

# Genesis

## Title and Purpose:

The title “*Genesis*,” is a fitting name for the first book of the Bible. *Genesis* is a Greek word meaning “*beginning*”. Not only does this book begin the Bible, but Genesis also contains the beginning of the world (1:1); the beginning of man (1:27; 2:7, 21f); the institution of marriage (2:24f); the beginning of sin (3:6f); the beginning of death (3:19; 4:8); the first Gospel Promise which is called the *Protevangel*, or “first Gospel” (3:15); the beginning of poetry, of cities, of music, etc. (4:17-24); the beginning of sacrifices (4:3f); the beginning of different languages (11:5-9); and the beginning of the nation of Israel (12:1-3).

This important book of “beginnings” is not intended to be a general history of the ancient world. The specific purpose of Genesis is to trace God’s saving activity throughout the history of the world. Genesis is the first chapter in the history of God’s magnificent rescue operation, His plan of salvation, which is presented through the genealogy of the Savior (notice the longevity of the Anti-deluvian people, living near 1,000 years of age!).

It tells us why salvation is necessary: Because we are sinful and are doomed without it. It shows us where the twofold division (believers and unbelievers) of the world came from. Notice especially how Genesis describes God’s work of redemption – not with theological statements of doctrine, but simply, through the biographies of real-life people. In the lives of these people we find God at work with the message of His law and the message of His grace.

## Time Frame and Structure:

Genesis also gives us an approximate age of the earth. This book itself covers a period of about 2300 years, from the beginning of history (the creation of the world) to the death of Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob (chapter 50). Following the genealogies in Genesis and throughout the rest of the Old Testament, the creation of

the world can be placed at about 4000 BC.

The book is divided into ten sections, each introduced by the statement, ‘*This is the account (or genealogy) of...*’. In each of these accounts, God is working with His creatures to carry out His plan of salvation. The ten accounts cover:

- ◆ 1) Heaven and earth (2:4-4:26),
- ◆ 2) Adam (5:1-6:8),
- ◆ 3) Noah (6:9-9:29),
- ◆ 4) The sons of Noah (10:1-11:9),
- ◆ 5) Shem (11:10-26),
- ◆ 6) Terah (11:27-25:11),
- ◆ 7) Ishmael (25:12-18),
- ◆ 8) Isaac (25:19-35:29),
- ◆ 9) Esau (36:1-37:1), and
- ◆ 10) Jacob (37:2-50:26).

## Holy Writer:

It should be noted that until recent times there has never been a serious challenge to the fact that Moses was the holy writer of the events recorded in Genesis. However, it has become fashionable in this century to question the holy writers of most books of the Bible, and Genesis is no exception. Skeptics doubt that Moses could have written the entire book himself. Instead, they credit mythical writers called **J** (*Jehovist*), **E** (*Elohimist*), **D** (*Deuteronomic*), and **P** (*Priestly*). However, there is no evidence for such divisions whatsoever.

To the contrary, evidence of the Mosaic authorship is overwhelming. For almost four thousand years the first five books of the Bible have been credited to Moses, who recorded these events through the verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Jewish Talmud, written during the Babylonian Captivity (about 600 BC), refers to Mosaic authorship. The New Testament church openly held to this

fact as well. Further weight is added by the Jewish historian, Josephus, who also accepted this. But the greatest weight that can be placed on the side of Moses as the holy writer can be found in Scripture itself. Very early on these first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis - Deuteronomy) were combined and are commonly referred to as one book instead of five (cf. **“the book of Moses” - Mark 12:26**). When we hear this phrase and others like it, we should also think of the book of Genesis (cf. John 7:22).

**Old Testament** - The following passages point to Moses as the inspired writer: Exodus 17:14; Leviticus 1:1f; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 1:1; Joshua 1:7; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11ff; Malachi 4:4.

**New Testament** - Christ Himself holds to Mosaic authorship: Luke 2:22; 24:44; John 5:46f. The Apostles, and even the Pharisees, also believed this: Acts 13:39; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 9:9.

It should be noted that Moses was not yet alive during the entire history of Genesis (creation of the world up to the death of Joseph). This naturally raises the question: How did he receive the information that he wrote in Genesis? Since there were no eyewitnesses to the creation account, information about this could only have come to Moses through the miracle of divine revelation. God told Moses what happened during the days of creation. Even with the later events where Moses was present, God saw to it that Moses' account was exactly what God wanted written word for word.

## Messianic Prophecies:

In Genesis we find a number of *types* of Christ. A *type* is an Old Testament picture of Christ, specifically named in the New Testament as such.

- One Old Testament type is found in chapters 6-8 in Noah's ark. While properly an *anti-type*, the ark is used by Peter as a picture of God's salvation through Baptism: **“when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype**

**which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)” (1 Peter 3:20-21)**. In the flood man was saved *from* water by the ark; in Baptism man is saved *with* the water used in connection with God's Word.

- Another example is found in the high priest, Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). He is also named as a type, or picture, of Christ who is called **“a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 7:21)**. Though the precise meaning of this picture is not clear to us, it is likely that the parallel lies in Melchizedek's office, as king of Salem (Genesis 14:18). *King of Salem* means literally *King of Peace*. Christ Himself is named *Prince of Peace* in Isaiah 9:6.

A number of Gospel promises of the coming Savior are found in the book of Genesis: 3:15 (*“the head-crusher of Satan”*); 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:15-18, 26:4, 28:14; (*“the blessing for all people”*); 17:19 (*“the everlasting covenant”*); 49:10-12 (*“the scepter and lion of Judah”*). While many other passages could also be listed, these illustrate the fact that the Gospel is found throughout the Old Testament, as we shall see in our continuing study.

## Outline:

### I. First Beginnings (1-5)

- A. Of the World (1-2)
- B. Sin and Salvation (2-3)
- C. Of the Divided World (3-5)

### II. New Beginnings (6-11)

- A. End of the First Beginning (6-7)
- B. A New Beginning (8-9)
- C. Division of the New World (10-11)

### III. Beginning of the Promised People (12-50)

- A. Abraham (12-24)
- B. Isaac (25-28)
- C. Jacob (26-37)
- D. The Sons of Jacob (37-50)