

GENESIS

רְאֵשִׁית

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Date written: 1450-1410 B.C.

Genesis means beginnings or origins. Genesis is the first book of a larger work, the first five books of the Old Testament. These five books are also known as the Pentateuch, the Torah, or the Law. This book provides the foundation for the entire Bible in its history and theology.

Chapters 1-11 give a sweeping survey of primeval events: God's work of creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the spread of the nations. The Garden of Eden story teaches that man was created for fellowship with God, but that this purpose was frustrated in the Fall (SIN). The story of Cain and Abel teaches that man is his brother's keeper, and that one who hates his brother can never offer acceptable worship to God. The Flood teaches that there is a limit to the patience of God, and that in the end, evil must be destroyed and righteousness rewarded. The same universal theme runs through the story of the Tower of Babel. It answers the question of how the human races, descended from one man, came to be divided into separate peoples with different languages. This story warns of what will inevitably happen when pride overreaches itself and men attempt to build towers up to heaven.

In chapters 12-50, the story of the beginnings of God's chosen people is told. The patriarchal history is given emphasizing the blessing that was to be mediated to all nations through Abraham and his descendants, Isaac, Jacob and his sons. (From this family we have the beginning of the nation of Israel.) The prophecies of a Messiah begin in Genesis, and we learn that He is to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah.

The most important story in Genesis is the story of God Himself. God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present is also all-loving. God, who controlled all the processes that caused the universe to come to be, showed His love to mankind by giving them a good earth and all the necessities of life. When mankind deliberately chose to do their own thing rather than obeying God, He punished them for their sin, yet He still loved them. Through the family of one faithful believer, Abraham, God began to work a great plan to bring all mankind into a loving relationship with Himself.

Theme: The twin themes of blessing and cursing are carefully woven together throughout the fabric of Genesis, and indeed, the whole word of God. Obedience brings enrichment and blessing, and disobedience the opposite. The great curses are the penalties of the Fall, the universal Flood, and the confusion of tongues at Babel. The great blessings are the promise of a Redeemer, the salvation of a remnant through the Flood, and the choice of a special nation (Israel) to be a channel of God's grace.

Application: Genesis gives us rich descriptions of the lives of many great men and women who walked with God. They sometimes succeeded and often failed. We learn much by reading the biographies of these people. Where did they receive their motivation and courage? They got it by realizing God was with them despite their inadequacies or circumstances. Knowing this should encourage us to be faithful to God, rely on Him for guidance, thank Him for His grace, and utilize the potential He has given us.

Genesis Outline

- I. Primeval History (Chs. 1-11)
 - A. The Creation of the World (Chs. 1-2)
 - B. The Fall (Sin) of Man (Ch. 3)
 - C. The Beginnings of Civilization (Chs. 4-5)
 - D. The Story of Noah and the Flood (Chs. 6-9)
 - E. The Descendants of Noah and the Tower of Babel (Chs. 10:1 – 11:26)
- II. The Patriarchs of Israel (Chs. 12-50)
 - A. Abraham (Chs. 11:27 – 23:20)
 - 1. The Call of Abraham (Chs. 12:1-9)
 - 2. To Egypt and back (Chs. 12:10 – 13:4)
 - 3. Experiences with Lot and Melchizedek (Chs. 13:5 – 14:24)
 - 4. Abraham's Promised Heir (Ch. 15)
 - 5. Ishmael, Son of the Flesh (Chs. 16, 17)
 - 6. Sodom and Gomorrah (Chs. 18, 19)
 - 7. Abraham and Abimelech (Ch. 20)
 - 8. Isaac, Son of the Promise (Ch. 21)
 - 9. The Offering of Isaac (Ch. 22)
 - 10. The Family Burial Place (Ch. 23)
 - B. Isaac (Chs. 24 – 26)
 - 1. A Bride for Isaac (Ch. 24)
 - 2. Abraham's Descendants (Chs. 25:1-18)
 - 3. Isaac's Family (Chs. 25:19-34)
 - 4. Isaac and Abimelech (Ch. 26)
 - C. Jacob (Chs. 27: 1 – 36:43)
 - 1. Jacob cheats Esau (Ch. 27)
 - 2. Jacob's Flight to Haran (Ch. 28)
 - 3. Jacob, His Wives, and His Offspring (Chs. 29:1 – 30:24)
 - 4. Jacob Outwits Laban (Chs. 30:25-43)
 - 5. Jacob's Return to Canaan (Ch. 31)
 - 6. Jacob and Esau Reconciled (Chs. 32, 33)
 - 7. Sins at Shechem (Ch. 34)
 - 8. The Return to Bethel (Ch. 35)
 - 9. The Descendants of Esau (Ch. 36)
 - D. Joseph (Chs. 37 – 50)
 - 1. Joseph Sold into Slavery (Ch. 37)
 - 2. Judah and Tamar (Ch. 38)
 - 3. Joseph's Test and Triumph (Ch. 39)
 - 4. Joseph Interprets Dreams (Chs. 40, 41)
 - 5. Joseph's Brothers in Egypt (Chs. 42-44)
 - 6. Joseph's Reunion with His Family (Chs. 45,46)
 - 7. Joseph's Family in Egypt (Ch. 47)
 - 8. Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons (Ch. 48)
 - 9. Jacob's Prophecy concerning His Sons (Ch. 49)
 - 10. Death of Jacob and then of Joseph in Egypt (Ch. 50)