

The Apostles and Genesis

Genesis and the Flood

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Tonight we are closing a series that we've done on the book of Genesis, on the flood, on matters pertaining to our origins. Andrew spoke for a couple of weeks from his expertise on geological and creation issues and I've tried to follow up last week and this week with a survey of what the Bible itself would say about the authority and the trustworthiness of Genesis, the book of Genesis where we learn about the worldwide flood, and I want to just remind you of what we said last time. The streams of authority and the streams of affirmation that go into this are really quite profound and really don't leave much room for varying approach, a different approach that would accommodate anything else.

Last time, we said that we built the case that Jesus clearly put all of the weight of his authority behind the book of Genesis, and what we said was, we established the authority of Christ. He is the firstborn of all creation. He rules in majesty. There is no higher authority than Christ, the living Son of God, and we looked at what he said about the Old Testament in general and he said that heaven and earth would pass away but my words would not pass away, and that not a jot or tittle from the law would pass away, in Matthew 5. So Christ who is the all of authority, affirmed in a general way the authority of the Old Testament and then we looked at a further aspect of matters and saw how Christ affirmed the authority of Genesis in the way that he referred to it and we traced how from creation through the entirety of the book of Genesis you can see Christ quoting it as historical, quoting it as factual, quoting it as that which pointed to the truth and was truth itself. So when you deal with the authority of the book of Genesis, when you deal with the teaching of the book of Genesis, you quickly find yourself dealing with an even more profound aspect of truth and that is the authority of Jesus Christ. When you question the authority of Genesis, when you diminish the historicity or the reliability or the truthfulness of the book of Genesis whether you realize it or not, ultimately you are casting, you are making an accusation against Christ, that either he did not know better or that he was misleading his audience when he taught, because the authority of Christ stands firmly, directly and fully behind the book of Genesis based on his own teaching, and we reviewed that carefully last time.

Well, there's one more matter that we need to address to really nail this down and one that might not be quite as evident when you first think about it, but as you look at Scripture, you find it echoing and resounding in the same way. There is another aspect of the authority of Christ that stands behind the book of Genesis to affirm it completely and

without question, and that deals with the authority of the apostles and the way that the apostolic writings just like Jesus did, also affirm the authority of the book of Genesis and that's more significant than it might seem at first glance. It's important for you to remember what we have said about the apostles in the past and I just want to kind of review it here today. When we speak about the apostles of Christ, we are speaking about that limited, finite circle of first century men who spoke on behalf of Christ, who were authorized by Christ to speak for him, who were the vessels of God's completed revelation to the church for all of time. So these apostles were speaking on behalf of and with the full authority of Christ and we need to look at that for a moment and then see what they said about the book of Genesis.

So we're going to break this down into two parts here this evening. First of all, I just want to remind you of some things that we've said in the past, first of all, about Jesus and the apostles. Jesus and the apostles. Jesus conferred authority, conferred his authority on the apostles to represent him so that when they taught, they taught with the full authority of Christ. There is no diminishment of authority from Jesus to the apostles. Just as a man can appoint an agent and that agent can go out and represent him in his business dealings, so in a greater way Jesus appoints the apostles to speak on his behalf after his ascension into heaven and we find this laid out for us in such clear manner in the New Testament.

Look at Mark 3 as we begin, and as you're turning to Mark 3, the great issue that is at stake here is what is the truth and how do we know what the truth is, and that is a question of no small import because if we want to worship God acceptably, we have to go to him exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ and Jesus said that if we want to worship God, we must do so in spirit and in truth. We are not free agents who are able to make up our own theories about what truth is and then believing our own thoughts and our own theories or the theories of other men, go and think that we are worshiping God acceptably. God has revealed himself in his word, God has declared what is true in his word and if we are to worship him truly, we must worship him believing him according to what he has revealed to be true in his word and that encompasses the entirety of Scripture, it encompasses the book of Genesis, it encompasses what God has said about the nature of where we came from as humans and how he has dealt with us, and all of that historical matter of origin is revealed in the book of Genesis. So this is foundational to true worship of God. That's why we're dealing with this so carefully.

First of all, Jesus and the apostles, that's our first point for this evening, and the simple statement that I want to make to start this point is that Jesus conferred authority on the apostles to represent him. These men were his authorized delegates. They were his ambassadors who could truly speak on his behalf. Mark 3:13, you see this. Mark 3:13 says that Jesus,

13 ... went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. 14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons.

