

# Introduction to Genesis

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7:56 AM

## I. Background

### A. Who wrote the book?

1. Tradition both Jewish and Christian throughout history has ascribed the book to Moses
2. There are no specific places in the Bible where Genesis is attributed to Moses, but there are good reasons to believe that this is the case
  - a. Genesis forms a united whole with the rest of the Pentateuch. Exodus is a direct continuation of Genesis and relies on it for all of the historical background to the story.
  - b. There are several places where the rest of the Pentateuch is attributed to Moses
  - c. So, it stands to reason that Moses also wrote Genesis
3. So, without clear reason to think otherwise and good reasons to agree, we can confidently attribute the book to Moses

### B. When was the book written?

1. The time when Genesis was written is complicated somewhat by our lack of complete understanding of when Moses was or when the Exodus from Egypt was
2. But, to our best understanding, Moses was around sometime between 1500 and 1300 B.C. and so the book was written during this time period
3. This means the book was written probably sometime right after the Exodus from Egypt, perhaps at Mount Sinai or during the wandering in the desert

### C. To whom was the book written? And why was it written?

1. Since Moses wrote the book, the initial audience would have been the generation that saw the Exodus from Egypt and the generation that went into the land of Canaan with Joshua
2. Moses wrote this book, by the inspiration of God, to make it clear to the covenant people why God was making a covenant with them and why God was going to bring them into the land
3. The background of the covenant necessarily includes who God is, why God is separated from man, why the people of Israel were chosen by God and what God has promised to them as His chosen people
4. Genesis explains all these things and helps the covenant people understand the God that they have covenanted with and how they must respond to this God

### D. About when was the book written?

1. Genesis records select events tracing God's redemptive purpose from the creation of the world to the story of Joseph
2. An exact understanding of dates during this period is lacking, but some good guesses would place this time period as 5000-4000 BC to 1900-1700 BC, in other words approximately 3000 years before Moses to about 400 years before Moses

### E. How could Moses write authoritatively about events that happened so long before him?

1. There are two ways that are not mutually exclusive to how Moses could have recorded events that happened so long before him
2. First, we know from Scripture that God spoke directly to Moses at length over many years, it is quite possible and plausible that God simply told Moses the actual stories that Moses needed to record in order to write Genesis.
3. Second, there is no reason to think that there was not some faithful remembrance of events that had gone before. Stories can be told from generation to generation and they can be transmitted very faithfully in some cases.
4. So, between historical knowledge and direct divine revelation, Moses could easily have written about events that happened long before him.

## II. Themes

### A. Genesis tells us about God and ourselves

1. Quote from Calvin: "our wisdom consists of right knowledge of God and of ourselves and it is hard to determine which precedes the other."
2. Genesis therefore teaches us both.
  - a. It teaches us who God is as the Creator and Sovereign Lord.
  - b. It teaches us who we are as created beings and fallen sinners.
  - c. It also tells us how God and us ought to interact now with God making gracious promises and us reacting in faith.

### B. Genesis is the book of God's sovereignty

1. What do I mean by "Genesis is the book of God's sovereignty?"
  - a. Sovereignty, as defined in Merriam-Webster's dictionary is: supreme excellence, supreme power especially over a political body, freedom from external control : autonomy, controlling influence
  - b. So, when we talk about God as sovereign, we mean that He is both supremely excellent and supremely powerful so that He alone is in charge of everything in this world.
  - c. In other words, when we define God as sovereign, we are talking about His Godness - God is God because He is the sovereign one over the whole universe.
2. Where do we see this in Genesis?
  - a. God is sovereign because of creation
    - i. Why is God supremely powerful? Why is He rightly in charge of everything in this world? Because He made this world by His word. How could He not be sovereign over it?
    - ii. Spend a few minutes contemplating that God made you, He owns you. Once you let that sink in, then you will start to understand what God's sovereignty means.
  - b. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in lawgiving
    - i. We see this as God commands Adam not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil.
    - ii. We see this as God gives Abraham stipulations that go along with His covenants, like circumcision.
  - c. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in judging sin
    - i. We see this as God pronounces curses on sin at the fall
    - ii. We see this as God judges Cain for murdering his brother
    - iii. We see this as God brings a flood upon the world of the ungodly
    - iv. We see this as God brings trouble upon Jacob
  - d. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in giving salvation
    - i. We see this as God promises a deliverer to Adam and Eve
    - ii. We see this as God saves Noah from the flood
    - iii. We see this as Joseph is raised up in Egypt
  - e. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in giving promises
    - i. We see this as God makes a covenant with Noah after the flood
    - ii. We see this as God makes two covenants with Abraham that undergird the rest of the Bible
  - f. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in choosing who receives His promises
    - i. We see this as Isaac is chosen as the promised Son over Ishmael
    - ii. We see this as Jacob is chosen as the promised Son over Esau
    - iii. We see this as Judah and Joseph are chosen as the royal lines over the other twelve brothers
  - g. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in drawing those whom He will to faith
    - i. We see this especially in the story of Jacob as Jacob runs away from God at the start of His story, but as He returns to the promised land, God has brought Him to believe the promises
  - h. God displays or exercises His sovereignty in ruling over even His adversaries
    - i. We see this especially in the story of Joseph in Egypt

