

## **Book of Genesis**

Genesis is the book of beginnings.

It records the beginning of time, life, sin, salvation, the human race, and the Hebrew nation.

It begins with primeval history centered in four major events: the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the dispersion of the nations.

Genesis then narrates the history of four great patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

### **Title:**

The English title, Genesis, comes from the Greek translation (Septuagint, LXX) meaning “origins”; whereas, the Hebrew title is derived from the Bible’s very first word, which is translated “in the beginning.”

Genesis serves to introduce the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament), and the entire bible.

The influence of Genesis in Scripture is demonstrated by its being quoted over 35 times in the New Testament and hundreds of allusions appearing in both Testaments.

The story line of salvation which begins in Genesis 3 is not completed until Revelation chapters 21 and 22, where the eternal kingdom of redeemed believers is gloriously pictured.

The title, Genesis (Greek, “Beginning”), was applied to this book by the Septuagint.

The Hebrew title (bereshit) comes from the first word of the book in Hebrew, which states (“In the beginning”).

The book is divided by 10 units (toledot) under the rubric: “These are the generations of.”

Thus, some have suggested that Moses had access to the patriarchal records.

### **Authorship - Date:**

With very few exceptions, Jewish and Christian scholars alike have believed that Moses himself wrote Genesis.

His authorship is supported by the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Palestinian Talmud, the Apocrypha (Ecclus. 45:4; 2 Macc. 7:30), the writings of Philo (Life of Moses 3:39), and Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 4:8:45; Contra Apion I.8).

Moses' life totaled 120 years (Deut. 34:7).

The first 40 years (1525–1485 B.C.) he spent as Pharaoh's son, learning the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22).

He spent the next 40 years (1485-1445 B.C.) in the desert of Midian as a shepherd (Exodus 2:15; Acts 7:30).

The final 40 years (1445-1405 B.C.), he spent wandering in the Sinai wilderness with the children of Israel (Deut. 8:2).

He very likely wrote all of the books of the Pentateuch after his call to lead the people out of Egypt, as recounted in Exodus 3.

This would have been in his last 40 years of life, during the wilderness wanderings.

### **Background – Setting:**

The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past.

God then, by willful act and divine Word, spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt which He fashioned in His image to become Adam.

God made mankind the crowning point of His creation, i.e., His companions who would enjoy fellowship with Him and bring glory to His name.

The historical background for the early events in Genesis is clearly Mesopotamian.

While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the historical moment for which this book was written, Israel first heard Genesis sometime prior to crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (ca. 1405 B.C.).

Genesis has 3 distinct, sequential geographical settings:

- (1) Mesopotamia (chapters 1-22);
- (2) The Promised Land (chapters 12-36); and
- (3) Egypt (chapters 37-50).

The time frames of these 3 segments are:

- (1) Creation to ca 2090 B.C.;

- (2) 2090-1897 B.C.; and
- (3) 1897-1804 B.C.

Genesis covers more time than the remaining books of the Bible combined.

### **Historical – Theological Themes:**

In this book of beginnings, God revealed Himself and a worldview to Israel which contrasted, at times sharply, with the worldview of Israel's neighbors.

The author made no attempt to defend the existence of God or to present a systematic discussion of His person and works.

Rather, Israel's God distinguished Himself clearly from the alleged gods of her neighbors.

Theological foundations are revealed which include God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, man, sin, redemption, covenant, promise, Satan and angels, kingdom, revelation, Israel, judgment and blessing.

Genesis 1-11 (primeval history) reveals the origins of the universe, i.e., the beginnings of time and space and many of the firsts in human experience, such as marriage, family, the Fall, sin, redemption, judgment, and nations.

Genesis 12-50 (patriarchal history), explained to Israel how they came into existence as a family whose ancestry could be traced to Eber (hence the "Hebrews"; Gen. 10:24-25), and even more remotely to Shem, the son of Noah (hence the "Semites"; Gen. 10:21).

God's people came to understand not only their ancestry and family history, but also the origins of their institutions, customs, languages, and different cultures, especially basic human experiences such as sin and death.

Because they were preparing to enter Canaan and dispossess the Canaanite inhabitants of their homes and properties, God revealed their enemies' background.

In addition, they needed to understand the actual basis of the war they were about to declare in light of the immorality of killing, consistent with the other 4 books that Moses was writing (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

Ultimately, the Jewish nation would understand a selected portion of preceding world history and the inaugural background of Israel as a basis by which they would live in their new beginnings under Joshua's leadership in the land which had previously been promised to their original patriarchal forefather, Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3 established a primary focus on God's promises to Abraham.

This narrowed their view from the entire world of peoples in Genesis 1-11 to one small nation, Israel, through whom God would progressively accomplish His redemptive plan.

This underscored Israel's mission to be "a light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6).

God promised land, descendants (seed), and blessing.

The 3-fold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1-20).

The rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises.

On a much larger scale, Genesis 1-11 set forth a singular message about the character and works of God.

In the sequence of accounts which make up these chapters of Scripture, a pattern emerges which reveals God's abundant grace as He responded to the willful disobedience of mankind.

Without exception, man responded in greater sinful rebellion.

In biblical words, the more sin abounded the more did God's grace abound (Romans 5:20).

On final theme of both theological and historical significance sets Genesis apart from other books of Scripture, in that the first book of Scripture corresponds closely with the final book.

In the book of Revelation, the paradise which was lost in Genesis will be regained.

The apostle John clearly presented the events recorded in his book as future resolutions to the problems which began as a result of the curse in Genesis 3.

His focus is upon the effects of the Fall in the undoing of creation and the manner in which God rids His creation of the curse effect.

In John's own words, "There will no longer be any curse" (Rev. 22:3).

Not surprisingly, in the final chapter of God's Word, believers will find themselves back in the Garden of Eden, the eternal paradise of God, eating from the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-14).

At that time, they will partake, wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14).

Genesis is the foundational book to the rest of the Bible.

Its important theological themes include the doctrines of God, Creation, man, sin and salvation.

It teaches the importance of substitutionary atonement and of faith in God's revelation of Himself to mankind.

It also records the first messianic prophecies of the Bible predicting that the Redeemer would be born of the seed of a woman (see 3:15); through the line of Seth (4:25); a son of Shem (9:27); and also the offspring of Abraham (12:3); Isaac (21:12); and Jacob (25:23); and from the tribe of Judah (49:10).

Genesis covers more time than any other book in the Bible.

It opens with the words: “In the beginning God created” (1:1), and it ends with “in a coffin in Egypt (50:26).

Thus, it covers the whole plight of man, who was created in God’s image to live forever, but because of sin became destined for the grave.

The book leaves the reader anxiously anticipating the redemptive intervention of God.