

## Genesis Introduction

Today we will begin our study of Genesis. Genesis is probably the most read book in the Bible because most study plans start with Genesis and most people have the resolve to get through the book and then part way into Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy, before they give up on their plan. So, why should we study Genesis?

- a. It explains Primeval history. It gives an account of the origins of the earth and mankind.
- b. It explains Jewish history. It gives an account of how and why the Jewish people came into existence and their occupation of the land of Israel.
- c. It reveals the nature of God and Humanity. God who is the Redeemer and seeker: man, who is fallen, sinful, and rebellious.
- d. It explains Human identity and relationships. It establishes that we are all made in the image of God, and it sets out the divine institutions of marriage, family, and nationhood.
- e. It introduces theological themes. Sovereignty, Election, Faith, Sin, Judgement, Righteousness, Grace, Sacrifice and Substitution, Redemption, Reconciliation, plus others, all start in Genesis.
- f. It introduces the Covenantal promises of God. In Genesis we have the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, and Abrahamic Covenants.
- g. It helps us navigate modern questions. We live in an upside down world. Questions of gender, family, marriage, work, and stewardship, are all addressed in this book.

### Title

Genesis comes from the Greek word *geneseo*, which means beginning. In English it is often referred to as the book of origins.

### Author

Moses was the author of Genesis as he also wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books are referred to as the Torah, or the book of the Law. While Moses was a first-hand witness to the events in the later four books, he was obviously not present when the events of Genesis took place. Thus, most authorities believe he relied on oral and written traditions to complete the story. Hence Moses functioned as a compiler and editor, rather than a witness. Both the Old and New testaments testify to his authorship as multiple verses attest (see Josh 1:7, 1 K 2:3, 2 K 14:6, Ez 6:18, Neh 13:1, Dan 9:11-13, Mal 4:4, Mt 8:4, Mk 12:26, Lk 16:29, Jn 7:19, Acts 26:22, Rm 10:19, 1 Cor 9:9, 2 Cor 3:15).

### Themes

- a. Origins. The beginning of heaven and earth. sea and sky, stars and space, plants and animals, mankind, nations, sin, the Jews, are all explained.
- b. Sin and Grace: throughout the book we see men failing, and God's provision for rescue and deliverance.
- c. Blessing and Cursing: we also see God blessing obedience and those whom he chooses, and cursing those who disobey and oppose Him.

- d. Covenant Promises: lastly, we see God extending Covenantal promises to mankind and specific men.

## Structure

There are three separate ways in which the book may be structured.

The two-division structure. This method divides the book into two sections. The first is comprised of Gen 1:1 through Gen 11:9, which deals with the origin of the world and nations. Within this section four major events occur: Creation (1:1-2:25), the Fall (3:1-5:32), the Flood (6:1-9:29), and the Nations (10:1-11:9). This section covers roughly two thousand years and focuses on the beginnings of the human race. Its style is historical and geographically it focuses on the Fertile Crescent from Eden to Haran.

The second section comprises 11:10 through 50:26, and focuses on the beginnings of one people and nation, the Jews and Israel. While the first section focuses on four events, the second focuses on four people, Abraham (11:10-25:8), Isaac (25:9-26:35), Jacob 27:1-36:43), and Joseph 37:1-50:26).

Comparing the two sections we see the following differences,

- a. The first section covers roughly two thousand years while the second covers roughly two hundred years (193 to be exact).
- b. The first section covers the beginning of the human race and the origin of nations, while the second focuses on the beginning of the Jewish people
- c. The style of the first section is historical, while the second is biographical.
- d. Geographically the focus of the first is the Fertile Crescent from Eden to Haran, while the second is focused on three places, Haran, Canaan, and Egypt.

Toldot structure. The Hebrew word *toldot*, means generation. As mentioned, Moses was a compiler of both oral and written histories of this period, and so likely compiled eleven family histories to compose the book. Each family document begins with the Hebrew words *eleh toldot*, which mean; “*These are the generations of*” These two Hebrew words acts as a title to what follows. The basic meaning is, “this is what became of” Now note, when a toldot is followed by a name, it is not always concerned with the one named, but it is always concerned with what became of the one named. For example, Gen 11:27 says, *this is the account of Terah’s family*. Though the verse mentions Terah, the focus of the following verses is Abraham. In other words, Abraham is what became of Terah. Therefore, the toldot explains what became of the line that is mentioned. The toldots also often involve blessing and cursing and narrow to the chosen person of discussion.

Using this method Genesis can be divided as follows,

- a. Introductory material 1:1-2:3. In this section Moses explains the creation of the world out of chaos, the creation of animal and plant life, mankind, and the Sabbath. This section records three blessings; animal life 1:22, human life (1:27-28), and the Sabbath (2:3).
- b. The first toldot, (2:4-4:26), *This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens*, or what became of Creation. What became of creation was a return to chaos, as this section covers the fall of Adam and Eve,

sin, its result on their descendants, Cain, and Abel, and the first two Covenants, the Edenic and Adamic.

