



A Course

In

GENERAL BIBLE

PART ONE

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

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BIBLE

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Pineland, Florida 33945

INTRODUCTION

As you study the Scriptures you will find that it is of the greatest importance to approach the Bible in a reverent attitude of mind, looking upon it as the inspired Word of God, and not just an ordinary piece of literature. If the Bible is studied in the same manner as one studies Shakespeare, Milton or some historical work, it may be found interesting and profitable. But by this approach, the Bible student, persistent though he may be, will never find its rich treasures. The Apostle Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14) For the profitable study of the Word of God, the right spiritual attitude is indispensable.

The Scriptures should be studied as eagerly as a hungry person seeks for food. The formal reading of a portion of the Bible may have some worth as a religious exercise, but in order that the complete benefit may be obtained from its truths, they must be appropriated to personal needs. A milkman may deliver thousands of quarts of milk each day and yet go home thirsty. The Bible student may read large portions of the Bible with little benefit, unless he makes it his own by personal appropriation and feeds upon it.

In your studies of the Bible will you appropriate the riches thereof to your own personal use, or will you read as you would read a book of fiction, a mystery, etc? In order to make full use of the pearls of wisdom

contained in the Bible readings, it is suggested you reread them. Go into its wonderful fields of truth; go down into its valleys; climb its mountain peaks of vision; follow its streams of inspiration; enter its halls of learning. Many Bible truths do not appear on the surface; they must be dug up and be brought into the light by toil and effort.

There are various methods of Bible study, such as the topical method, the study of books, the study by chapters, the study of important passages, and the biographical method. In our approach we are following the last method the biographical (storytelling) method or the study of various Biblical Characters. In this way the Bible heroes are made to walk across the stage of life again and to furnish us, as Christian believers, lessons of life and inspiration.

The General Bible Survey course is formatted in the historical story-telling method. This method is utilized in order that the student may see the Bible as a complete unit telling His-story history. Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that A. B. C. is correcting God's Word.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Bible.

Chapter One

ADAM - NOAH - ENOCH

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1 to 11:26

1. Genesis a Book of Beginnings. Genesis is a book of origins. It is a record of the beginning of the universe; the human race, sin, redemption, family life, corruption of society; the beginning of nations and different languages and the chosen race.

As a book of beginnings, Genesis records the beginning of the physical creation of all human, animal and plant life as well as human institutions and social relationships. The events necessary to introduce the drama of human redemption are recounted; the creation, the fall, the flood.

The beginning chapters of Genesis have constantly been under attack by modern criticism, but the facts they relate when rightly understood, have never been shaken. It is not the purpose of Moses, the writer of Genesis, to advance an elaborate account of the creation. Only a little space is devoted to a subject representing a few basic facts. Most of Genesis is devoted to the history of Israel.

The important theme of Genesis is man's fall and the initial steps for his salvation by a divine covenant made with Abraham. Immediately following the fall of man, is God's prophecy that his creation could yet prove successful, through the "Seed of the Woman", Gen. 3:15. The use of the pronoun, "He" shows that one person is meant. There has been only One descendant of Eve who was born of Woman without being begotten of man. That ONE is Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

2. Creation. According to the Christian view, only God is eternal. The system of the universe, including matter, had a beginning. Everything, in fact, had a beginning, except God himself. God created the universe and everything therein out of nothing by His power of almighty will. In the opening chapters of the Bible we have revealed a succession of creative acts representing together one great process of creation. Whatever interpretations have been advanced as to the different stages of the process, or the days of creation, the important fact remains unchanged - that to God, and to God alone, is ascribed the work of bringing in to existence, by the free exercise of his creative powers, the universe and all beings and things herein.

The Bible tells us that in the beginning there was a great darkness and there was nothing that had any form or shape. Try to imagine this blackness or

emptiness, this nothingness. There were no beautiful lit stars, no warm sun, no wind, no earth, no heaven, no light - only darkness and silence. God changed all that through the process of creation.

3. Adam and Eve and the First Sin. In the Biblical story of creation God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Gen. 1:26. Thereupon God created man in his own image. As man needed companionship, woman was formed out of man's own flesh to be his help-meet. Then Satan came in the form of a serpent and tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden tree and she gave her husband to eat also. Thus, Adam and Eve gained knowledge, became sex conscious and were able to differentiate between good and evil, but they were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis is a book of beginnings, including the beginning of sin. Man had all the good things of life that could come from God because everything was designed for man's pleasure and happiness. Surely he should have been satisfied with this happy relationship! But, alas! the Tempter appeared on the scene.

