

The Book of Genesis

The Author, Title, and Date of Genesis

1. Author: God, through Moses
2. Title is taken from the first word of the book
 - 1) Hebrew — *bereshith* = “in the beginning”
 - 2) Greek — γενήσις = “beginnings”
3. Date: c. 1445-1405 B.C.

The Background and Setting of Genesis.

1. Background: The book begins in eternity past, with God, who Creates the universe, with the creation of man as the crowning glory of that Creation.
2. Historical Setting — God has just redeemed His people from Egypt and is about to make a covenant with them.
 - a. This book records God’s dealings with mankind in general, and His people in particular, thus giving them the context of their existence as a nation, and the covenant. So, the book is an introduction to the book of Exodus!
 - b. Allen P. Ross: “The final product is not simply a collection but *a theological shaping of the reports and traditions for the instruction of Israel under the Sinaitic covenant*. Genesis, then, in the broadest sense, belongs to the Torah, for it is a theological explanation of what led up to and transpired at Sinai. The book forms a prologue to the law.” in *Creation and Blessing*, p.64
3. Note: Genesis is the *foundation of the entire Old Testament and New Testament*.
 - a. The Old Testament is built on the truths found in Genesis.
 - b. The New Testament writers assume a familiarity with the Old Testament, and of Genesis.
4. Genesis is the book of *Beginnings*.
 - a. It is the basis and context of our understanding/view of, and the beginning of:
 - 1) Creation of the Universe
 - 2) Man’s nature, his special relationship to God, and his superiority to animals
 - 3) Marriage and the gender roles
 - 4) Civilization/society
 - 5) Israel as God’s chosen people
 - 6) Prophetic/future actions of God
 - 7) Sin — Its beginning, nature, consequences, death.
 - 8) Satan
 - 9) God’s character in blessing and cursing
 - 10) Why life is rough
 - 11) Our need of salvation, and of a sacrifice
 - 12) Salvation by faith and God’s grace
 - b. Genesis is God’s divine narrative, wherein *God* sets forth, and explains, the correct worldview.
 - c. Presuppositions: God exists, and this book is God’s revelation, not man’s doing.
 - d. *** Without Genesis, we are in the dark about these!**

The Structure of Genesis

1. Geographical structure
 - a. Chapters 1-11 — Mesopotamia - from the Creation of the world to 2090 B.C.
 - b. Chapters 12-36 — The Promised Land - 2090 B.C. to 1897 B.C.
 - c. Chapters 37-50 — Egypt - 1897 B.C. to 1804 B.C.
2. Simple Historical structure
 - a. Chapters 1-11 — Primeval: Origins of the Universe and Mankind

- 1) This section narrates God's dealings with mankind in general.
- 2) The beginnings of everything:
 - a) Time and space
 - b) Nations and civilization
 - c) Marriage and family
 - d) Fall, Sin, and Death
 - e) Judgment for sin, and grace for sinners
 - f) Redemption
- 3) Three traumatic events for the human race: Fall, Flood, Dispersion
- b. Chapters 12-50 — Patriarchal: Origins of God's family
 - 1) This section narrates God's dealings with His covenant people. *How Israel came into being as a family.*
 - 2) God narrows His focus in dealing with mankind to one family.
 - 3) This section explains the beginnings of Israel's customs, language, and culture.
3. This leads also to a Dispensational structure.
 - a. God *tests* man in each section, to see whether or not man will fully follow God.
 - b. Blessing or curse is the outcome, depending on man's response to the test.
 - c. Note the narrowing process, down to Abraham.
4. Narrative structure
 - a. The word *toledot* is a structural marker throughout the book.
 - b. The word means "this is what became of . . ."
 - 1) The word marks the sections of the book. Each section deals with a specific person, explaining the outcome of that person. Example: "This is what became of Adam . . ."
 - 2) Thus, the book is not merely a genealogy, but an explanation (see Purpose of the Book)
 - c. There are ten of these sections: 2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.10; 11.27; 25.12; 25.19; 36.1; 37.2
 - 1) The Toledot of the Creation 2.4-4.26
 - 2) The Toledot of Adam 5.1-6.8
 - 3) The Toledot of Noah 6.9-9.29
 - 4) The Toledot of Noah's Sons 10.1-11.9
 - 5) The Toledot of Shem 11.10-26
 - 6) The Toledot of Terah 11.27-25.11 (The establishment and development of God's promises to Abram)
 - 7) The Toledot of Ishmael 25.12-25.18
 - 8) The Toledot of Isaac 25.19-35.29
 - 9) The Toledot of Esau 36.1-37.1
 - 10) The Toledot of Jacob 37.2-50.26

The Purpose of Genesis

1. Genesis sets forth the *context* of God's covenant people: God reveals Himself to His creation, specifically through the nation of Israel.
 - a. *12.1-3; 50.24; Ex 2.24-25*
 - b. C. F. Keil: "The creation of the heaven and the earth, therefore, receives as its center, paradise; and in paradise, man, created in the image of God, is the head and crown of all created beings." *Commentary on the Old Testament — Genesis*, p. 33
2. The purpose of the book of Genesis is to set forth the *context* of God's covenant people. Context for all that follows.
3. He accomplishes this purpose by revealing to Israel:
 - a. their beginnings
 - 1) The history of the world and their place in it.
 - 2) The history of *them*, and the Abrahamic Covenant. *12.1-3; 15*
 - b. their context: The beginnings of the Gentiles (Canaanites) and why God is judging them.
 - d. His character and works
 - 1) His holiness, grace and love to His people.
 - 2) Note Tests of mankind:
 - a) Grace is given by God . . . mankind, instead of humbly worshiping, sins and rebels.
 - b) God increases grace . . . mankind increases sin and rebellion.
 - c) God continues to increase grace => ***God is a God of sovereign love and grace! Ro 5.20***

The Message of Genesis

1. The message of Genesis is that God has created us for His purposes, and we should live in that truth. And more specifically, He has chosen a people for Himself to accomplish this through.
2. Allen P. Ross: "If indeed God was before all things and made everything—including the things pagans worshiped—how foolish it would be to have any gods besides him. If God made humans as his image to represent him on earth, how foolish it would be to make an image of God. If god himself set aside one day for rest and sanctified it, should not God's people who were seeking to please him observe one special day as well? In numerous ways the law finds its rationale in creation. This idea is strengthened by the fact that God created by his powerful and authoritative word. Later, when Israel received 'the Word of the Lord,' they knew it was that creative word. Should they not obey this powerful word, as all creation had? Could they not trust it?" in *Creation and Blessing*, p.102

The Themes of Genesis

1. Blessing and Curse
 - a. Blessing is seen to be that which is beneficial to life and is in harmony to God's will. What God sees to be *good* He blesses, calling forth more of the same. Curse is seen to be that which is detrimental to life and in conflict with God's will. What God sees to be *evil* He thus curses, bringing destruction.
 - b. Allen P. Ross: "That which is good is harmonious with the divine will; that which is evil conflicts with the divine will. 'Good' describes obedient activities and pleasing circumstances meant to benefit and enhance life; 'evil' depicts sinful activities and unpleasant circumstances that interrupt and hinder life, causing pain and suffering. God blesses the good but curses the evil; God's blessing in turn brings about good things, but his cursing ultimately destroys life." in *Creation and Blessing*, p.67
2. Covenant
 - a. Blessing and relationship with God in covenant. Especially seen from chapter 12 on.
 - b. Conflict between the line of God and the line of Satan.
 - c. Key Verses: *1.26-27; all of ch. 2; 3.105; 3.15; 12.1-3; 15.6, 18; 17.8; all of chapter 22*