These 12 men have an elevated place in the redemptive plan of God. They are authorized representatives uniquely and exclusively authorized to be vessels of his revelation. So the apostles hold a place in the foundation of the church that no one else holds, has ever held, and will ever hold. There are no apostles today despite the men who claim to be apostles. That claim is false and that is not true and we have messages on the authority of the apostles that you can find at our website that goes into that in more detail. For tonight, we just summarize and we see that Jesus appointed these men particularly by himself on his own authority and said, "I want you men to represent me and to go out and preach."

In John 15:16, he said, speaking to the apostles, he said,

16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit,

So here's the thing, beloved, this is a really simple point but one with very far-reaching consequences. For those of us that own Christ as Lord, that name him as Lord, that receive him and submit to him and follow him as Lord, we must recognize that he appointed these apostles to be his unique representatives so that the apostles speak with the authority of Christ in their written writings. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:37, I believe that it is, he said, "I want you to realize that the things that I write to you are the Lord's commandment." So when the apostles spoke, when the apostles speak in the New Testament writings, they are speaking with the authority of Christ.

Look at Matthew 28, turning back just a couple of pages in your Bible. Matthew 28, beginning in verse 16. Matthew 28:16 says,

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee [this is after the resurrection of Christ], to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth [then he tells the disciples]. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Christ declares his authority and then by that very authority he tells the apostles to go out and teach. The apostles taught, the apostles wrote based on the authority, on the power, on the prerogative conferred upon them by Christ himself and that means that they speak with authority to the church in their writings.

Look over at the book of Acts 1:2. It says, Luke is writing and describing what Jesus began to do and teach from verse 1. Verse 2,

2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

He ordered the apostles to go out on his behalf and in verse 7 he says,

7 ... "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

So as the apostles went out preaching, as the apostles wrote the word of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they were doing so not as independent agents but as those who had been ordered to do so by Christ himself.

So they spoke with the authority of Christ and they spoke with one other thing that needs to be remembered here. Turn to John 14. We're just laying the groundwork so that we will give the proper respect and belief and deference to what the apostles say. In John 14 in verse 25, Jesus says to the disciples in the Upper Room, he says,

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

John 16. We're kind of laying out a lot of different passages to pull together and make a final point here in just a moment. John 16:12, Jesus said to the disciples, to those gathered with him in the Upper Room, that limited group of men. Verse 12,

12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

So here's what's going on: in these passages in the book of John, Jesus promises his disciples, the 11 that were left after Judas had departed from the room, he promises to clothe them with the Holy Spirit, with the third person of the Trinity shortly after his departure, and he promises them and he tells them what the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be in their lives and in their ministry. The Spirit will guide them into the truth. The Spirit will instruct them and bring to their remembrance all that Christ said. The Spirit would be the guarantee that what the apostles spoke on behalf of Christ would be true, would be accurate, would be the very word of God.

So when we consider the writings of the apostles, we realize that there is an authority of the Godhead that is placed upon them that is quite staggering. Christ himself appoints them. Christ chooses them, commands them, "Go and speak on my behalf." And alongside of that as they begin to minister after Pentecost in Acts 2 and the Holy Spirit has come upon them, we realize that the Holy Spirit himself is empowering them, is directing them, is guiding them, protecting them from error and giving them the ability to speak the truth so that the third person of the blessed Trinity guided the words of the

apostles as they transmitted the history and interpretation of Christ without error in the New Testament. They spoke on behalf of God. They spoke under the inspiration of God. They spoke with the authority of God. They spoke with the accuracy of God. This is critical. This is why we heed the writings of the New Testament. This goes to the most fundamental issues of how we know truth.

Beloved, the church was founded on the apostles' teaching. Ephesians 2:20. In fact, let's look over to that key verse for just a moment. Ephesians 2:20 says that the church is, look at verse 20,

20 ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

The church built on the apostles by which it means built on the teaching and the instruction of the apostles. Everything about the church of Jesus Christ builds on the foundation of what the apostles taught, what God revealed through the apostles, and their witness continues today in the New Testament. These are really weighty matters. These are fundamental to knowing what truth is and what we see is that Jesus Christ himself, the Lord of the universe, is the guarantee that the apostles were trustworthy in all that they said. He appointed them. He commissioned them. He sends them out. He sends the Spirit upon them so that these men, the 12 plus Paul, were uniquely authorized to be the vessels of God's revelation upon which the church would stand.