### **C. Genesis is the book of man's fall**

1. What do I mean by "Genesis is the book of man's fall?"
  - a. We see throughout history and in our own experience what C.S. Lewis calls a 'fatal bent' that ruins everything we do
  - b. In Genesis, the origin of this 'fatal bent', this propensity to sin is explained- why are we given over to enmity with God and each other?
  - c. Genesis explains why we have this fatal bent and also how terrible it really is - what its true consequences are
2. Where do we see this in Genesis?
  - a. We see the origin of sin described in Genesis
    - i. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
  - b. We see the results of the fall described in Genesis
    - i. Cain and Able
    - ii. Babel
    - iii. Abraham's disbelief
    - iv. Jacob's scoffing
  - c. We see the judgment against sin described in Genesis
    - i. The curses pronounced by God against sin
    - ii. The flood
    - iii. Sodom and Gomorrah

### **D. Genesis is the book of God's promise**

1. What do I mean by "Genesis is the book of God's promise?"
  - a. At the fall, there was no reason for man to have hope anymore. They had rebelled against their maker, and like the fallen angels, the only thing they had a right to expect was eternal judgment.
  - b. But, we see in Genesis that this is not what happens. God graciously continues to interact with mankind and He does this by making promises, especially covenants, with mankind. These gracious promises serve to reestablish a relationship between God and mankind and promise a redemption from sin.
  - c. Genesis provides the basis for all of God's other covenants with man - the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant. It is the basis because Genesis shows us how God graciously makes promises to man and because these other covenants are all outworkings of the promises in Genesis.
2. Where do we see this in Genesis?
  - a. A promise to Adam and Eve - God would have one of their own descendants crush the serpent
  - b. A promise to Noah - God would save Him from the flood and God would not bring a flood upon the world again
  - c. The promises to Abraham - God promised Abraham and his descendants a land and a son and these promises undergird the rest of the Bible!
  - d. The propagation of the promises through the patriarchs to the twelve tribes - the promises to Abraham were reconfirmed to each new generation of the Patriarchs

## **E. Genesis is the book of man's faith**

1. What do I mean by "Genesis is the book of man's faith?"
  - a. God makes graciously makes promises to mankind and since they are of grace, there is nothing man can do to earn or deserve the promises.
  - b. But, this does not mean that God does not require anything of mankind as He gives the promises and what God requires of mankind can be summed up in faith. Mankind must believe and act upon the promises of God.
  - c. So, faith in Genesis entails accepting God's promises as true, living as though God's promises are true and obeying the commands that God gives along with His promises.
2. Where do we see this in Genesis?
  - a. Noah believed God
    - i. When God proclaimed a flood on the world of the ungodly, Noah accepted that what God said was true
    - ii. Noah lived as though this was true, devoting his life to preaching and building the Ark
    - iii. And Noah obeyed God's commands in how to build the Ark
  - b. Abraham struggled to believe God when he could not see the promises
    - i. Abraham's story focuses on this struggle, and at Abraham's best moments we see great faith in the promise
    - ii. Abraham believed that God would give him a promised son and that God would give his descendants the promised land
    - iii. Abraham lived as though this was true, living as a nomad in a land he did not know because God had promised it to him
    - iv. Abraham obeyed God and took the covenant sign of circumcision on himself and his family
  - c. Jacob was eventually brought to faith in God
    - i. At the beginning of Jacob's story, he does not demonstrate Abraham's faith and is instead a deceitful schemer
    - ii. But, God, by His mercy and sovereignty, eventually brings Jacob back to the promised land and causes Jacob to believe God's promises

## **F. In summary, Genesis is the book of beginnings**

1. Genesis tells the story of God's sovereignty, man's fall, God's promises and man's faith.
2. These concepts become the basis for the rest of the Bible both in general terms and in specific details.
  - a. Generally, these concepts are necessary to the rest of the Bible. The rest of the Bible presumes God's sovereignty, man's fall, God's promises and the necessity of faith
  - b. But, specifically, the details of Genesis are important to the rest of the Bible
    - i. The fact that we are all descendents of Adam
    - ii. The specific content of the promises to Abraham
    - iii. The propagation of the promises through the chosen race
3. The rest of the Bible is the outworking of the promises of Genesis
  - a. Exodus through Joshua is a fulfillment of the promise of land and points to a greater fulfillment of that promise
  - b. Judges through Kings is a fulfillment of the promise of a son and points to a greater fulfillment of that promise
  - c. Chronicles through Malachi calls us to understand that the previous fulfillments of the promises were only types and we must expect a much greater fulfillment in the New Covenant
  - d. The New Testament is the record of the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of a son, Jesus Christ, and the promise of land, the inheritance of Christ and commands Christ's people how to live in faith in the promises as Abraham did in Genesis

### III. Outline

#### A. Primeval History (1:1-11:26) - An introduction to who God is and who we are

1. Creation week (1-2)
2. The Fall and Sin (3-4)
  - a. The Fall (3)
  - b. The Results (Cain and Able) (4)
  - c. