

Foundations



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 19:3-8; Luke 17:26-30; Acts 7:1-15; Romans 1:17; Romans 4:3; Romans 5:14; Hebrews 11:1-22.

MEMORY VERSE: “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous [holy] do?” (Psalm 11:3, NIV).

LAURENS VAN DER POST, A SOUTH AFRICAN, HAD A STRANGE BLACK ROCK ON HIS LIVING ROOM TABLE. People asked him about this rock. He answered that it came from 15,000 feet under the ground of Africa. The rock was sent to him by a friend who wrote: “This is a symbol of what you and I have tried to build on all our lives.”

We all build upon foundations. We build our lives upon the rocks under our feet. We also build our lives around the principles¹ that guide us. Atheists,² overzealous religious believers, skeptics (doubters), scientists—everyone controls their lives by fundamental (basic) principles.

As Christians, our principles are found in Jesus. Jesus is the One in whom “we live, and move” (Acts 17:28, NIV). We know about Jesus through the Bible. So the Bible works as the foundation for our lives and our faith. In a way, Genesis serves as the “foundation” of the Bible. Genesis is almost the same as the “strange black stone” far beneath (under) the earth that held up the ground under Laurens’s feet.

This week, we will take our first look at Genesis, the foundation of the Bible itself.

¹principles—basic rules of life upon which other rules and laws are based.

²atheists—people who do not believe in God.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 1**GENESIS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT (Matthew 19:3-8)**

The name *Pentateuch*³ comes from a Greek word meaning “five.” The Pentateuch is the foundation for our biblical faith. Our faith would not make much sense without the Pentateuch.

The first of these five books is Genesis. Genesis begins with the beginning of our world. If we do not have our beginnings right, it is easy to get everything else wrong. Suppose a builder works on the joists⁴ of a house and gets one joist off by a few inches in the beginning. Before long, the walls will be crooked and unusable. In the same way, Genesis begins with a clear message about our beginnings.

Of course, Satan works hard to turn us away from God. He tries to put doubt in our minds about the Bible. Genesis itself comes under terrible attack. If Satan can destroy our faith in Genesis, then it would be easy for him to destroy our faith in everything else.

What do the following verses tell us about how Jesus and the New Testament authors looked upon Genesis as truth? Matthew 19:3-8; Luke 17:26-30; Acts 7:1-15; Romans 4:3; Romans 4:9-21; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Galatians 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; Hebrews 11:3-22; 1 Peter 3:20.



Jesus believed the book of Genesis spoke the truth.

Will we listen to the critics who come up with all kinds of “evidence” (proof) to question Genesis? Or will we follow the example of those who showed complete faith in Genesis? To question Genesis means to question the New Testament, which often refers to Genesis. How dependable could the New Testament be if it were wrong about Genesis? If we start questioning Genesis, our faith will crumble. This is exactly what Satan wants.

What other examples can you find of how doubt about a small thing can lead to doubt about important things? Why should we be so careful about our faith in the Bible as God’s Word? If you start doubting the Bible what is left?

³Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible.

⁴joists—the boards of a wall that support the floor and ceiling.

MONDAY—OCTOBER 2**THE MIGHTY (POWERFUL) AND MERCIFUL⁵ GOD (Genesis 48:15)**

Genesis shows us who God really is. Genesis also gives us the first written example about our Creator and Savior.

What do the following verses tell us about God?

Genesis 1:1 _____

Genesis 7:11 _____

Genesis 14:19, 22 _____

Genesis 18:23-33 _____

Genesis 48:15 _____

Genesis is full of God's power. He is seen as the Creator, Judge, Example Giver, Life Supporter, Most

High, Almighty, and Everlasting⁶ God. As the Ruler, God lives before everything and brings everything into life.



Genesis shows God as the Creator (Genesis 1:1).

But, there is so much more about God in Genesis. Even in some of the Genesis stories about judgment we can see God's mercy, His sufferings over humanity's⁷ sin, and His great patience. Before the Flood came, God had Noah preach for many years. God gave everyone a chance to be saved. God was willing to save even Sodom and Gomorrah.⁸ All through Genesis we see the power of a merciful, loving God. He hates sin and evil. But He loves His fallen people and tries to save them.

⁵merciful—full of mercy. Mercy is kindness we do not deserve.

⁶everlasting—lasting forever; without beginning or end.

⁷humanity—all the people of the world.

⁸Sodom and Gomorrah—two great, wicked cities that God destroyed during Abraham's time.



Genesis shows that God is patient, the same as a shepherd (Genesis 48:15).

Write a short paragraph about your understanding of what God is like. What does your answer show about your opinion of God? Be prepared to share your answer in class.

