

## ***THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For January 1:***

### *Genesis 1:1-2:25:*

The book of Genesis (which means “origin” or “beginnings”) stands at the head of a five volume collection known as the Law (Psalms 1:2; 119:1; Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40) or the Pentateuch (Greek for five volume book). The five books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch was written by Moses in the fifteenth century B.C. His authorship of the first five books rests on several bits of evidence: The Pentateuch is referred to as “the book of Moses” (Nehemiah 13:1; 2 Chronicles 25:4) and “the book of the Law of Moses” (Nehemiah 8:1); we are told in these five books themselves of Moses’ authorship (Exodus 24:3-7; Deuteronomy 31:24-26); Jesus said that Moses wrote of Him in his multiple writings (John 5:46-47); Jesus quotes specific texts out of the Law and attributes them to Moses (e.g. Mark 7:10); and throughout the New Testament the Pentateuch is believed to be written by Moses (Matthew 12:5; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:16; John 7:19; Galatians 3:10). The five books which make up the Law or Pentateuch are the foundation for the entire Bible. They establish what God is like, what His standards are, the reality that He relates with mankind by means of covenant (a solemn bond or agreement between two or more), and the truth that He made special covenants with and promises to the nation of Israel that they would be His special people and a light to the other nations. It is safe to say that the rest of the Bible cannot be understood without the Pentateuch. It is also safe to say that the Pentateuch is not fully understood apart from the book which stands as its head and foundation, Genesis.

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. It records the beginning of creation and mankind (chapters 1-2), the beginning of sin and its consequences (chapters 3-11), the beginning of the population of the earth and the nations (chapters 5, 10), the beginning of God’s work of redemption (Genesis 3:15), and the beginning of God’s formation of a people, a nation through whom He would work in a special way to carry out His saving plan and purposes (chapters 12-50). After the creation prologue (1:1-2:3), the book is organized around a common phrase which stands at the beginning of its major divisions, “these are the generations (or the history) of” (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2).

Today’s reading covers the account of the creation of the world. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the six days of creation. In 2:1-3 we find out that God rested on a seventh day. Though God does not need to rest (see Psalm 121:3-4), nevertheless, God did this to establish a pattern for mankind of working six days and resting one (Exodus 20:8-11). In 2:4-25 the text zeroes in on the creation of mankind, the climax of God’s creation, and how God graciously provided for man in all He made and all He gave him. In typical Hebrew fashion the creation account moves from general to specific: The general statement about creation is made (1:1); the more specific account of the creation is given (1:2-2:3); and the crowning glory of God’s creation, man, becomes the focus (2:4-25).

Though genuine Christians differ on how Genesis 1 is to be understood (is it a literal six days or are the days figurative?), any attempt to read a figurative understanding or to

force upon the text a reading of the days which makes them longer than actual 24 hour periods does not measure up to the text itself. To understand that events in the first few chapters in Genesis really happened and that Adam and Eve really existed and that sin entered into the world for the first time through them all has major impact on later biblical teaching (Romans 5:12-19).

As you read through these two chapters, take special note of a few things: the power of God's Word, whereby He speaks into existence matter and creation (e.g. 1:3, 6); God created man alone in His image and then blessed man with and commanded him to carry out a mandate as His princes and princesses to rule and watch over the earth and life on it (1:26-28 [cf. Psalm 8:5-6]); God created all things good and without sin (1:31); work is part of God's will for man and part of how God designed man which predates the entrance of sin into the world (2:15); God blessed man with rich abundance and wanted him to enjoy all He had given to him (2:4-14, 16); the prohibition that God gave to Adam regarding the one tree was a test to see if he would obey God or not for no other reason than that God commanded (2:17); men and women are equally prominent and significant before God, yet they have different (but complementary) roles (2:18); and God instituted marriage (2:18, 23-25).

#### Matthew 1:1-2:12:

This first book of the New Testament and the first of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John [those books which tell of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ]) was most likely written in the 60's A.D. by one of the Twelve Disciples, a man known as Matthew or Levi (see Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17). This is clear not only from the fact that the early Church was quite united on his authorship, but also because no early manuscripts of Matthew we have are without some indication (though worded in different ways) that Matthew is the author.

