

## **UNIT I: THE BIBLICAL BASE OF MISSIONS**

## LESSON 1

### CREATION AND GOD'S WORLD PLAN

#### Introduction

Missions is the very "heartcry" of God. By missions, we mean that God, through redeemed people, is seeking to make Himself known to men, women, and children everywhere, reconciling them to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Genesis is a book of beginnings. Indeed, the word Genesis means beginning. Genesis relates the beginnings of physical creation, life, man, the home, and society. Genesis not only gives us the account of the physical creation but shows us something of the person of God: His nature and His manner of dealing with man.

God is Creator not only of the first stars and light but also of every new day, of each sunrise, of each rainfall. These physical elements are expressions that God is still at work—governing, sustaining, and working in His creation. God breathed the breath of life into the first man, but He also gives life to each new-born babe. He gives life, eternal life, to each new creature who comes to faith in the Son of God.

The biblical account of creation lays a solid base for God's world mission. One of the foremost teachings of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is the unity of the human race. The universality of the Gospel message hinges upon the fact that man, wherever he lives, is of one nature and, therefore, is in need of redemption.

Paul based his strong argument for redemption on the basic unity of mankind: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men . . ." (Rom. 5:12). Since all men are members of the Adamic race, they are sinful in nature by birth and sinners by choice. Man was created in the spiritual image of God for fellowship with his Creator (Gen. 1:27). When man chose his own way and rebelled against God, he broke the fellowship that he had enjoyed. From the third chapter of Genesis forward, we find God seeking man who had broken fellowship by his rebellion. God's seeking for His lost, fallen, and rebel creature is the beginning and the centre of missions.

#### How It All Began

Whereas science begins with results and looks for corresponding causes, the Genesis account begins with final causes—even more with the Ultimate Person—and

Missions is God's seeking, through redeemed people, to make Himself known to people e \_\_\_\_\_. He is reconciling them through J \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_.

(everywhere, Jesus Christ)

Genesis tells of the beginnings of physical \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

God is still at work \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ in His creation.

(governing, sustaining, working)

What is the primary teaching of Genesis 1-11?

(the unity of the human race)

All men are sinners by \_\_\_\_\_ and sinners by \_\_\_\_\_.

(birth, choice)

God's seeking for His l \_\_\_\_\_, f \_\_\_\_\_, r \_\_\_\_\_ creature is the beginning and the centre of missions.

(lost, fallen, rebel)

proceeds to results. In addition to presenting the beginnings of the physical universe, it relates the creation of man in the spiritual image of God and his consequent stewardship over the birds, the beasts, and the physical universe. It also presents the entrance of sin into the universe and the consequent scarring of God's creation.

The first two chapters of Genesis trace the beginnings of the physical universe, including the crown of creation-man. The Bible leaves the details of the "how" to subsequent science; it presents God, the ultimate Author of all that is.

The Bible presents the creation account in the language of the common man and from the standpoint of common sense. It shows the world as man observes it. This language is understandable to men in all ages and maintains flexibility to keep it always up to date. It does not deal with immediate causes but with God, the final Personal Cause of all. It goes back to God, the source of man's life and even all life in the universe.

### A World Made Ready

Order characterizes the Genesis account at every juncture. The Spirit of God hovered and brooded over the chaos until He brought order and cosmos out of it. He created the heavens and the earth. He divided the waters of earth and set dry land in their midst. He made trees that bore fruit, the seeds of which bore more fruit. He made the light, then the lights. With the environment prepared, God made the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. All that these creatures needed for survival was ready before the creatures were made. Each step in creation speaks of order, purpose, and design.

On the sixth day, God made the land animals. All they needed for health and well-being was ready. Each creature was part of the total plan for God's world.

### The Crown of Creation

With His world prepared, God created man, the crown of creation. He made man in His own spiritual likeness. Man was both the crown and the goal of creation. He had both a physical and a spiritual nature (Gen. 1:26). He represented that wonderful link between the physical and spiritual universe. To forget either element in man's nature is to fail to understand man. Created in the spiritual image of God, man has rational affection, emotions, a moral nature, and a free will. The possession of this likeness of God is man's supreme treasure; it is also his greatest potential liability. The possession of such a nature makes him responsible, and that responsibility is awesome.

God deals with man as a creature of free will. He loves man, woos him, but refuses to turn him into an

With what do the first two chapters of Genesis deal? \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The creation account is presented in the language of the \_\_\_\_\_ man from the standpoint of \_\_\_\_\_ sense.

(common, common)

What characterizes the Genesis account?

Each step in creation speaks of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

(order; order, purpose, design)

Man was created in the spiritual image of God: He has--

rational a \_\_\_\_\_

e \_\_\_\_\_

m \_\_\_\_\_ nature

free w \_\_\_\_\_

To be created with this nature makes man \_\_\_\_\_.