Now, that has a lot of consequences. Martyn Lloyd-Jones states it this way in his book titled, "Authority," pages 59 and 60, speaking of Christ he says, "He enlightens and reveals his will in teaching to these apostles, endows them with a unique authority, fills them with the needed ability and power, and gives them the teaching that is essential to the well-being of the church and God's people." So this is the biblical understanding of the role of the apostles in the church and the authority that they held. They are completely trustworthy, they speak with the very authority of God, their words recorded for us in Scripture are the very words of God himself. That is how it pleased God, how it pleased Christ to give his revelation to the church. It pleased him to do it through these men and so they were perfectly trustworthy in all that they said.

Now, that's just a general foundation for our more specific concern that brings us here together this evening dealing with the authority of Genesis, dealing with the authenticity and the reliability of the book of Genesis as it pertains the worldwide flood, as it pertains to creation and matters of man and woman and marriage and gender and all of these matters. What do the apostles have to say about it? What do the apostles and their circle say about the book of Genesis? Well, last time when we looked at Jesus, we walked through Genesis from chapter 1 to chapter 50 seeing that in broad and sometimes specific terms, Jesus affirmed it all. If what we've said about the apostles is true, we would expect to see a parallel attitude of the apostles that is perfectly consistent with Christ. We have multiple streams flowing into the river, as it were, all contributing to the great river of truth that we receive about the reliability of Genesis. If what we've said about the apostles

is true, we would expect the authorized representatives of Christ to be consistent with the one who sent them out. If what we've said about the authority of the apostles is true.

Well, let's take a look and see if what we have said bears up to scrutiny. We'll come to point 2 now. We saw Jesus and the apostles, now we want to look at point 2, the apostles and Genesis. The apostles and Genesis. How do the apostles look at Genesis? What do they say about it? How do the apostles use the teaching of Genesis in their own writing when they are continuing and carrying out the revelatory ministry that Jesus commanded them to do? How do the apostles use the source material? Well, the way that we're going to approach this is just a parallel of what we did last week. It's going to seem like we're jumping around in the New Testament in kind of a random way, perhaps, but actually there is a method to our madness and what we are doing is we're going to walk through the teaching of the apostles following the chronology of Genesis as we do and this will make sense as we go along. I'm confident in your ability to follow what I'm about to say.

First of all, the apostles affirm the account of creation from Genesis 1 and 2. The apostles affirm the account of creation from Genesis 1 and 2 and what we're going to do now for the rest of our time together tonight is repeat the same approach we did with the teaching of Genesis from the four Gospels, now following that same pattern, that same methodology in the writings of the apostles and their associates. So we're going to jump around a little bit but there is a method to the madness.

Turn to 1 Timothy 2. Our point here is that the apostles affirm the account of creation from Genesis 1 and 2. 1 Timothy 2, beginning in verse 12. The Apostle Paul says, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." Men, only you can say it. No. Say amen to that. That's just a joke. That's just a joke. I'm trying to lighten the mood here just a little bit, and if the ladies want to say amen, that's just fine. It's just a joke for the moment.

Paul says,

12 ... I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Now on what basis does he make that broad statement of church order? He appeals to the creation account in Genesis. Verse 13,

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Paul bases a principle of church government that he intends to be carried out in all of the churches, he bases the rationale for his principle on the assumption of the truthfulness of the account found in Genesis of creation, of Adam and Eve. If he had considered that to be a fable, to be something that was not representative of what really happened, he could not possibly give a principle to guide the church in truth that's based on a false historic

representation. He is obviously assuming the factual truthfulness of the account of creation when he gives that instruction.

Turn over to the right in your Bibles to Hebrews 4. Hebrews 4 where we see again the account of creation affirmed with clarity by the writers of Scripture. Hebrews 4:4 says that,

4 ... He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";

This is Genesis 1, this is Genesis 2 that he's quoting here, he's alluding to, taking it at face value, referring to a seventh day. Not a seventh age, not an indefinite period of millions of years, he's referring to the seventh day just like Genesis teaches.

In Hebrews 11:3, I'll just read it very quickly. Hebrews 11:3 says,

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Genesis 1:1,

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

So we see in these three sample passages the apostles taking the account of creation literally at face value in the writings of the New Testament.

They go on to affirm, the apostles do, the history of Adam's sons from Genesis 4. Turn to your right in your Bible a few pages to the book of 1 John 3 where it says in verse 11,

11 ... this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

What does he ground that statement upon? How does he enforce the command to love one another? Well, he uses a negative example in verse 12,

12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother.

Cain killed Abel in Genesis 4. The Apostle John says, "We are to love one another and to distinguish ourselves from what Adam's son did to his other son." So there is this affirmation, there is this presupposed historical accuracy of what he's saying and it's obvious that he's assuming this passage to be true otherwise he would not ground his ethical instruction to the church on something that had no basis in reality. If the ground of appeal had no basis in reality, the moral force of the command is evacuated, it is undermined completely.

What else did the apostles do? Well, turn back to the left to 2 Peter just a couple of pages, 2 Peter 2, you find the apostolic circle affirming the account of Noah and the flood found in Genesis 6 through chapter 9. In 2 Peter 2:4, it says,

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

What Peter is doing here is establishing to comfort the church, the fact that God knows exactly how to protect his own. If you go on to verse 9, you'll see he gives a couple of other examples in between. We'll come back to one of them in a moment but in 2 Peter 2:9, you see what his point is. He says,

9 ... the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation,

And so the flow of his argument is God saved Noah and seven others during the time of the worldwide flood and brought judgment on the rest of the ancient world, and he's assuming that you understand, that you're familiar with that and that you know that to be true. He's assuming the factual accuracy of what he just cited as a basis upon which to provide comfort to a suffering church that while you may be suffering for a time, while the world may be collapsing around you into seemingly greater degrees of chaos, understand and take comfort from the fact that God knows how to protect and preserve his own. He did it in the days of Noah under dramatic circumstances and if he knew how to do it then, his power is unchanged, his knowledge is unchanged, his love for his own is unchanged. Beloved, look back at Noah and realize that God has the power, the ability, and the willingness to protect you as you go through times of temptation and trial as well. Don't you see that the comfort is real because the historical example he uses to enforce it is real? If Noah and the worldwide flood was just some silly fable and everybody knew that and that's what we believe, then all of a sudden we are robbed of the comfort, the power of what Peter said to us in chapter 2.

Now, are we to think that the writers of Scripture wrote with no purpose? That they were just aimlessly saying things, citing fables in order to try to give imaginary comfort to people with real problems? Is that how God deals with his people? Is that how God loves his own? Does he comfort us with falsehood? Does he comfort us with fables? Or does he comfort us by reminding us of the truth of his past actions in history that show that he is willing to do this, able to do it, and he will do it for us as well. You know, I can read this passage, so can you as believers in Christ, I can read 2 Peter 2, see what his purpose is and find great power, overwhelming, conquering confidence for my life here in this difficult world because I know that he's citing a true example. The ones who cut Noah out of the Bible, cut Genesis 1 through 11 out of the Bible, have kicked the slats out from under the comfort of the people of God. The edifice collapses as a result. You can't even uphold the authority of the apostles if you do that. Out on the suggestion.

What else do the writers of Scripture do, the apostles do? What do the apostles do? They affirm the history of Abraham which begins in Genesis 11. Now get this, I'm not going to turn to a Scripture right away because I want to quote something for you first. We're talking about the authority of the apostles verifying for us the authority of Genesis and I just said that the apostles affirm the history of Abraham which begins in Genesis 11. One source, one scholarly source says this, that there are 83 references to Abraham in 11 different books of the New Testament. Eighty-three references to Abraham which is in Genesis spread through 11 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Now beloved, this is powerful. Of course Genesis is reliable because Genesis itself came through the revelation of God through his servant Moses. The authority of Genesis is real on its own but what we are addressing here and what we are showing and helping to try to clarify is that we understand that there are a lot of attacks on the authority of Genesis from voices purporting to be speaking from within the Christian church. Now that's a real problem for them, not for us. It's a real problem for them to want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to deny Genesis but somehow still keep the New Testament. You can't. The two are joined together. They are conjoined twins that cannot be separated without killing them both, right, because Genesis is woven like a golden thread throughout the entire New Testament. In fact, Genesis is found at the very beginning of the New Testament in Matthew 1:1,

