

# Popular Commentary of the Bible

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Volume I

The Historical Books of the Old Testament:  
Genesis to Esther

*By*

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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Our Literary Board of 1918 initiated this undertaking and, after very mature consideration, nominated the author and drafted the general character and scope of this POPULAR COMMENTARY. Accordingly Prof. Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., D. D., was called from the position of instructor at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn., in 1919 and has been continuously engaged in the preparation of the manuscript for this COMMENTARY ever since. At the present time, April, 1923, he is writing the concluding chapters on the Old Testament, the two volumes on the New Testament having been published in 1921 and 1922, respectively. Credit is due not only to the Literary Board (Prof. Theo. Graebner, chairman, Prof. J. H. C. Fritz, Rev. L. Buchheimer, Rev. W. F. Wilk; later succeeded by Rev. A. Doerfler and Mr. E. Seuel), but also to Professors E. Pardiack and J. T. Mueller, who, on behalf of the theological faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, critically read the manuscripts and the proof-sheets. The author also acknowledges with thanks the cooperative and suggestive assistance of other living authorities besides the authors whose books he quotes, or the results of whose literary labor he has condensed or quoted. The reader is here referred to the preface written by Prof. J. T. Mueller for Vol. I of the New Testament.

Reviewers of the volumes of this work which preceded this present volume in time of publication have labeled it a Lutheran commentary. If correctly understood, we are proud to accept this designation. It

is, indeed, not a Lutheran commentary in the sense that it comments on the Bible with a view to establishing the Lutheran doctrines, though, as a matter of fact, it does establish the Lutheran doctrine from the Bible; it is not a Lutheran commentary in the sense that it starts with Lutheran beliefs and proves them from the Bible, though, as a matter of fact, it does prove the Lutheran beliefs from the Bible; but it is a Lutheran commentary in the sense that it starts with the Bible and ends with the Bible, as did Luther and as do all conservative Christians, such as the Lutherans are or should be. It is a Lutheran commentary in the sense that all Lutheran users will be grateful for the fact that their Lutheran sense of propriety and their Lutheran reverence for the inspired writings of the Bible are not offended by trivialities, or worse, by the promulgation of hypotheses and deductions in opposition to the dicta of the Holy Spirit. It is a Lutheran commentary in the sense that it proclaims the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as Luther and Lutherans have found it in the Bible — truths that are truths not because they are Lutheran, but truths that are Lutheran because they are Biblical. The publishers expect to market this COMMENTARY principally among Lutherans, though the publishers would fain find their principal sales among non-Lutherans.

God's blessing has manifestly been with the author and with the publishers during the preparation of this book. May His blessing abide with the book and its users!

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# THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The Book of Genesis (beginning) is the first of five books known collectively as the Pentateuch, which the many Scriptural references in the later books of the Old Testament as well as those of the New Testament compel us to ascribe to the authorship of Moses. In the Book of Genesis the inspired author presents a record of the origin of the world, of the human race, of the institution of marriage, of the beginning of sin, of the first judgment of God upon a sinful world, of the first preaching of the Gospel, and of the beginning of the chosen race as the bearers of the Messianic prophecies.

Moses, the author of the Book of Genesis, was the son of Amram, a member of the tribe of Levi, and his wife Jochebed, as recorded in Exodus, chaps. 2 and 6. He was born in Egypt, at the time when the rise of a new dynasty had caused the deeds of Joseph to be forgotten and the new Pharaoh had laid upon the children of Israel such intolerable burdens as ever a nation was obliged to bear. By God's dispensation his own mother became his nurse after his parents had found it impossible to keep him at home any longer, Ex. 2, 8. 9. In this way Moses was instructed in the history and the religion of his people, and although he afterward, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he remained true to Jehovah, the God of his fathers. From the land of Midian, whither Moses had fled from the wrath of Pharaoh, the Lord called him to be the deliverer and the leader of the children of Israel, and he served in this capacity for somewhat more than forty years, until he had brought the people to the boundaries of Canaan, where he appointed Joshua as his successor, went up on Mount Nebo, where God showed him the entire country which his people were to possess, died there, and was buried by the Lord Himself. — Moses probably wrote the Book of Genesis some time during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, and God not only inspired him to write, but also revealed to him most of the matter that is contained in the account, since tradition would, at best, have been extremely unreliable and many events could not have been known but by the special revelation of the Lord.

The Book of Genesis may be divided according to various points of view. The simplest division is that into two parts, chaps. 1—11 recording the beginnings of all history to the confusion of tongues, and chaps. 12—50 showing how God paved the way for the establishment of the theocracy as it afterward existed for a number of centuries. Some commentators prefer the division into six chief parts, chaps. 1—5 dealing mainly with Adam, chaps. 6—11 with Noah, chaps. 12—24 with Abraham, chaps. 25—27 with Isaac, chaps. 28—36 with Jacob, and chaps. 37—50 with Joseph.

The period of which the Book of Genesis treats begins with the creation of man and ends with the Flood, comprising some 1,700 years. Though there is no valid reason for assuming that the art of writing had not been developed by the people of the world at that time, recent discoveries indicating, rather, that the art of writing was a common accomplishment in the East as early as the time of Abraham, in fact, that large libraries were then in existence, there was no urgent need of recording the Word of God at that time, since the patriarchs lived to a very great age and were able to pass on what God had revealed to them by word of mouth, from generation to generation. The record shows, for instance, that Adam lived for fifty-six years after Lamech, the father of Noah, had been born. This providential arrangement continued for some time after the Flood; for Abraham was born 150 years before the death of Shem and surely profited by his instruction. The period from the Flood till the death of Joseph is that of the patriarchs proper, and covers a space of some six hundred years. At its close the chosen family of Abraham had multiplied into a numerous people.

The modern student of the Bible will find in the Book of Genesis abundant evidence of the providential working of God in the destinies of mankind. Above all, however, the Christian will follow with the greatest interest the Messianic types and prophecies which appear even thus early in the Holy Scriptures; for just as the entire New Testament looks back to Christ, thus the entire Old Testament looks forward to Christ. Jesus is the center of all divine revelation.

## CHAPTER 1.

## The Creation of the World.

**THE CREATION OF CHAOS AND LIGHT. — V. 1.** In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. In the beginning, cp. John 1, 1, that is, when time first began, when time was first measured; for as long as God alone existed, there was no time. God created, He brought forth out of nothing, He brought into being something that had not been in existence before, namely, the heaven, or heavens, and the earth, the material out of which they were constructed. V. 2. And the earth was without form and void. The material substance of which the earth consists was in a state of chaos, the various elements being intermingled in utter disorder. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. There was, as yet, no elemental light; the great sea of the chaotic materials was covered with an impenetrable veil of the blackest darkness. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The third person of the Holy Trinity is represented as taking part in the work of creation by way of brooding over the waters, by making use of His divine power in causing the elements to combine in the form which they now have. V. 3. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. God spoke; the almighty Word of God is here introduced, the second person of the Godhead, John 1, 3. The creation of the world is a work of the Triune God. By the word of His power He created light, elemental light, brought it into being in the midst of the darkness, commanded it to shine out of darkness, 2 Cor. 4, 6. V. 4. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. The light was good, it was a perfect creature of God's almighty power; and so God separated between the light and the darkness, so that they were no longer in a chaotic state. V. 5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. Time had begun for the earth, and therefore the Lord made this rule for the division of light and darkness, as they follow each other in regular order, and did so even before the creation of the light-bodies. He Himself defined the unit of time which He thus ordered. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And there was evening, when the darkness had ruled alone, and there was morning, when God's almighty power created light and separated it from the darkness. Ever since the first day of the world the regular recurrence of darkness and light marks the period of one day, as we now divide it into twenty-four hours. This is the fundamental meaning of the Hebrew word here used, which must be assumed even Ps. 90, 4 (cp. 2 Pet. 3, 8), where the Lord accommodates Himself to human speech and limitations, for the sake of comparison.

**THE CREATION OF THE FIRMAMENT. — V. 6.** And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. God's almighty word continued to create on the second day. He caused a firm extension, or expansion, to be fixed in the midst of the waters, in the chaos where liquid and vapor were intermingled with the more solid substances. The purpose of this firmament was to keep separate the waters from the waters, as the text next explains. V. 7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. Although there is no concrete, visible vault of the sky, yet there is an invisible dividing-wall above the earth, which under ordinary conditions holds back the masses of water in gaseous form which are high above the visible clouds. Cp. chap. 7, 11. V. 8. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. God Himself applied the name heaven, or heavens, to the invisible dividing-wall which separates the waters below from the waters above. Thus the work of the second day was accomplished.

**THE CREATION OF THE DRY LAND, HERBS, AND TREES. — V. 9.** And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. God here finished His creative work on inanimate matter, when His almighty command bade the waters from below the heavens, below the firmament which He had constructed, be gathered together into a single place, by themselves. In chaos the mixture of solids and liquids had been so complete as to preclude the designation "dry land." But now both the solids and the liquids were to be separated, so that dry land, as we know it, was visible. V. 10. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas. And God saw that it was good. There had been no chemical compound, but a mere mixture of solid and liquid particles in the mass composing chaos. The division took place at God's almighty command, and the dry land was henceforth known as earth, while the places on the earth's surface where the waters had come together into large masses were called seas or oceans. And again God saw that the product of His almighty power was good, that it exactly served the purpose for which it was intended. V. 11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth. And it was so. The dry land having emerged from the waters, it was now possible, by God's command, for the earth to be clothed with vegetation, with green, tender grass, with small

plants bearing seeds, and with trees of all kinds that bear fruit. As the Lord gave to the earth the power to bring forth the plants, so He placed into the plants the power to propagate their kind by bearing seed and fruit. V. 12. **And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind. And God saw that it was good.** The mature plants were thus brought into being by the word of God's power, fully able to reproduce their kind and species by means of seed and fruit. It was not a gradual generation, as under the present laws of nature, but the fully developed specimens were brought forth by the earth as God's creative work, altogether fit to take their place in the universe. This ended the work of the third day. V. 13. **And the evening and the morning were the third day.**

**THE CREATION OF SUN, MOON, AND STARS.**—V. 14. **And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.** The Creator brought into being light-bodies of the sky, assigning to them a threefold function: to show the distinction between day and night, to serve as indicators or means for men, enabling them to distinguish between the two divisions of the full day; to serve for signs, not only as in the case of ordinary eclipses, but also as omens extraordinary; and to fix the calendar of the world in general. **And not only that:** V. 15. **And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And it was so.** That is the third function of the heavenly light-bodies, to send forth the light, either their own or that reflected by them, to be light-bearers for the earth. No sooner had God spoken than it was done; for it was not an ordinary work done by Him, but an act of creation. V. 16. **And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.** Although the names are not expressly mentioned, it is obvious that the greater light is the sun, which, by its light and power, governs the day, has the most profound influence upon organic and inorganic life, and the smaller light the moon, which governs the night and the life of the night in much the same way as the sun does by day. Likewise, God on this day filled the immense reaches of the universe with the countless number of stars. V. 17. **And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, v. 18. and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.** God's almighty, creative act is again emphasized; for He gave, He put the light-bodies in their proper place, the functions of which are given in the order in which

they usually impress men: they give forth light upon the earth; their influence controls day and night, respectively; their rising and setting governs the division of light and darkness. And again, the work of the perfect God was perfect. V. 19. **And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.**

**THE CREATION OF MARINE ANIMALS AND BIRDS.**—V. 20. **And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.** At God's almighty word the waters were to swarm a swarm of living beings, of marine animals, and also of winged animals, characterized by the fact that they fly over the earth on the face of the firmament, that is, on the side which is turned toward the earth. These animals were created in great abundance and are conspicuous to this day by their unusually great number, as careful statistics have shown. V. 21. **And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind. And God saw that it was good.** Not only the fishes were made by God to inhabit the seas, but He also created long and huge whales, crocodiles, and other monsters of the oceans and rivers, and every form of marine animal, no matter of what form and nature, with which the waters swarm, and every kind of winged animal, chiefly birds, all of them perfect and exactly adapted to the element in which they found themselves. V. 22. **And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.** As animate beings both the marine animals and those that inhabit the air received a special blessing of the Lord, not in a mere friendly and fatherly greeting, but in the conveyance of the power to reproduce themselves in kind. The fishes were to multiply at such a rate as to fill up all the oceans, and the birds were to become many on the earth. V. 23. **And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.**

**THE CREATION OF THE LAND ANIMALS.**—V. 24. **And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind. And it was so.** The seas and the air having been filled with living beings, the earth now received the command to bring forth, to permit to go forth, living beasts: animals such as were easily domesticated, reptiles and creeping beasts, and the game of prairie and forest. Without delay the order was carried into execution, the earth opening or unfolding, as it were, and presenting the animals fully grown. V. 25. **And God made the beast of the earth after his kind and cattle after their kind and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his**

kind. And God saw that it was good. The making of these animals is represented as having received the special attention of the Lord in forming the game animals of the earth and the domestic animals, mammals, most of them, and the reptiles of the ground each one after its kind, and each one perfect in its own environment.

THE CREATION AND BLESSING OF MAN. — V. 26. And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Man is the crown of creation; the Triune God held a special council session with Himself, determining to make man in His own image, with a blessed knowledge of the heavenly Father and possessed of a perfect righteousness and holiness. Man was also to have power and government over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the animals in general, in brief, over the whole earth and over every reptile and similar animal that might be creeping on the earth. Thus the relation of man to the animals was clearly stated. V. 27. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. God made an impression of His own essence upon the soul of man, making his intellect keen for the knowledge of Himself, and his will eager to perform only that which was good and righteous. As man and woman, as male and female, God created the two first human beings, the two sexes being a creation of God from the beginning. V. 28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Thus was the blessing of the Lord given to man and the power to reproduce his kind according to God's laws transmitted to him. But the fact that God

gives to him the power and government over all the animate and inanimate things of the earth indicates that the propagation of the human race is not the process of mere animal reproduction, for man, as the crown of creation, is living on a higher plane. V. 29. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. Having created man, the human race, and provided for their propagation, God also provides the necessary food to sustain their life, the vegetables and seed-bearing plants and the fruit-bearing trees. V. 30. And to every beast of the earth and to every fowl of the air and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so. That was the food which the Lord had provided and intended for animals of every description, whether mammals or birds or reptiles or any other kind, namely, the tender green grass and vegetation. It follows, then, that neither did man use animal food before the Fall, nor were there any beasts of prey that stalked their prey; they all lived together in perfect harmony and partook of the food which the Lord provided in richest measure. V. 31. And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. This is God's own opinion and verdict of the entire work of creation as it was before Him at the end of the sixth day: "Good exceedingly." There was not a single mistake, not even a flaw, in the perfection of God's work.<sup>1</sup>)

1) For the discussion of the scientific questions which have come up in connection with Genesis 1, see "Evolution und die Bibel," *Lehre und Wehre*, 1909, Juli ff.; "How Old Is Man?" *Theol. Quart.*, XX, July ff.; Lindberg, *Apologetics*; Gruber, *Whence Came the Universe?* Bettex, *Science and Christianity*; Patterson, *The Other Side of Evolution*; Fairhurst, *Organic Evolution Considered*.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Creation of Man, Paradise, and Woman.

THE SABBATH OF CREATION. — V. 1. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. The actual work of creation had been done in six days, all the created beings in heaven and earth, angels, birds, animals, and men, all organic and inorganic matter having been called into being, and men, beasts, and plants having been endowed with the power to reproduce their own kind. V. 2. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested

on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. The work of creation did not extend into the seventh day, but was finished at sundown of the sixth day, which marked the beginning of the seventh. God devoted the seventh day to rest after the creative activity of the preceding days. Not that God was tired out, or that He now turned from the world to devote Himself entirely to the enjoyment of the bliss of heaven, but that the work of creation was finished. V. 3. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all