- c. The second toldot, (5:1-6:8), *This is the written account of Adam's family line*, or what became of Adam. This toldot deals with the themes of death, sin, and the downward slide from Adam to Noah. It also deals with the angelic corruption of womanhood.
- d. The third toldot, (6:9-9:29) *This is the account of Noah and his family*, or what became of Noah. This section deals with the flood, the salvation of Noah and his family, and the Noahic covenant.
- e. The fourth toldot, (10:1-11:9) *This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood*, or what became Noah's sons. This section outlines the formation of the nations and then the confusion, dispersion, and expansion of humanity at Babel.
- f. The fifth toldot, (11:10-26), *This is the account of Shem's family line*, or what became of Shem. This short section details the line of Shem to Terah.
- g. The sixth toldot, (11:27-25:11), *This is the account of Terah's family line*, or what became of Terah. This section details the life of Abraham, and the Abrahamic Covenant.
- h. The seventh toldot, (25:12-18), *This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham*, or what became of Ishmael. This section outlines the fate of the not-chosen line.
- i. The eighth toldot, (25:19-35:29), *This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac*, or what became of Isaac. This section details the life of Isaac and Jacob and the formation of Israel.
- j. The ninth toldot, (36:1-8), *This is the account of the family line of Esau (that is, Edom)*, or what became of Esau. This small section deals with the end of the line not chosen.
- k. The tenth toldot, (36:9-37:1), *This is the account of the family line of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir*, or what became of Esau as the father of the Edomites. This section deals with the fate of the nations not chosen, and the contrast between Esau and Jacob.
- l. The eleventh toldot, (37:2-50:26), *This is the account of Jacob's family line*, or what became of Jacob, namely Joseph. This section focuses on the life of Joseph, the beginning of the twelve tribes, and the resettlement of the enlarged family to Egypt.

Geographical structure. Genesis can also be divided geographically into three sections,

- a. The first section is Gen 1-11 where things happen in Babylonia.
- b. The section is Gen 12-36, where things happen in Canaan.
- c. The third is Gen 37-50, where the story is centered in Egypt.

Note, Canaan is bordered by Haran to the northeast and Egypt to the south. Both these lands will play important roles as history unfolds. Note the central section of Genesis (12-36) records the election (choice) of Abraham out of the nations of chapters 1-11, and Egypt (37-50), for the purpose that these Gentile nations that border Israel might receive the knowledge of the only true God and the blessings what would follow. A right relationship with Isarel will bring blessing and an adverse one, cursing.

## **Genesis and Science**

Genesis is not a textbook on science, however where the book touches science it is correct and accurate. Genesis has never been shown to be in conflict with known scientific facts. Where it does come into conflict, it is between Genesis and certain scientific theories, such as evolution.

There are a number of parallels between Gen and Rev (from Fructenbaum)

<u>Genesis</u>	<u>Parallel Concept</u>	<u>Revelation</u>	<u>Parallel Concept</u>
1:1-2:3	A new beginning	21:1-22:5	A new creation
1:2	Darkness upon the deep	21:25	No night, just light
1:2	Deep waters	21:1	No sea exists in new order
1:16	Rule of sun and moon	21:23	No need for sun or moon
2:8-9	Man is placed in prepared garden	21:2	Man placed in prepared city
2:9	Tree of life in garden	22:2	Tree of life by the river
2:10	River out of Garden of Eden	22:1	River out of God's throne
2:12	Gold in the land	21:21	Gold in the city
2:12	Only Bdelium and Onyx stones	21:19	Twelve types precious stones
3:1-8	Sin enters	21:8,27	Sin expelled
3:8	God walks in garden	21:3	God dwells in the city
3:8-10	Walk with God broken	21:3	Walk restored
3:13	Triumph of the Serpent	20:10,22:3	Triumph of the Lamb
3:15	Satan opposing	20:10	Satan banished.
3:15	Redemption promised	5:9-10	Redemption accomplished.
3:17	Ground is cursed	22:3	No more curse.
3:17	Daily sorrow	21:4	No more sorrow
3:18	Thorns and Thistles	21:4	No pain
3:16-19	Death is present	21:4	No death.
3:18	Eating of herbs	22:2	Twelve manner of fruits.
3:19	Sweat of the face	21:4	No more tears.
3:21	Coats of skin	19:6-9,14	Clothes of fine linen
3:23	Paradise lost	21:25, 22:14	Paradise regained.
3:24	Mankind kept from tree of life	22:14	Access to tree of life.
6:5	Evil continually	21:27	Nothing present to defile

