

UNDERSTANDING GENESIS: A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

GOD'S CREATION & COVENANT

Introduction: The first 5 books of the Bible are known as the “Pentateuch” (“5 volumned” book). They are also called the **Law** or **Torah** (“instruction”). As a collection of books they make up the “theological constitution” for the nation of Israel (Jewish people) and also contain the foundational truths revealed by God on which Christianity rests. The Pentateuch covers the period of time from creation to preparation to enter the promised land of Canaan.

It is not really possible to comprehend fully the rest of the Bible without first understanding the teachings of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is critically important because it introduces us to:

- ✓ God Himself
- ✓ the beginning of the world and the human race
- ✓ the beginning of sin in the world
- ✓ the beginning of the promise of redemption
- ✓ the beginning of family life
- ✓ the beginning of civilization and the nations of the world
- ✓ the beginning of the Hebrew people
- ✓ basic theological concepts like sin, salvation, and sanctification
- ✓ what God requires for right relationship to Him
- ✓ God's redemptive purpose in human history
- ✓ God's provision of a nation through which He would bring Christ into the world as Savior

In other words, the Pentateuch creates a framework which provides us with some understanding of who God is, who we are, why God created us, and where to find meaning and purpose in life.

Use these videos from the Bible Project that give an overview of Genesis.

[Bible Project Genesis Chapters 1-11](#)

[Bible Project Genesis Chapters 12-50](#)

Author: Moses is generally acknowledged as the author/compiler of the Pentateuch.

Date: The date of authorship is not indicated in the book of Genesis. Most scholars date it either 1440 or 1240 BC (between the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and his death).

Portrays Jesus Christ as Creator God

Theme/purpose: Moses recorded in **Genesis** the work of God in creation, the calling of Abraham and the choosing of the nation Israel as God's chosen instrument in order to show how God would accomplish His plan of redemption for all mankind.

Applicational Message: We can be confident that our sovereign, creator God is in the process of working out His purpose in the world and in our individual lives.

Structure and Major Divisions

- ⇒ 50 Chapters
- ⇒ 2 Major Divisions (Chapters 1-11 & Chapters 12-50)
- ⇒ 4 Key Events (1-11)

A. Creation (1–2)

In 6 days God created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. God also created man in God's own image and **God**

- placed him in the Garden of Eden
- gave him dominion over the earth
- provided meaningful work for him to do
- granted to man great freedom with only one restriction to insure that man's obedience was voluntary
- created a suitable mate for man in Eve (woman)
- brought the man and woman together in marriage
- initiated fellowship with him

Chapter 1 provides the general account of creation while chapter 2 focuses on the creation of man on the sixth day. Here God's personal covenant name is first used (Yahweh or Jehovah, **Ge. 2:4**). The concept of the Sabbath rest was given as a memorial creation ordinance when God declared His creative work to be "very good."

B. Fall (3)

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God's Word (commandment) and to become their own god. They sinned by breaking God's law which caused immediate spiritual death (separation from God) and eventual physical death (separation of spirit and soul from the body). God pronounced judgments against man and all the created order and drove Adam and Eve from the Garden to live in a sin-cursed world. But God also graciously "covered" the sin of Adam and Eve and provided a means for them to have fellowship with Him.

C. Flood (4–9)

Cain killed his brother Abel (Chapter 4) and the descendants of Cain were, generally, ungodly people who practiced evil. But God continued the godly line through whom Messiah would come by giving Adam and Eve another son (Seth—Chapter 5). Notice in Chapter 5 that Seth was born in the "likeness" of Adam and that men began to die as God had promised.

In the post-fall, pre-flood world, sin multiplied rapidly as man increased in population and sought meaning and purpose in life apart from God. Wickedness so abounded that God determined to judge man's sin by flooding the entire earth. Only "righteous" Noah along with his wife, three sons, and their wives were spared by God in the Ark, which represented God's gracious, merciful provision of salvation from the curse and penalty of sin (spiritual and physical death). After the flood, God gave man a new start through Noah and his children. All peoples of the earth are descended from Noah's three sons. God provided the rainbow as a sign or covenant that He would never again flood the earth.

D. Nations (10–11)

Sin was not dead, however, and man soon devised a plan to rebel against God and exalt his own pride. In the Babylonian area, a Satan-inspired man named Nimrod directed the construction of the tower of Babel. God then judged all of mankind for pride and arrogance, confused their single language into many, and scattered them across the face of the earth. This is the likely origin of the "ethnic groups" (people/nations) of the world.

Key People (12-50)

A. Abraham (12–24)

God called a man named Abraham, who responded to God by faith. God made a covenant with Abraham, promising to

- **make him a great man and bless him (individual promise to Abraham)**
- create a great nation out of him and give them a land forever (national promise to Israel)
- bring blessings to all peoples through his descendants (universal promise of spiritual blessings/salvation)

The covenant of circumcision was the confirming sign of the Abrahamic covenant. (see chart of Major Covenants – near Genesis 9, *The NIV Study Bible*) Abraham generally walked by faith before God, and God made him a great man. Abraham was "saved" when he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (see **Ge. 15:6**, which is quoted in **Ro. 4:3**, and **Gal. 3:6**). Thus faith in God was established as the means of making salvation applicable to individuals. Abraham and Sarah, his wife, acting in unbelief had a child by his hand-maiden Hagar. This child was named Ishmael and became the father of the Arab peoples. Later, acting in faith Abraham and Sarah gave birth to the child of promise, Isaac, through whom God would eventually bring salvation in the person of Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham (see **Gal. 3:10-18**). In calling Abraham, God chose both a man and a nation (Hebrews – Jews) through whom He would accomplish His redemptive purpose for all mankind.

B. Isaac (25–26)

God confirmed to Isaac as the child of promise the covenant (**Ge. 26:1-6**) He had made with Isaac's father, Abraham, and gave him a wife named Rebekah.

C. Jacob (27–36)

From the two sons of Isaac, God chose Jacob over Esau to be the one through whom God would continue the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

(**Ge. 28:10-15**) (see **Ro. 9:1-16**). Jacob learned to walk by faith before God, and God changed Jacob’s name to “Israel” which is usually said to mean “he struggles with God [and overcomes]” but may mean “God prevails in the struggle.” Jacob became the father of 12 sons – the twelve tribes of Israel (see chart of Tribes of Israel – near Genesis 50, *The NIV Study Bible*).

D. Joseph (37–50)

Joseph, the 11th son of Jacob, was given by God the ability to interpret dreams. Out of jealousy, his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God prospered Joseph in Egypt and sovereignly used Joseph to deliver Jacob’s family (the Hebrew nation) from death as a result of a worldwide famine. Jacob and his entire clan (70 people) moved to Egypt with Joseph. Thus, the Hebrews came to live in Egypt where they would remain for 400 years, ending up as slaves to the Egyptians.

RESOURCES:

Henrietta C. Mears. *What The Bible Is All About*. 33-38.
Dennis Mock, *Old Testament Survey*. Bible Training Center For Pastors. 33-37.