

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 01: Genesis 1-14

Welcome to week one of the Bible-Reading Coach Podcast. My name is Karl Vaters. And I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks. If you've ever started and stopped a Bible reading plan before, this plan is designed for you stick with us through the journey, we want to make your reading journey through the Bible so simple, so understandable and so rewarding that you will be excited to keep reading all the way through the book of Revelation in December. It is our hope it is our goal for you that this time, you'll finish.

But first, we need to start. Now, every week we're going to give you an assignment to read. This week's assignment will be Genesis chapters 1 through 14. So this week, we'll be covering the creation, Adam and Eve, the fall into sin Cain and Abel, Noah, the Tower of Babel, the call of Abram and his separation from Lot. Yeah, there's a lot of ground to cover this week. But also this week, because it's starting, we need to give you some context. So we're going to give you the background of the entire Bible, the background of the Old Testament, and the background of the book of Genesis.

So this episode will be a little longer than most. First of all, let's give you the context of the Bible itself. One of the most important principles to understand about the Bible, and it's something we'll come back to regularly in this series, is that the Bible is a library and not a single book. So we need to treat it as a library. That is it's organized into sections. In general, it's chronological Genesis is the start of things, Revelation will be the end of things. But there are major sections in there that don't follow chronology. All the prophets are put together, all the poetry is put together, all the letters are put together, not necessarily chronologically. As an example, Genesis is the first book in the first section of the Bible that we call the Old Testament. But by the time you're done with books 16 out of 39 books in the Old Testament, by the time we get to Nehemiah, the entire Old Testament timeline will have been done. So that's where the history is. When we get there, and we make the shift to the next section we'll tell you what happens. So that's the idea of how it goes chronologically.

Now let's take a look at the Old Testament, or what our Jewish friends call their scriptures. The Old Testament was written almost entirely by Jewish authors. The one exception might be Job, which we'll talk about when we get there. And it consists of several types of books of history also called books of the law, books of poetry and books of prophecy, primarily. It was written, not in English, not even in Old King James English, but it was written in the Hebrew language and translated into our language for today. It's an absolutely essential belief by Christians, that the Bible is accurate in its original writing. And what I mean by that is this, the translations we have today are very, very good, they are extremely trustworthy. Translators are super picky to make sure that they're accurate. But Christians generally understand that it's the original writings that were divinely inspired, and our translations that we have today are only inspired to the degree that they accurately reflect the original Hebrew for the Old Testament, or the original Greek for the New Testament, which thankfully, they do extraordinarily well. So we can trust that what we're reading is what God intended for us to have. So that's the Old Testament, given to us by our Jewish friends, written so many years ago, the first 39 books of the Bible. That's what we're starting today.

Out of that old testament, the first book in the Bible is the book of Genesis. It's actually the first book of five books. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And these first five books of the Bible go by several names. Sometimes they're called The Law, The Pentateuch, which comes from the word five, The Torah, or The Books of Moses. These were, I want you to imagine back in the day, when the library of the Bible was being constructed, there was a period of time, a long period of time, in which there were only five books on the shelves of what we today call the Bible, and they were those five books. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. All the other books were added to the shelf of the Bible later.

So now let's get to the passage that we'll be looking at today, chapters 1 through 14. First of all, we have the story of creation. And it begins with four extraordinary words in Genesis chapter one, verse one, it begins with these words. "In the beginning, God". It's really an extraordinary start. There's no explanations about where God came from, because of course, he didn't come from anywhere he's pre-existing, was right there start blowing our minds before we've even gotten to the fifth word. But these first four words "In the beginning", and "In the beginning, God" actually introduces some of the most foundational truths for us to understand. Foundational truth number one is this: God exists. It is by far, the most foundational truth behind everything else in Scripture. This is the fact, that God exists because of that foundational truth. Number two is this. The Bible is God's story. He is the hero of the story, not us. So whenever you're reading scripture and you're not sure about something, don't ask "What does it mean, to me?" at least not at first. Ask "What is God doing in the story?", because he's the hero. So, the rest of chapters one and two, give us creation. And it gives us creation from two standpoints. And I want to pause on this one for a moment. There'll be a lot of pausing and explaining in this episode, because there's so many foundational truths in these first few chapters. Genesis one and Genesis two give us two accounts of creation from two standpoints, but they are not different versions of creation, and there are no contradictions between them.