The book is organized around five major blocks of teaching material by Jesus (Chapters 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25) interspersed with narrative about His life. The main purpose appears to be to instruct the early Church about the life and ministry of Jesus in such a way they can see that in Him comes the kingdom of God. In other words, the Old Testament had prophesied that there was coming a day in which God would make it possible that many peoples (Jew and Gentile) would be able to know, worship, and submit to Him as king. That day has dawned in the coming of Jesus Christ along with all He will accomplish. Given the major theme and purpose, the book speaks a great deal about how His life fulfills the Old Testament in general and the Law specifically. It also shows how Jesus fits with the expectations the Old Testament had set for who the Messiah (the specially anointed coming king whom Israel had anticipated for generations [the Greek translation of Messiah is Christ]) would be.

Chapters 1-2 serve as something of a prologue to the book. In 1:1-17 Matthew gives a genealogy of Jesus which he purposefully crafts in such a way it highlights that Jesus is a descendant of both Abraham and David. Genealogies were important to Jews since they often showed one was truly part of Israel, which tribe they were from, and, in this case, that Jesus had the right "pedigree" to be the Messiah. The Messiah was to descend from

Abraham and David (Genesis 12:3; 2 Samuel 7:12-14; Isaiah 11). In 1:18-25 we not only learn of Jesus' virgin birth which shows He is not just any baby, we also learn His birth is a fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). So far, the book is pointing to the reality He is the Messiah! In 2:1-12 we see that even more spectacular phenomena surround His birth to show He is special. What is more, we learn that those from outside Israel begin to acknowledge Him which is a sign the era of the Messiah has dawned (cf. Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 31:12; Zechariah 8:20-23; Malachi 1:11, 14, et. al).

A theme which Matthew also introduces (and which he will continue to develop) is that Jesus Christ is a fulfillment of that to which the Old Testament pointed. This is evident in 1:22-23. We will continue to see this as we read through this Gospel.

#### *Psalm 1:1-6:*

The entire collection of 150 psalms (sometimes referred to as the Psalter) is comprised of writings best described as divinely-inspired poetic-spiritual-journal-entries-set-to-music. To read them is, in essence, to look over the shoulders of very devout believers in Israel as they wrestle through life, trials, sorrow, joys, and seek to love God and each other. They teach us how to praise, how to pray, how to trust God in hard times.

This collection of powerful prayerful praise and devotional writings is written primarily for those who know, fear, and trust in the LORD, the true God. That is why the very first psalm, which serves as somewhat of an introduction to the entire collection, describes what such people are like. This wisdom psalm explains what the truly blessed person is like: they do not engage in or identify with or follow the directions of those who are not wise believers (1). Instead, their delight is in the Law of the LORD and so they carefully think about, reflect upon, and work to apply his Word day and night (2). Such a person will live a truly blessed, fruitful, and prosperous existence, no matter what comes his way (3). This is the opposite of the wicked who are not fruitful, not stable, and not part of the people of God (4-5). Certainly the LORD knows which people are which and has entered into intentional relationship and covenant with the righteous, yet the wicked will face His judgment, which is what is meant by "perish" (6 [cf. Deuteronomy 8:19-20; 30:18; Joshua 23:16; Psalms 68:2; 73:27 on "perish"]).

This psalm forms a doorway into the collection by letting us know those who will prosper the most from their content are those who are part of the people of God, those who love Him and His Word. Those people will find a wealth of knowledge, insight, and strength.

#### *Proverbs 1:1-6:*

Like many other collections out of the ancient world, the book of Proverbs is a collection of various kinds of wisdom sayings which were designed to instruct people (especially young people who were preparing for leadership in the court) in how they could be skillful in life. This is especially apparent in today's reading. What sets apart the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament from other ancient collections is both its origin and its specific content. As to its origin, though it is a collection of wise sayings of men like Solomon, nevertheless, it is ultimately the product of God's Spirit directing the process of the writing and collection of these sayings such that what they say is what God says (2

Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). As to its content, the skill and insight for living set forth is a different skill than in other ancient collections of proverbs. In this book the skill is for godliness, in other words, it is skill from the perspective of God. What is more, the skill and insight always flow from fearing God (1:7; 9:10) which means that the view of these proverbs is that there is no skill and insight for godliness apart from worshipping, trusting in, loving, not taking lightly, and seeing that God is to be more important to us than all people and things (this is what is meant by fearing God).

As we read the book of Proverbs we must understand that proverbs tell us what generally takes place. They are not meant to be exhaustive treatments of a particular subject, for they often do not deal with the exceptions to their assertions. Additionally, they do not function as promises. They tell us what usually happens in a given situation or when we follow certain paths.

The book is especially designed to give instruction to children, youth, and young believers. As such, its instruction is very practical, usually simple, and lends itself to giving great direction to anyone willing to read it and study it.