

## **Genesis and Exodus**

From the fundamentalist point of view the stories found in Genesis and Exodus are both factually and historically accurate, and useful as a guide to righteous living. They feel the history of the nation of Israel is meant to be less a history, however, and more of an explanation of God's plan of redemption. Therefore, though the accounts are factual and accurate, they do not feel there is a need that they be detailed. Thus there is no need to explain why there seem to be gaps and discrepancies in the Bible. All that needs to be understood by the reader of the Bible, according to the fundamentalist, is the power and love of God that brings redemption to mankind.

To the fundamentalist the creation account and subsequent history of Israel, as told in Genesis and Exodus, are crucial to the understanding of the rest of the Bible; in particular God's plan of redemption. They feel it is important to understand that if mankind was lost to sin by the actions of one man, then it is reasonable that one man can also bring about mankind's redemption. Thus it is written in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."(KJV) It was Adam's sin that caused mankind to be born in sin. It was Jesus' sacrifice that allows mankind to be born again; out of the grasp of sin's condemnation.

The history of the nation of Israel, as depicted in the Bible, is the story of how God's redemption plan was implemented. It is the story of how one redeemer, Jesus Christ, came from the same seed as the one man, Adam, who was the first to bring to mankind his or her fall from the presence of God. The fundamentalist therefore must view the lineage of Christ in a very concise history going back to the very first man created by God. God is the father of both; thus making mankind's redemption just and legitimate.

The fundamentalist will go on to say that not only are the stories found in Genesis and Exodus factually accurate, but they offer insight into the kind of life that is acceptable to God. In the first book of Corinthians, chapter ten, the writer is speaking of the stories of the men and women of the Old Testament. In verse eleven he writes, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [by way of example]: and they are written for our admonition....” The stories found in the Old Testament gave guidelines for holy living. Often the scripture stories reveal that trusting in God brings blessings; while going against the will of God brings punishment and sorrow.

The stories of the Bible serve the purpose of telling the redemption plan, and how that plan is implemented in the lives of men and women. Not all of the history of Israel is found in the Bible; only that which serves this purpose. Details were omitted in some places, while fervently expressed in others, as was necessary to accomplish this purpose.

The fact that the fundamentalist sees the books of Genesis and Exodus as factually accurate leads them to view the rest of the Word of God in the same way. It is important for them to see, throughout the Bible, how each story points to the Messiah, the savior of mankind. It is important that these stories be historically accurate so that Christ’s lineage can be traced back to the first man, and back to God himself.

The liberal believer, on the other hand, sees the stories of the Old Testament as myth rather than an accurate historical account. Although having their basis in history, the stories found in Genesis and Exodus were dreamed up by men and women to give credence to their beliefs about God and mankind. The creation story is not a literal and historically accurate account of creation. But this, in their mind, does not take away from the importance of God, and his very definite role in the creation of mankind. Since the myths found in Genesis and Exodus

are not literal accounts it is conceivable, and most likely probable, that God's creation took many millions of years to unfold. To ancient man this creation account was a very plausible explanation for their existence. Modern man, even as he expresses his belief in God and his hand in creation, sees the very likely possibility that God used the process of evolution to bring about his creation.

For the liberal believer, the characters in the first two books of the Bible were probably a compilation of many personalities who make up the history of Israel. This view obviously changes one's perspective on the Bible. The life span of many of the people found in Genesis and Exodus are given in the hundreds of years. If these personalities are a compilation then it is reasonable to assume that, rather than one man living for five to six hundred years, these are actually the lives of many men put together to efficiently relate these myths. These lengthy ages were assigned to the characters in these myths to make it believable that they were able to accomplish all they were claimed to have accomplished in their lifetime.

The rest of the Bible will be viewed by the liberal believer in the same way. Each book, rather than relating specific stories about specific men, are myths relating the history of Israel by compiling many lives into one. Thus the story of David and Goliath was probably a myth to glorify the king of Israel, but not an accurate historical account. That the Philistines were defeated by Israel may be a historical fact, however, the story of David and Goliath may have been a way for the Israelites to give David stature above the rest of his countrymen. This was needed in order to give greater importance to his lineage, which is to produce the Messiah. The one Christians believe to be Jesus Christ.

The secular humanist also does not believe the myths of Genesis and Exodus to be accurate historical accounts. They agree with the liberal believer on this point. But, unlike the

liberal believer, they go on to say they do not believe any of these myths give proof of the existence of God. Therefore, they do not believe that earth or mankind was created by God.

To the secular humanist ancient man's ability to comprehend the reason for their existence was limited to the concept of a God or many god's who had the intelligence and resources to bring into existence mankind and all his surrounding environment. All these myths were written by mere humans in an effort to explain mankind's existence, to offer a reason for acceptable moral behavior, and to give mankind guidelines for this moral behavior.

They believe there is no redemption plan in the Bible because there is no need for one since there is no proof of God's existence. All the myths of the Bible do not point to the existence of God, or to the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. These myths are nothing more than an attempt by the nation of Israel, via the Old Testament, and Christians, via the Old and New Testaments, to bring others over to their way of thinking. What ever good comes from the Bible is the result of the goodness found in every man and woman. Mankind is basically good. That is why he or she does not need a redemption plan.

Interpreting the rest of the Bible, for the secular humanist, follows this line of thinking. Even Jesus Christ, though he may actually have existed at one point in history, was nothing more than a good man. Certainly he was not the son of God. He was no different than Mohammed, Buddha, Gandhi, Martin Luther King or any of a number of great men throughout history. Men, and women, who were able to gather people around them who believed in them and their cause, and were willing to sacrifice all they had for them. History is replete with these charismatic leaders, and Jesus was no different than any of these. The myths relating the stories of his existence do not prove the existence of God. They were needed, however, to get others to believe in the Christian way.

The fundamentalist reads the Bible and hears God speak through the written word. He believes every word in the Bible comes from the hand of God, and is to be looked upon as God's infallible Word. The Word of God is the Bible, and it is God's direct communication to mankind as to how man is to live a holy life.

The liberal believer reads the Bible and sees God work through the writings of various authors. He uses these authors, and their stories, as a way of showing the love and power of God. These words may be inspired by God, but are written by human hands from human minds, and are therefore subject to inconsistencies and historical errors. This does not, however, diminish the importance of the Bible.

The secular humanist reads the Bible and sees mankind's attempt to give men and women a reason to believe in themselves. Man is good, and is able to find it within himself to make for himself a good society in which to live.