

Journey Into God's Word



#2

Genesis 1-10

Psalms 1-10

Matthew 1-7

Dear Co-workers in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,

When everything seems like a mess and the situation appears hopeless, what a joy it is to read Genesis 1:2,3. “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light’ ”(NIV). What an assurance it is to me to know that this same Holy Spirit can come and hover over the dark, hopeless situations in my life and create order and along with the Word of God, light, in the midst of the mess. As I feel overwhelmed with assaults from every side, I am strengthened in declarations such as that found in Psalms 3:3,4 from the Message Bible. “But you, God, shield me on all sides; you ground my feet, you lift my head high; with all my might I shout up to God, His answers thunder from the holy mountain.” As I read the word of God I am assured I do not need to worry. “But seek first His (God’s) kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:33, 34 NIV) What a joy it is to know that God has everything under control and He will provide the necessary miracles to provide for that which is necessary in my life.

As we journey into God’s Word we see His great desire to express His love through the wonders of that which He has created. 1 John 4:16 declares, “God is Love.” Since God is Love, He desires to express that Love. In Genesis 1, we see this expression of love through all that God has created. In order to appreciate this expression of love revealed through creation, we must ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to see not just animals, birds, people and the rest of created life as a group, but also recognize the wisdom and beauty in each created form of life. Adam saw this and as a result under God’s direction named each of the creatures. (Genesis 2:20) Reflect on the example of the wonders of creation found in Genesis 1:20, where it says, “And God said, ‘Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.’” Looking at just one of the living creatures in the water, the dolphin, shows a fish that has a brain that

instantaneously calculates the nature of the surrounding environment from the reverberations from the ultrasounds produced by a specialized organ in the front of its skull (200,000 vibrations per second). Or notice for a moment a flock of geese and their v-shape formation as they fly through the sky. The leader, the strongest bird, uses his strength to shield the birds following from opposing air currents, enabling the entire flock to gain an improved efficiency and speed of up to 23%. Volumes could be written on the very subject of examining the miraculous in each particular species. Humanity, which Genesis 1:27 speaks of being created in the image of God, has the ability to also create and reflect on the purpose and meaning for life. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” What does this mean to you? How does it relate to the fact that we are to reflect the glory of God? “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28) Mankind was ordered to rule as God ruled with love and caring attention. Truly we are ordered to be earth keepers not earth breakers.

In Genesis 1, we witness a precise order of creation establishing time. There we see God creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh. Genesis 2 emphasizes the aspect of place, which is the Garden of Eden. Here we see, “the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:6) Animals and Eve are also created. Genesis 2 does not give us the precise order of creation that we find in Genesis 1. Instead we see as mentioned earlier the emphasis on place or space given. This brings out the fact that like Adam and Eve you and I have been placed in this particular time and space in order that we may seek God as Acts 17:26, 27, 28 explains. Please read these verses and in your own words write what you believe they express for your life in the here and now.

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’” (Genesis 2:15, 16) In Genesis 3 we witness Satan coming in the form of a serpent and tempting Eve (the woman) using the same tactics he uses today by saying ““did God really say...?”” Questioning if God really means what He says is one of Satan’s tricks that he continues to use today to get people to disobey the word of God. Eve eats of the fruit and then gives some to Adam. Please read Genesis 3:8-13 and explain the blame game that follows? Why is it so much easier to blame someone else when

you do wrong than confessing that wrong and asking God for forgiveness? What were the results of the sin that took place in the Garden of Eden according to Genesis 3:14-24?

The results of disobeying God were not only limited to Adam and Eve, but directly affected all of creation. Sin brought pain and death. “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19) That is the message of hope that we will discover as we study the book of Matthew.

As the creation of the universe reveals the power of God, the creation of Adam and Eve reveals the compassion and love of God. A love which motivated Him to perform the greatest miracle of all, after sin invaded His wonderful creation. This greatest miracle is when God became flesh through the Holy Spirit conceiving Jesus in the womb of Mary. Jesus, who was fully God and man is called in Matthew 1:23, “Immanuel...’God with us.’” C. S. Lewis writes, “In the Christmas story, God descends to re-ascend. He comes down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb of ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and sea-bed of the Nature He has created.” This miracle resulting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ made possible the recreation of an initial creation that sin had infected. Jesus invaded Satan’s territory and Satan tried to kill Jesus. (Matthew 2:16, 17) How does Jesus escape? (Matthew 2:14, 15) How does John the Baptist describe Jesus in Matthew 3:11, 12?

In Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus who was also tempted by Satan, shows us how to victoriously overcome temptations. “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written. ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:1-3). Satan tries to get Jesus to question who He is by using the word if. Then he goes on and tells Jesus, you don’t have to be hungry you have got options. These options or alternatives seem to increase the more we turn away from trusting God. The lie of the devil is that these options will bring us what we need. The fact is they won’t because every idol is an impostor. If we are going to be victorious we must believe and declare to the devil that God is in control. He is the one we will

put our trust in not the devil's alternatives. Jesus made this declaration by stating, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

"Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:5, 6) Again Satan uses the word if and tries to move Jesus from the realm of faith into the world of presumption. "Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matthew 4:7 NIV)

"For the third test, the devil took Him on the peak of a high mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, 'They're yours – lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours.' Jesus' refusal was curt. 'Beat it Satan!' He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: 'Worship the Lord your God, and only Him. Serve Him with absolute single-heartedness.'" (Matthew 4:8-10 Message Bible) What have you learned from Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 as to how to resist the devil?

What advantages does Psalm 1 point out results from not sinning? Sin is standing "against the Lord" as Psalms 2:2 declares. Sin is rebelling against the Living God. How do you think sin keeps one from experiencing the miraculous as it is defined earlier? What miracle conquers the power of sin? See Psalm 3:3,4 in the light of Romans 6:23: Why is it important for those who meet Jesus to "return a different way" like the wise men did by living a different life in contrast to their previous sinful life? John the Baptist says in Matthew 3:1 "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near," and in Matthew 3:8, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." What do you think John the Baptist meant when he said in Matthew 3:11, He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire?" Matthew 4:17 declares, "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near,'" To repent means to turn around to march to God's "drumbeat" rather than that of the world's. How does Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, 7 turn this world's practical philosophies upside down with His revolutionary teachings? For example in what is commonly referred to as the beatitudes we see Jesus declaring, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5:3) This sharply clashes with the world's values of pride and personal independence. Then in Matthew 5:4 Jesus states, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." What a contrast this is to the

world's philosophy of happiness at any cost. In Matthew 5:5 Jesus declares, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." How different this is to the world's attitude of happiness at any cost. Please examine the rest of what Jesus says and contrast it with the world's philosophy for living. Why is it impossible to accept and apply the teachings of Jesus without faith?

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage." (Matthew 5:13 Message Bible) What do you think Jesus is saying in this verse? "You know the next commandment pretty well, too! Don't go to bed with another's spouse.' But don't think you've preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your heart can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your body. Those leering looks you think nobody notices, they are also corrupt.'" (Matthew 5:27, 28 The Message Bible) Please read the next 2 verses and state what extreme action Jesus mentions should be taken before lust takes over and casts one into hell. In what way does Jesus say we should help the needy in Matthew 6:2-4? What does He say about money in Matthew 6:19-24 and worry in Matthew 6:25-34? In Matthew 7:1-6 what does Jesus say about judging others? Please describe His teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:5-15 and Matthew 7:7-12. Jesus makes it perfectly clear that knowing what to do is not enough. Obedience involving acting on the knowledge is absolutely essential. "Knowing that correct password-saying 'Master, Master,' for instance –isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience-doing what my Father wills. I can see it now-at the Final Judgement thousands strutting up to me and saying, "Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects have everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use Me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.'" (Matthew 7:21-23, The Message Bible)

Cain had such a message directed at him. His offering wasn't accepted. He ignored God's warning, when "the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it!" (Genesis 4:6, 7) How did Cain respond to this warning? What can you learn from Cain's mistake?

"God saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil – evil, evil, evil from morning to night. God was sorry that He had made the human race in the first place; it broke His heart. God said, 'I'll get rid of

my ruined creation, make a clean sweep: people, animals, snakes and bugs, birds – the works. I'm sorry I made them.' But Noah was different. God liked what He saw in Noah.” (Genesis 6:11-13) What did God do through Noah as described in Genesis 6:13 – Genesis 8:20? Please explain the covenant God made with Noah in Genesis 9:1-17?

When we feel totally overwhelmed we must also call out upon the Lord as the Psalmist does in Psalm 4:1 “Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.” In the Psalms we see that prayer is the language of desire. Jesus prayed like the Psalmists with passion. In Hebrews 5:7 (NLT) we read, “While Jesus was here on earth, He offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could deliver Him.” Please read Psalms 5-10 and note the earnest prayers that are shared there. Psalm 7:1, 2 gives us an example of such a prayer. “O Lord my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me, or they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.” The Psalms have been the prayer book for thousands of Christians for many generations. Your personal prayer life will be deeply enriched as you utilize these prayers in your daily living.

Now let us continue our journey through the bible by reading this week Genesis 11 – Genesis 23, Psalms 11 – Psalms 23, and Matthew 8 – Matthew 14. Continue to observe the miracles of God in both the created order and in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in the lives of those in the scriptures and in your own life.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice