



# In His Service



A Newsletter from the teaching ministry of  
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“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them ...” Matthew 28:19-20

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## Origins of Genesis

Now that it is September I am again teaching in the Cornerstone Bible Institute. This is, of course, the type of thing I really enjoy doing. The course I am teaching is entitled “Understanding the Bible,” and includes a short review of the entire Bible.

It is a bit of a challenge to cover the entire Bible in seven or eight weeks, and the only way to do this is to look at the great themes of the Bible. My plan over the next several newsletters is to look at those themes in the hope that understanding them will improve your own Bible reading and meditation.

One of these themes is found in the very first words of the Bible:

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1)

These words which state that God is the Creator of everything—time, space, and matter—form the foundation upon which everything else in the Bible is built.

The Bible not only claims to tell us about God, it claims that it is in fact the very word of God. Jesus Himself referred to the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, as the “word of God.” In his second letter to Timothy Paul stated that “all Scripture is inspired by God [lit. God-breathed] ...” (2 Timothy 3:16)

It is interesting to note how much controversy those few words of Genesis 1:1 have caused in recent years. The real issue is not one of science, although that is often how the debate is argued, but one of truth. If these words are not truth then nothing in the Bible is.

No human observer was there at the time of creation. The only eye-witness testimony we have as to what happened is the testimony recorded in Genesis chapter 1, and if it is not true then the foundation for the entire Bible is weak and crumbling. Is it possible to answer the question of what is the origin of these words?

The first five books of the Bible are known collectively as the “book of Moses.” It is certainly clear that Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were written by him and comprise his autobiography. But nowhere does the Bible say that he was the author of

Genesis. Actually, if Moses were the author of Genesis, then he would have had to written it based solely on hearsay, since he could not possibly have had personal knowledge of the events.

Over the last three centuries Bible scholars have noticed that there seem to be multiple authors of the book of Genesis. For example, the creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is distinctively different from that found in Genesis 2:4b-25. When studied in the original language it is noticed, for instance, that the first account only uses the word “*Elohim*” for God, while the second account uses only the name “*Yahveh Elohim*,” or Lord God.

P. J. Wiseman was an archaeologist who worked on some of the most important sites in Mesopotamia. As a result of his studies and his knowledge of ancient languages, he re-examined the structure of Genesis. His conclusions are eye opening.

There is a particular phrase that occurs repeatedly-11 times in all—throughout Genesis: *elleh toledoth*, often translated “these are the generations of ...”

Verse	Translation
2:4	These are the generations of the heavens and the earth
5:1	This is the book of the generations of Adam
6:9	These are the generations of Noah
10:1	These are the generations of Shem, Ham and Japheth
11:10	These are the generations of Shem
11:27	These are the generations of Terah
25:12	These are the generations of Ishmael
25:19	These are the generations of Isaac
36:1	These are the generations of Esau
36:9	These are the generations of Esau
37:2	These are the generations of Jacob

This phrase is simply known as the “toledoth.”

Wiseman noted that throughout the region of Mesopotamia it was common for records to be made on clay or stone tablets. The writer would end the tablet with a phrase that indicated identity of the writer plus other information, such as the date.

Wiseman proposed that the toledoth was such a “signature” that indicated who was the author of the preceding section. He further suggested that Genesis was actually a collection of clay or stone tablets that was the eye-witness account of the writer.

This idea is further supported by the insertion of the word “*sepher*” in Genesis 5:1. *Sepher* literally means “written narrative” or “document.” Wiseman pointed out that the “books” of antiquity were actually clay tablets.

It is often taught that the creation account and the stories of the early patriarchs were stories like folk tales that were passed by word of mouth from generation to generation until they were finally written down. Now it is known, however, that writing dates back as far as archaeological records exist, so there is every reason to accept the idea that the patriarchs knew how to write.

Putting these clues together leads to the conclusion that the early patriarchs—Adam, Noah, Shem, etc.—each wrote a record of what they experienced. Stone tablets are an ideal medium, since they are durable. These tablets were then passed from generation to generation.

What Moses probably did was to collect the tablets that had been brought to Egypt by Jacob and preserved during the time the Jews lived in Egypt. He then put them together as any good historical editor would do with the important documents of a nation.

This would mean that Genesis is a collection of first hand historical accounts diligently maintained by Jacob’s family and preserved by Moses. In fact, the very name “Genesis” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew toledoth.

The toledoth, or generations, theory thus explains the structure and content of Genesis, except, perhaps, for the first “tablet”. Following this theory through to its logical conclusion, it would appear that the author of the first tablet was God Himself.

That God can and did write on stone tablets should come as no surprise. He did it twice for Moses as He wrote the Ten Commandments.

There is also a major similarity between the record in Genesis 1:1-2:4a and the Ten Commandments. In both records God stated that He created the heavens, earth and everything in them in six days and rested on the seventh.

This is significant for those who like to claim that the “day” of Genesis 1 was an indeterminate length of time. It is clear in the Ten Commandments when God is speaking of the sabbath day that He is referring to a normal day. It is in the context of the fourth commandment that God draws a strong parallel between the six days of our labor and the six days of His labor in creation.

What an incredibly exciting document! Who else could give us an accurate account of what happened during the time of creation other than the Creator Himself?

Many of you know that I have been trained in science, which is steeped in naturism. Over the years I have discovered that God has had to alter my view of the world to conform to His revealed truth. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, “We have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

The toledoth theory does not “prove” anything, but it is one more piece of evidence that confirms the reliability of the Bible.

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## News and Stuff

**African ministry:** A few weeks ago I returned from a short ministry trip to South Africa and Lesotho. While I have made many ministry trips before, this one was much different in that I led a team of five others. This meant I had much more responsibility than in previous trips when I was either a part of a team or traveled alone. I believe it was a challenge for which God had prepared me and which I answered successfully.

The ministry was truly significant, both in the lives of the team members and the African church. God had laid it on my heart that I was to share the message from my book, **Getting Ready**, that Jesus is coming back soon and that we need to prepare. Knowing that I had a limited time to share, I sought ways to communicate this message effectively and in a way that was an encouragement to the church. The reaction of the people would indicate that this message was well received and embraced.

I was also concerned that the other team members had abundant and significant opportunities to minister. From the beginning of our time together as a team weeks before we left for Africa, I tried to impress upon them the importance of stepping out and trusting on the grace of God. I stressed that faith was taking a risk, and without risk taking there would be little reward. It was gratifying to see the team step up and take hold of those opportunities, and it was exciting to see the way in which their ministry was received. Several team members have shared with me that their lives will never be the same again, and I know their ministry had a deep impact.

**Note cards:** Over the years I have had a few opportunities to do some sightseeing in Africa. Occasionally I have gotten quite close to some of the animals, and have quite a collection of photos. I have selected 12 of the best of them to feature on a set of note cards. They are of high quality and attractively packaged, which makes them suitable of your own use or as gifts. See the enclosed form if you would like to order some of these cards.

**Getting Ready:** I am getting many favorable comments back from those who have read **Getting Ready**, and also from those who have read the accompanying book, **The Coming Day of the Lord**. The remark is often made that they are not difficult to read.

The message contained in these books is important to all Christians, and I want to encourage you to get a copy. Perhaps you can get more than one and share it with someone else.

One of the ways in which the message of the return of Jesus can be spread is to sponsor or arrange a seminar or

speaking engagement. I would be delighted to talk to anyone interested in doing that.

God bless you, and thank you for your support.