A lot of times, cynics and skeptics of the Bible will say, and the Bible starts out with two different creation accounts, and everything's in different orders in them. And that's simply not true. Chapter one and chapter two of the Bible do not stand side by side parallel, and they do not lead one into the other chronologically. Instead, chapter one gives us all of creation, from nothing, all the way to the creation of human beings. Chapter Two, gives us a close up of the end of day six, that is the creation of human beings and how that came about. So it's a closer window into one segment of chapter one, it's not a parallel to chapter one, or a continuation of chapter one. It's a close up version of a portion of chapter one. And when you understand it that way, and then you read the two chapters, you see how they fit together. It's also fascinating.

Then as we move to the rest of the chapters, chapters three through eleven of Genesis, more time passes in those chapters than in the rest of the Bible entirely until we get to eternity in heaven in the book of Revelation. We know this because there's a chapter or two in it of genealogies, which when you read, it will feel boring. But when you add the numbers together, you realize there is a massive amount of time that passes within these few chapters. So as you're reading through the so-and-so gave birth to so-and-so portions of it, take a look at the number. See how long they lived. And in fact, here's your first kind of Where's Waldo treasure hunt. Look for Methusala. He's the longest recorded person who ever lived and see how long he lived. I'll give you a hint. It's almost 1000 years. It's an amazing thing to read through.

So let's take a look, now, from chapters one and two. We've now seen an overview of three through eleven. In chapter three, then we're going to get to one of the most essential and important points to understand in the Bible. It's called "The Fall" or the place where sin enters the world. I want you to notice a couple things about the Garden of Eden and what does and doesn't happen there. First of all, there ain't no apple. Everybody talks about eating the apple and Adam eating the apple. There's no Apple, it says it's a fruit. It could have been an Apple could have been a banana could have been a kumquat could have been a grapefruit. We don't know if it was a fruit, but it doesn't say that it was an apple. Second thing to notice, when the serpent talks to Eve. He first of all misquotes God's command to Eve. And because of that, Eve then misquotes God's command but in a different way back to the serpent. This is one of the reasons why reading the Bible accurately is so important. We don't want to misquote or misunderstand God because it leads to devastating consequences.

Another thing to note in chapter three, is that there's not one tree, there are two trees. There's the tree from which they eat the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but there's also the tree of life. And we will see the tree of life later, a lot later. Like in the last couple chapters of Revelation in week 52. Yes, there's a pin drop here that doesn't pay off until the final week of reading, that alone should keep you hanging in there until the end to see how the Tree of Life comes back in an amazing way in week 52.

All right, now we move on to chapter four. And we have a story of Cain and Abel, where one brother kills the other sorry, spoiler alert, Cain kills Abel. The biggest skeptic question that comes out of this story is, after Cain kills Abel, and he's banished, he goes in, he finds a wife and he marries her. But up until this point, the only four people we've heard about are Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. So this is another place where cynics and skeptics of the Bible come along and go, Well, where did Kane's wife come from? Right, you can write that can't have been the only four people on the earth if he had a wife. Well, no, by then they weren't the only four people on the earth. They're the only four people mentioned so far. But that's typical for storytelling. How many times have you told a story about something that's happened in your life, and you don't describe every single person in the crowd or every single person in the family? You only talk about the people for whom the story matters. Now, where did Cain's wife come from that? Well, by the time we get to chapter five, verse three, Take a look for this. By the time they have Seth, who is born to replace Abel, who's been killed by then Adam is 130 years old. So Adam and Eve, have been having children for 130 years, there's no way that they only had Cain and Abel, they're just the only two people who are part of the story. So far, they've had 130 years to give birth to children and their children to give birth on their children to give birth. By this time, there could easily have been 10s of 1000s of people on the face of the earth. So where the wife came from is really easy when you take a look at the timeline.

Then we get to chapter six through nine and the story of Noah and the ark, and it's the first long narrative of the Scripture. The first note that you need to take. Be aware of, for the story of Noah is this. The story of Noah's Ark is not the polite story that we like to paint on nursery walls. Just about every church nursery you've ever been in, there's been a picture of an ark with a bunch of animals and it looks so pleasant. But it's not a pleasant story. First of all, it takes place because of rampant and profound evil. Let me give you a quote from chapter six, verse five, "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."