(affection, emotions, moral, will, responsible)

obedient mechanical toy. God leaves man free to choose to love Him. This basic doctrine of human freedom is a key to the missionary message of the Bible.

### Rebellion Against Creaturehood

Genesis 3 tells of man's using his freedom to rebel against God. Man's role in God's universe was that of a trusted steward. He was to live in fellowship with God—but subject to his Lord. When man attempted to take God's place and rejected God's offer of fellowship and trust, he fell into sin, became shattered by defeat, and unwittingly lost Paradise.

Immediately after their rebellion, Adam and Eve reaped the terrible consequence of their sin—judgement. They were separated from God (Gen. 3:9); they fell into recriminations (Gen. 3:12-13); the woman was subjected to pain and subservience (Gen. 3:16); man was cursed with the toilsomeness of labour and a resistant soil (Gen. 3:17-19). Finally, both were banished from Eden and from intimate communion with God (Gen. 3:23-24).

The first eleven chapters of Genesis relate the birth, growth, and history of the entire human race. After man's rebellion in Genesis 3, the story is different. The stain of sin appears. It spreads like dye in a pool of clear water. It spreads to the edges until the entire pool becomes stained. The whole human race is infected with sin (Rom. 3:23). So completely does the corruption spread that God sends a flood to blot out the whole race. Then with Noah's family, God begins to build anew (Gen. 8-10).

Out of the ark walked the hope for a better tomorrow (Gen. 8:17). The human race returned to its infancy. In one language man began to build again. The sad story began anew. Man in personal and corporate rebellion began to try to construct his *own* world and to fashion God in *man's* image.

### The Great Love Plan

Into this starless night of the consequences of rebellion shines God's morning star of hope. No sooner had condemnation been pronounced than God announced the possibility of reconciliation. God's love expressed itself in what has been called "the Gospel in seed form" (Gen. 3:15). This promise of reconciliation, like the first rays of dawn, tells of a new day and of a full Gospel in which the Messiah would deal a death blow to Satan's power: "he shall bruise your head" (Gen. 3:15, RSV). The rest of the Bible is the unfurling of this plan.

### The Crumbling Tower

The Tower of Babel, described in Genesis 11, represents man's organized rebellion against God. That tower, possibly some sort of temple, was a monument to

Tell how man lost Paradise. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List five consequences of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text and Genesis 3:9-24.)

What verse in Genesis has been referred to as "the Gospel in seed form"? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain this verse. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

man's rebellion. The tower represented man's organized attempt to abandon creaturehood in order to claim the privileges that belonged to God alone. The attempt to build the tower represents an absolute refusal to accept the promise of Genesis 3:15. Man was not satisfied to be *like* God; he wanted to *be* God. He wanted to take heaven by storm.

God broke down man's tower and, by the division of languages, made such a future attempt impossible. Babel revealed the eternal principle that when man is not right with God he cannot be right with his fellow-man. After the Tower of Babel, man stood as he always stands—lonely and in conflict with himself, his neighbour, and with his Lord. He stood in desperate need of redemption. Redemption is just as necessary for literate man living in the great modern cities as it was for the most primitive man living far from civilization.

### Lessons in Kingship

After the awesome experience in chapter 11, God began the extension of His world mission through the selection of one man—Abraham. Whatever the Jews later understood about Abraham's call and blessing, God chose this one man and his seed (family) to bless all the nations of earth (Gen. 12:3).

God, by right as Creator and by right as Redeemer, is the sovereign Ruler of the universe. Although some Jews mistakenly thought that God was interested in their nation *only* when He selected them for His people, "the hearts of the great religious teachers—prophets, psalmists and lawgivers alike—longed for the time when all men would come to know the God of all the earth and worship him."<sup>1</sup> In the remaining chapters of Genesis, in Exodus, and in the historical and prophetic books, Jehovah revealed Himself as the God of all the earth. His existence meant that all other gods must be false (see Isaiah 44).

The creation account of Genesis forces the careful student to some far-reaching conclusions. God is Sovereign of all the universe by right of creation. When man, the crown of creation, fell because of his disobedience, he felt the terrible consequences of sin. In the midst of just condemnation, God made the promise of redemption. Since mankind was one race—made in the image of the one God, there can be only one plan of redemption. All other ways must be false. God chose one man, Abraham, to father a nation that would honour God and become a missionary nation to bless all people.

In our modern world the student will meet some, wishing to introduce an error, who say, "If each man has some religion, it is enough." Such an attitude goes well

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Bliss, *We the People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 74.