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 3

THE NEARNESS OF GOD (Genesis 18:17)

Genesis pictures God as all-powerful. He spoke the world into life. He brought a flood upon the whole earth. He rained fire on wicked cities. As humans how could we not wonder about the unbelievable power of the God who created all things?

But the Bible also pictures God as up close and personal. He did not create the world and then leave it on its own. The God of the Bible has been very close to fallen people. We see this most powerfully in Jesus' life and death (Philippians 2:5-8). And

yet, even in Genesis, we are given examples of how closely God mixes with His fallen people.

In the following verses, how do we see God closely mixing with people? What does each tell us about God's character?

Genesis 2:7 _____

Genesis 3:8 _____

Genesis 18:17 _____

Genesis 39:21 _____



Genesis shows that God is close to people (Genesis 39:21).

How have you personally experienced God's nearness? In class, share what the experience was like and what you learned from it. Share in a way that will encourage

others who have not experienced how God can be so near.

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 4

FOUNDATIONS (Acts 7:2-17)

Acts 6 tells a story about a Jewish believer named Stephen. He was a man “full of faith and power” who did “great wonders and miracles” (Acts 6:8). He was arrested and brought to a council of leaders for preaching Jesus. Acts 7 begins with Stephen giving the speech that would lead to his death by stoning.

Read Acts 7:2-17. Then answer the following questions:

- 1. Does Stephen have any doubts about the truth of the stories he is telling? What lesson is here for us?**
- 2. Where is Stephen getting these stories?**
- 3. Why is Stephen telling these stories?**

The Jewish leaders are challenging Stephen for preaching that Jesus is the Messiah. Stephen starts his defense with God’s call to Abraham in Genesis. Stephen then follows Abraham’s family history through Joseph in Egypt. He continues the history to the beginning of Israel and the building of the temple. All these stories end with the coming of “the Just One [Jesus]” (Acts 7:52).

⁹the just—righteous (holy) people.

¹⁰compare—show how things are the same.

Stephen uses Genesis as the starting point for the great truths that pointed to Jesus, “the truth” (John 14:6). So, we can see how important Genesis is for our own understanding of what we believe.

What are some of the “foundations” in your own life? How firm (strong) are these foundations? Are they firm enough to hold you even during the toughest times of your life?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 5

THE JUST⁹ SHALL LIVE BY FAITH (Romans 1:17)

Read Romans 1:17. Now write out your understanding of what this verse means.

People often hear that in Old Testament times, believers were saved by keeping the law. They learn that after Jesus’ death and the beginning of the Christian church, people began to be saved by faith alone. But that is not true Bible teaching. According to the New Testament, God’s people lived by faith from the very beginning of sin.

Hebrews 11:1-22 is an inspired story about the lives of some people in Genesis. Compare¹⁰ Hebrews 11:1-22 with Romans 1:17. As you read about each person in Hebrews 11:1-22, put yourself in that person’s place. What was that

person taking on faith? What was that person needing to trust God for? What lessons can you learn from that person's experiences that can help you right now?

What is Hebrews 11:13-16 talking about? How can you relate to what the verses are saying? Look at your own life and ask, What do my actions say about what country I am looking for—this present life or the future life in heaven? What changes do you need to make in your journey to heaven?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 6

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Criticizing the Bible destroys faith in the Bible as God’s Book. Criticizing the Bible destroys God’s Word of its power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives. By spiritualism,¹¹ many people are taught to believe that desire is the highest law. They also believe that we are free to do anything we want to do . . . The power of a higher, purer, nobler life with God’s influence is our great need.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 473, 478.

“Darkening night is enclosing the Christian world. Backsliding from God’s commandments is proof of this deep and dark night. People love systems that mock God’s truth. People are teaching the commandments as doctrine.¹² And their teachings are

accepted as truth. People have received human theories (ideas). So the gospel is twisted and people misinterpret Bible verses. As in the days of Christ, the light of truth is pushed into the background. People’s theories are more honored than the Word of God. His truth is covered up by error. God’s Word is misinterpreted and divided by thinkers who criticize and twist Bible truth. Jesus is recognized but betrayed by a kiss. Backsliding continues and will enclose the world till the end. Backsliding’s terrible character and darkening influence will be seen as evil winds coming out of Babylon.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo*, February 1, 1897.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Discuss the Ellen White quotes above. What things in your society are working against the Bible? How can we protect ourselves and others from these things?
- ❷ In class, read your paragraphs about what each person believes about God’s character. Discuss your answers and what you can learn from each other.
- ❸ Talk about your answer to the question at the end of Wednesday’s lesson. What can you learn from each others’ experiences about the closeness of God? How would you explain to a non-believer that “God is close” to us?

¹¹spiritualism—belief in the occult and in the world controlled by evil spirits; the false belief that dead people can come back to life.

¹²doctrine—church beliefs.