That is quite a statement. So first of all, happens because of evil. Secondly, we cannot overlook the horror of what happened to those who were not on the ark and who drowned. The Bible is true. The Bible is right. But the Bible is seldom easy. And it's often horrifying. And this is one of the horrifying parts. Don't overlook the horror of that. And then thirdly, after the Ark lands, and they all leave it, this righteous man named Noah, the only person righteous enough for him and his family to be saved. He behaves horribly, I won't tell you what he does, you'll be able to read it for yourself. But it's horrible.

And this will point us back already to one of our primary principles. Do not perceive Noah as the hero of the Noah and the ark story. He's not heroic. Well, he has faith and God saves him. But God is the one who's the hero by saving Noah, we read about No, and we find out Wow, he really didn't deserve this. God simply had mercy on him, God is the hero, not Noah.

Then we get to the Tower of Babel and chapter 11. And this is another one that needs to be explained for cynics and skeptics of Scripture. In the Tower of Babel story in chapter 11, it sounds as though everybody spoke the same language in the whole earth and boom, out of nowhere, God just simply split their languages. And all of a sudden, everybody spoke different languages. And anybody who knows linguistics, or anthropology or history or archaeology, just wants to roll their eyes at that, because they look at the history of the world and they go that's not how language is developed? Well, here's the deal. One of the other principles that we're going to follow through in this series is this. Good science and good theology are good friends. If your science is good, and your theology is good, they will agree. If your science and theology don't agree, then either your science is bad, or your theology is bad, or maybe a little bit of both. So if science tells us that languages developed as tribes spread around the world, and they were separated from each other and separate and developed differently, but the Bible tells us in chapter 11, or seems to tell us in chapter 11, that they just, poof, came out of nowhere. Which one are we going to believe? Well, it's an easier question to answer than you might think, because we jump to chapter 11, without paying attention to chapter 10. So as you read chapter 10, this week, pay attention to what it says in chapter 10, verses 20 and 31. It says this, that the tribes as they scattered, developed their own languages.

So chapter 10, already tells us we had different tribes scattered to different places, speaking different languages, chapter 11, one then says the whole earth had been one language, but that's actually a reflection back to coming off the ark. So by the time we get to chapter 11, at 11, chapter two, we've got one tribe in one place that decides we're going to consolidate all the power here, and God confuses their speech and their understanding. But the Bible does not say that that's how language developed in chapter 10. It tells us how language develops, and it happens to match what we know of anthropology, history and linguistics. Good science and good theology are good friends.

And our reading for this week will conclude with chapters 12 through 14, and we meet a man named Abram in Chapters 1 through 11. We have a handful of quick stories that go through a ton of time in chapter 12, it's like we hit the brakes and everything slows down and we've got one person in his life and then the life of his children from that point on.

So from chapter 12 of Genesis on, basically, we have the story of one man, Abram, and his descendants for the entire rest of the Bible. He's called by God to, take a look at how he's called. Take a look at how immediately, almost immediately, he has to separate from his nephew Lot, how he rescues him, then he has a visit from a mysterious man named Melchizedek. This is

another one that's going to pay off. This time in week 50. We hear about Melchizedek. this week. We will not hear about Melchizedek again until week 50, in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, and it will be a big deal when that one pays off. So hang in there to that.

So as you read this week, what should you do? Ask a handful of questions. First of all, ask this. What does this passage tell me about God? Then ask, what does it tell me about his creation? What does it tell me about humanity's place in that creation? What does it tell about God's plans for humanity, the only part of creation that were made in His image? What is the, what are these passages? Tell me about sin and its effects on that plan. And what do these passages tell me about our need for God's help? So don't go into this immediately asking, What does it say to me? Ask first of all, what does it say about God? And how am I going to fit into his story? God has something that he's doing, we can get on board, or we can refuse to get on board. But God's story is going to happen.

Now, next week, we're going to come back to this man Abram, the story is going to slow down, the rest of the Bible will flow from that one man and his family that God will use to set his plan of salvation in motion. And we will cover Genesis 15 to 35. That's next week with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This week, let's read together chapters 1 through 14, and see the amazing things that God has put in his word, as we do this together.

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