that. Well now, if God is going to make all people with their hair coming out of the skull at the same angle instead of just straight out, is that what He wants, to eliminate that kind of diversity?

Before finishing this lesson and looking forward to further lessons in Inductive Bible Study, let us just ask ourselves, "What is more important: teaching or learning?"

A person can not really learn what someone else has learned. You have to learn for yourself. When we had these four different people giving their impressions in their reports, you are not to memorize what they related. The students who shared are to serve as examples. You are supposed to be able to discover things like that for yourself. The whole purpose of Inductive Bible Study is to provide an introduction to the very nature of learning. It is not just Inductive Bible Study; it is an introduction to inductive learning.

All of our learning needs to progress from the known to the unknown. It has to be added to what we already know, and it has to be discovered for ourselves. And the retention, the grades we make in exams, really depends on whether we learned it or whether we were merely taught it. Telling is not the same as teaching, and learning is not the same as listening.