Man refused to accept the promise of Genesis 3:15, and his rebellion is shown in the building of the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Tower of Babel)

What did God do to stop this rebellion? \_\_\_\_\_

(He broke down the tower and divided the languages.)

READ GENESIS 12:1-3. Then list the promises that God made to Abram.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Jehovah revealed Himself as the God of all the \_\_\_\_\_. His existence meant that all other gods must be \_\_\_\_\_. READ ISAIAH 44:8.

(earth, false)

with the spirit of our times but is opposed to clear Bible revelation in passages, such as, "Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any" (Isa. 44:8, RSV).

A study of the non-Christian religions reveals the need non-Christians have for redemption. Animism, that sometimes expresses itself in voodoo or spiritism, is the religion of 125,000,000 people. Animists believe that all nature—rocks, lakes, trees, mountains—is inhabited by powerful spirits. These spirits are said to be the spirits of ancestors. The student may even have some friends who hold to these beliefs. Animists, through their folklore, tell of earlier times when their people were closer to God than they are today. They explain that God moved away because the people wiped their dirty hands on the sky. Or again, they may say that the people moved away because they did not like to live so close to God. Other people offer the explanation that God moved away because the women lifted their grinding stones too high into the air. In each of these traditions, the people retain the truth that there was a time when they were closer to God than they are today. In each of these explanations, the truth appears that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God . . ." (Rom. 1:21).

### Summary and Conclusion

The Book of Genesis presents not only the beginnings of the physical universe, of man, of the home, and of society but it also presents the entry of sin into the world. It shows the consequences of sin upon man and the scars that sin leaves on the earth itself.

Genesis states that the most terrible consequence of sin was the separation of man from God. No sooner had the terrible separation occurred than God began His search for man and announced His plan of reconciliation (Gen. 3:15). The entire Bible continues the story of a loving God seeking to reconcile man to Himself. The story finds its completion in Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:20), but it begins in Genesis. Reconciliation is no cold, abstract doctrine. It means that in the same way God loves you He loves others and desires to reach them through you. This truth is the base of missions.

Animists believe that all nature is inhabited by powerful \_\_\_\_\_.

Animists say their people were once closer to \_\_\_\_\_. They explain that God moved away because the people wiped their hands on the sky, or they did not like to live so \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

(spirits, God, close, God)

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20.

The promise of reconciliation in Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled in \_\_\_\_\_.

(Christ)

God's reconciliation is for all \_\_\_\_\_. This is the base of \_\_\_\_\_.

(people, missions)

# Home Study Exercise

## Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Give a definition of missions. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Mention some of the beginnings that Genesis lists. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is one of the themes of the first eleven chapters of Genesis? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Describe the language the Bible uses to present the creation account. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In what way is man like his Creator? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. List some of the consequences of sin in the life of Adam and Eve. (See Genesis 3:9, 12-13.) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. How has Genesis 3:15 been described? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. The Tower of Babel represents \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What did God do to stop this rebellion? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. List seven promises that God makes to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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 \_\_\_\_\_
11. In what way does the Bible condemn the attitude “They have their religion, leave them alone”? (See Isaiah 44:8.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
12. What god or gods does the animist worship? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
13. Relate the animists’ explanation as to why they were once closer to God than today. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. In whom does the promise of Genesis 3:15 find completion? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. Relate 2 Corinthians 5:20 to Genesis 3:15. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
16. What significance does the doctrine of reconciliation have for missions? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)**

1. Why is God’s creation of the world the foundation for missions? (See Gen. 1–2.)
2. Make an outline of Genesis 3 and explain what bearing it has on missions.
3. Read Isaiah 44. Answer the following questions.
  - (1) Who is Jesurun? (See verse 2.)
  - (2) What is meant by “you . . . whom I have chosen”? (See verse 2.)
  - (3) Who are the witnesses in verse 8? Contrast them with the graven images in verse 9.
  - (4) List the uses man makes of trees. (See verses 14-17.)
  - (5) What is meant by “For thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant”? (See verse 21.)
  - (6) Summarize the missionary message of this chapter.

### **Advanced activity (Level 3)**

1. Explain the missionary implications of Genesis 12:1-3.
2. Write a missionary sermon based on Isaiah 44:1-20. (Students who are not preachers may prepare a Bible study lesson instead of the sermon.)

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. In what way does the creation account define the nature of man and provide the base for missions?
2. In what way is the doctrine of sin crucial in developing a theology of missions?
3. How does Paul relate the unity of the human race to the doctrine of reconciliation and redemption in Romans 5?
4. What is the difference in perspective between the Bible and science?
5. How is man's place in the world as the crown of creation both a liability and an asset?
6. Discuss the significance of the Tower of Babel for missions.
7. Discuss the charge that God showed favouritism in selecting only one man and his family as His chosen people.