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

It starts with the cornerstone of Genesis and as my former pastor, John MacArthur, liked to say when he was teaching on these issues addressing rhetorically these critics of Genesis, "Where do you kick in? Where does it start if you deny six days, 24 hour creation? Where do you kick in? Do you kick in at chapter 3 with the fall? Do you kick in at Noah, chapter 6 through 9? Is that too much for you? Do you kick in at chapter 12 with Abraham and the call of Abraham?" The point being that there is no consistent hermeneutic, there is no consistent rule of interpretation that would govern somebody to do this, to govern when they kick in, when they start to say, "Okay, you can believe this now." And beloved, as a pastor responsible for the protection of your souls, I want you to see what's going on there. What they are doing is they are telling you in their writings, they are telling you in their teachings, they are telling you, "You can't trust God's word on its own face but trust me instead. I'll tell you where you can believe. Trust me and you can follow me and I'll show you where the truth is." To which your believing heart should be righteously indignant and say, "No, no, no, thank you. I kick in at Genesis 1:1 and so does Jesus and so do the apostles. I'm glad to align myself with them rather than you. You can go now. You're not needed here."

So in Romans 4, just to pick one of the 83 references as an example, Romans 4, you see Abraham used by the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as an illustration of saving faith. Romans 4:1 through 3,

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has

something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15. So we've seen the account of creation, 1 through 2. We've actually seen Genesis 3 also, haven't we, when Eve was deceived and they fell into sin. Genesis 4. Genesis 6 through 9 with Noah. We see Abraham now being represented in this.

Look at 2 Peter again, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 18 and 19. 2 Peter 2:6 in that same line of argument that I was explaining earlier in verse 6, it says,

6 and if He [meaning and if God] condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

Do you see it? He's referring to these stories as literal historical events accurately described in the narrative accounts of Genesis as being what really happened.

Now, the apostolic circle affirms the rest of Genesis as well. Go to the book of Hebrews 11, and had I wanted to, I won't do this but you could preach this kind of sermon entirely from Hebrews 11 because Hebrews 11 starts with creation and goes through all of Genesis itself. It's tempting to read verses 1 through 22 right now but I won't do that. We've gone through Abraham, look at verse 20, it says,

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come [referring to Genesis 27]. 21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff [referring to Genesis 48]. 22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones [the end of Genesis 50].

Don't you see it, beloved? In fact, I won't sleep good tonight if I don't do this so let me do this so you can participate in my good night's sleep here tonight. Just to let you see the bracketing nature of this in the book of Hebrews, look at what we said, we quoted from Hebrews 11:3, the account of creation, Genesis 1, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God." Then you just walk through this passage in Hebrews. Verse 4, Abel. Verse 5, Enoch. Verse 7, Noah. Verse 8, Abraham. Verse 11, Sarah. Verse 17, Isaac. Verse 20, Jacob, Esau. Verse 22, Joseph. Do you see that he walks us through the entirety of the book of Genesis, quotes it as part of his greater illustration of the nature of faith. Now look, if they are writing about the nature of faith intending to give, if the writer of Hebrews, I should say, is writing to the people of God intending to give them a plain explanation of the nature of faith so that we could follow in its footsteps, isn't it obvious that he's telling us the truth? How could he possibly give us a true illustration of faith from the book of Genesis if it was not completely reliable?

Otherwise he's telling us to pattern our faith after a falsehood which would be false faith which would condemn us to hell. That's not what the biblical writers did. There is not that kind of duplicity in their mind. It's clear. It's plain. It's straightforward. It's reliable. It's accurate. It's from Genesis beginning to end, covered in the apostolic writings.

Now, do you want to know something interesting? What else are you going to say, right? Here's something interesting: I am leaving out a ton, as I like to say, "And that's italicized in my notes," a ton of references in the apostolic writings for the sake of time. I have 18 other passages in my notes footnoted here documenting other places where the apostles quote from Genesis. I have taken 50 minutes of your time already and I have left out more than I have said. And beloved, these references to which I refer that I have given you that I have actually spoken, the ones that I footnoted that I'm not going to, beloved, that's just from Genesis. The apostles have a whole lot to say about the rest of the Old Testament as well. Here's the point that I trust is established to the point of settled conviction in your mind: the apostles consistently reasoned from the history of Genesis to preach Christ and to teach doctrine and ethics to the church. They did so clothed in the Holy Spirit. They did so under order of Jesus. So there is just this overwhelming tsunami of reliability and authenticity and authority which we receive in the church from the apostles who are authorized by Christ grounded on the teaching of the book of Genesis.