The account of the beginning of sin in the first family is the account of the propagation of sin in every family, and in every human life. Notice that there are three distinct steps in the temptation that resulted in man's downfall.

The first step was the arousing of the desire for something more than God had allowed. It was the desire for something that did not rightfully belong to man. It was unholy ambition. The second step was the doubting of the justice and goodness of the Lord. Eve was told that God was keeping her and her husband in a restricted condition, whereas, if she would disobey God's will she would enjoy a new and wonderful freedom. The third step consisted in giving into temptation. Then came the downfall, the eating of the forbidden fruit and broken fellowship with God.

This account of the first sin is not merely the story of the first temptation and sin. It represents the principle on which all temptation operates. It is the identical way that Cain, Achan, David, Jezebel, Ahab and countless others were led to perpetrate their great crimes. It is the identical manner that Satan tempted Jesus at the start of his earthly ministry. It is the

identical manner that temptation comes to all of us in this day and age.

Then came the climax of temptation, the act of sin itself. Adam and Eve broke God's commandment together. Individual sin became social sin. One sin was committed while another started, and so it multiplied until a pattern of evil enveloped the life that yielded to temptation. This has been the experience of every sinner from time immemorial.

As a result of sin, Adam and Eve have to work for their living, are subject to pain and death, and are at enmity with the serpent. God has now given man an opportunity to grow purer and better. Now, even though work is difficult, it is much better than idleness. In having man till the earth, God has furnished him with the opportunity of making himself better, purer and kinder. When we see pictures of our first parents leaving the Garden of Eden with tears and shame we must remember that over them is God filled with love and mercy.

Worship was first established by God in the Garden of Eden as Adam and Eve communed (prayed) with him. Because of their sin, God offered the first lamb sacrifice and then clothed them with coats of skins.

Two sons are born to Adam and Eve. Their names are Cain and Abel. Cain a tiller of the soil, kills Abel, a keeper of flocks; so another son, Seth, is born to the first parents to replace Abel. So the two human stems, the Cainites and the Sethites come from these two.

4. Cain and Abel. These two brothers worshipped God through sacrifice. Today, people give up money for God, or pleasures, or serve him by aiding the sick, the needy, the distressed, etc. Abel's lamb was brought to the altar and properly sacrificed; whereas, Cain grudgingly sought to substitute his own fruit instead of God's required sheep sacrifice. Cain disobeyed God and gave some of his fruits while Abel obeyed God and sacrificed some of his flocks. Nearly 4,000 years later John the Baptist would say as recorded in John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Cain reminds us of the way some people give to God today. Abel gave to God cheerfully and with a pure heart. Naturally, Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God and Cain's was rejected. As a consequence, Cain hated Abel. Cain dwelled on God's refusal and his angry thoughts and ultimately slew his brother. We find that the first crime recorded in the Scriptures started out of jealousy and selfishness. The first recorded crime in God's Word is the terrible crime of murder, and that crime was perpetrated by exactly the same spirit which makes people today want to be richer, prouder and cleverer than their neighbors.

When God appeared to Cain after he had committed his heinous crime, he endeavored, like his parents, to escape from judgment. He told God he did not know where his brother had gone, saying angrily, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Here a fundamental principle is enunciated which should always keep man from committing murder. All of us are brothers. All of us have one Creator. Yes, all of us are actually brothers and each is his brother's keeper. Consequently, murder is a sin against God and the social order he has ordained.

5. Enoch. Following the story of Cain's great crime and its aftermath the writer of Genesis gives us a long account of the vital statistics of Adams descendants as far as Noah. One of these descendants was different for he lived a different life. His name was Enoch. Enoch dwelled in a world fashioned by the descendants of Cain. They were men of culture and progress. Jabal took the lead in the field of agriculture; Tubal-Cain was a manufacturer; Jubal provided amusement and music. Enoch was considered a peculiar person, not valuing the improvements being made in the sin-filled earth. Doubtless the people despised Enoch because they were "dead" to God. But Enoch was pleasing to the sight of God, for Enoch was a dedicated and righteous man — the exception.

Enoch's faith drew God from heaven to walk with him. Enoch kept an unbroken fellowship with his Creator. He was in constant communion with God. In this way Enoch was a mighty conqueror.

Enoch's father, Jared, lived to be 962 years of age, while his son Methuselah, became the oldest man on earth, living to a ripe old age of 969. Long years by themselves do not mean anything. It is the way we live the years that counts. Enoch was taken away or translated in his very prime of life. Each of us must raise the question of ourselves: "Are we walking with God, like the great patriarch Enoch, or are we walking contrary to God?" Enoch, as a reward for his sanctity, was transported into heaven without seeing death. Thus the doctrine of immortality was clearly taught under the old dispensation.

The Bible does not tell us too much about Enoch. Therefore, the tendency on the part of most individuals is to skip over him rapidly. However this is a mistake. In Hebrews 11:5, the spring and issue of Enoch's life are clearly indicated. In Jude 14-15, appears a quotation from a prophecy of Enoch. Here in the book of Jude, we find that Enoch prophesied of the coming of the Lord "with ten thousands of his saints."

Enoch's name, meaning *initiated, dedicated*, was significant of his character. He was a dedicated person, whose life was disciplined and his habits regulated by the guiding hand of the Lord. He was one of the few individuals against whom nothing evil is recorded in the Scriptures.

The testimony that we find of Enoch is that he pleased God. He was the shining light of the antediluvian period. Enoch was not a warrior, a statesman, nor a scientist, nor did he, as far as the record goes, accomplish anything remarkable like Joseph, Moses or Daniel. What made him great was that he walked with God. Abraham, our hero in the next chapter, is called the "father of all that believe." Enoch may be called "the father of the people who in all generations have walked with God." Enoch did not follow the crowd. He was probably out of style for he did not do what the multitudes did. He did not go with the crowds to do wrong and would have remained steadfast even though the entire world was against him. He knew that if he were on God's side, he and God would constitute the majority to withstand the entire world. What we need in this century is the moral stamina to be against the world when we are in the right. Our hero Enoch, dared to be strong, to be right. He took his stand and dared to stand against an ungodly people. Hence, he "walked with God."

The short account of Enoch's life presents him as a foreshadow of God's Son on earth — alone, yet not alone, for the Father was with him. Enoch was alone in the world, but yet not alone, for he "walked with God." God and Enoch, what a combination. God and you, what a combination. We can be sure that Enoch pleased God, he did not please men. He could not please both, so he chose to please the Lord. Often, we cannot please both God and man. What is our choice going to be? God or man? Had the antediluvians taken Enoch's translation as a warning, and had turned from their sins to God, the flood would not, maybe, have taken place. We are living in an era of choice. We can choose to walk with God, or we can walk with the world.

In the Scripture Enoch is identified as:

- ❖ A man who walked with God, Gen. 5:24,
- ❖ A man pleasing to God, Heb. 11 :5,
- ❖ A man who witnessed for God, Jude 14.

What a wonderful example for us today.

6. Noah. It is sad indeed to read in the Scriptures that men and women had become so bad that God was sorry he had created the earth. The Bible tells us that God looked at the manner in which people were living and determined to punish them by sending a deluge. However, God remembered that on earth there was one righteous man, called Noah. For the sake of this one righteous man, God saved the earth from complete destruction.

Nothing is known of Noah's early days and he appears on the scene when he was 500 years of age. His great grandfather, Enoch, was a man of piety and escaped death by translation. His father's name was Lamech, and he was apparently a devout person, His grandfather was Methuselah, the oldest man.

The age in which Noah lived was corrupt, so corrupt that God decided to destroy the race. The wickedness of people had for a long time stirred God's anger. The fundamental cause of the wickedness was the intermarriage of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men." God decided to destroy the human race, but permitted a respite of 120 years, during which time Noah, as preacher, strove to bring the people to repentance.

Noah, due to his righteousness, was warned of the forthcoming flood. He was told to build an ark, through which he was saved, in accordance with divine direction, Gen. 6:14-22. Noah's character is made known to us in a few words in Gen. 6:9, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God."

He entered the ark when he was 600 years of age and the flood started on the 17th day of the second month, Gen. 7:6, 11, and kept rising for 40 days, and only started to recede after 150 days, Gen. 8:3. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark rested on Mount Ararat, and after 40 days Noah sent out a raven, and at intervals of one week a dove. Ultimately, on the first day, the first month of the 601st year, Noah took off the covering of the ark; and on the 27th day of the next month he returned once more to dry land, Gen. 8:4-19.



Figure 1: The dove returns to the ark.

The first act of Noah after leaving the ark was the building of an altar and the offering of sacrifice. This is the first reference in the Bible where burnt-offering sacrifice is mentioned. Noah took his offerings from every clean animal and every clean fowl, such living things as were destined to be man's food. Jehovah accepted the sacrifice and promised never again to destroy the earth by flood, but to continue without cessation the regular alternations of night and day and the yearly seasons, Gen. 8:20-22. As a symbol of this covenant with Noah, God placed the rainbow in the clouds.

The Lord blessed Noah and his sons. All living creatures were given to man for food, with the restriction of not eating the blood. After the flood, Noah entered into agricultural pursuits and cultivated grape vines. Whether in ignorance of its properties or not we do not know, but Noah drank of the wine and became intoxicated. Then we hear nothing more of the patriarch except the total of his years, i.e. 950 years, Gen. 9:29.

Now what may we say about an estimate of Noah? The task which God called on him to perform appeared impossible, especially when it is recalled that Noah was surrounded by a multitude of godless unbelievers. These unbelievers would watch Noah work on the ark and then scoff at him. He became the laughing stock of all the people. Yet Noah remained at his task of building faithfully. Taking into account his surroundings, the vastness of his project, and the many years devoted to hard work, Noah stands among all the workers in the Bible unequalled, perhaps, in steadfast faith. Despite his being ridiculed, Noah apparently warned and exhorted the people while he was busily engaged in building the ark, II Peter 2:5. Truly Noah by faith, worked out his own salvation, Heb. 11:7.

7. The Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues. The ark rested in a place where it was easy for Noah's sons to spread themselves over the earth. This was God's intention. He wanted men to cultivate the entire earth and so brought the ark to rest at a spot where they could most readily cross into all lands. However, Noah's sons settled down in one spot, built a large city and in the center of the city constructed a huge tower. God saw that the people were set on disobeying Him, and so caused the people to speak in different tongues so that no one could comprehend the other. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the earth and they left off to build the city. Therefore, is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Gen. 11:8,9.

8. In Genesis 11, we find another long list of generations. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and

Japheth, the first being selected to receive special favor of God. The other two were to be subordinate to him. One of Shem's descendants was Abram who became the father of the Hebrews. The Hebrews are also known as Shemites, Semites or Semitic race, because they are descended from Noah's son Shem. It was to be through Abraham that God would bless the people of all the earth. Still later there was to come God's Son who was to redeem the world from sin and its consequences.

9. The Lesson for Today. If we have studied this assignment carefully, we will have traced the beginnings of the universe and the development of the human race. We will have found that these truths in the Bible are eternal — true today as they were in the days of Adam, Noah and Enoch. We will have learned that:

- ❖ Behind all the universe there is a personal Creator and Ruler.
- ❖ Man's Creator is a God of Infinite Love, making available for man all that is best for him.
- ❖ Man is the highest product of God's creation.
- ❖ Temptation is not an accident in God's creation, but rather an absolute necessity for man's growth.
- ❖ Sin is not God's creation, but man's invention.
- ❖ Sin destroys man's peace of mind and soul.
- ❖ In consonance with the law of cause and effect, sin brings its own inevitable punishment.
- ❖ To sin means to act in accordance with one's baser and more selfish motives.
- ❖ One effect of sin is the severing of the harmonious relations between God and the sinner.
- ❖ Mere formal worship is not necessarily acceptable to the Lord.
- ❖ It is the spirit, not the gift, of the offeror that God considers.
- ❖ God has made man a free agent. Although God surrounds man with noble influences, He does not remove from him the possibility of committing the most serious crime.
- ❖ The individual who forsakes his responsibility as his brother's keeper associates himself with Cain.
- ❖ The individual whose ideals are pure and noble will become a leader of men.
- ❖ Only the pure in heart shall walk with God.

END OF SAMPLE