Beloved, as we said last time, Jesus was not mistaken. Jesus did not accommodate his hearers and pretend to agree with them about the reliability of Genesis when he really didn't. He wasn't a hypocrite. He wasn't a coward. He spoke the word of God in truth. That's what Jesus did in the four Gospels and, beloved, in exactly like manner, the apostles were not mistaken and the apostles did not accommodate to the mistaken beliefs of their readers either. The great man of God from the nineteenth century, J. C. Ryle, said this and I quote, he said, "Let us remember this if we hear men professing to believe the writers of the New Testament and yet sneering at the things recorded in the Old Testament as if they were fables," J. C. Ryle making the exact same point that I am making here this evening. Continuing the quotation he said, "Such men forget that in so doing, they pour contempt on Christ himself. The authority of the Old Testament and the authority of the New stand or fall together."

So where does this leave us? What I want you to see, beloved, because I realize these men seem to write in a scholarly vein, they seem to be persuasive, a lot of them write with great arrogance toward the word of God and try to make you feel like a hayseed with a straw stuck between your teeth because you believe the Bible and I want to strengthen you against that, and it's just particularly difficult when they do so in the name of evangelical Christianity, isn't it? Here's the reality of it as we have demonstrated over the past two weeks: a man or woman cannot speak about Genesis without first answering the preeminent question of the ages about the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me say that again: a man cannot speak about Genesis without first answering the preeminent question of the ages about Christ. In other words, who is the authority here?

Look at Matthew 16 and this will be the last passage that we look to. Matthew 16, beginning in verse 13.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Now look, beloved, this wraps it all up and puts a nice bow on the whole package. If Jesus Christ is Lord, if he in fact is the Son of the living God, then his attitude toward Genesis settles the matter. The attitude of Christ determines what is true and so you go to the ultimate final authority, who is Christ as we have shown, and he has mediated his authority through his apostles, you go to the authority and say, "What do they say?" and you interpret everything else in light of that. Christ and the apostles have spoken on the reliability of Genesis with utter clarity, with utter comprehensiveness, and with utter finality so that we can say this: ultimately a skeptical attitude toward the book of Genesis reveals either an uninformed attitude toward Christ himself, or displays a skeptical attitude toward Christ himself, or in the case of some, simply displays their utter unbelief because you cannot deny Genesis without denying Christ and the apostles, and when you deny Christ and the apostles, you throw salvation out with it and we are all still miserably lost in our sins and headed for judgment if we can't believe what's said there.

So for those who are uninformed, we call them to search out the word of God and see whether these things are so. To the skeptics, to the unbelieving whose unbelief and skepticism is expressed in their attitude toward the book of Genesis, we call them to repent and we call them to reconsider and to answer this question, "Who do you say that the Christ is? Is he the eternal Son of God in whom all truth and authority resides or not? Has he spoken with clarity and finality in the pages of the New Testament or not? Answer that question and then we can have a discussion, but do not clothe your skepticism as though you were representing Christ when you do."

For those of us who trust Christ as Lord and Savior, who submit and follow him as Teacher and Master, we find this, those of us who know him as the Son of the living God just like Peter said, just like Christ affirmed, we find this as we conclude this four-part series on the book of Genesis, we find this: our confidence in the first book of the Bible is well-placed because our confidence in Christ and in his apostles is well-placed and, therefore, we stand on a solid foundation upon which we confidently proclaim to the world, "Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Salvation is found in him and in him alone." And with authority that is rooted in his word, we proclaim this Christ and everything that he affirmed as we teach the whole counsel of God.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, we do pray that you would vindicate your word, that you would support and illuminate your word to your people, and that you would humble those who question and deny and cast doubt upon it before the people of God and undermine their confidence in what you have said. Father, we pray for them, that you would bring them to repentance that they would recant of their skeptical unbelieving writings, and that they would submit to Christ in humility knowing that unless Christ is received with childlike faith, he cannot be received at all. Strengthen us here in this room. Strengthen our church, Father, that we might ever be faithful to the proclamation of your word. Help us to do it in spirit and in truth, in a spirit of love, of course; and a spirit of humility, of course; but Father, in a spirit that is without compromise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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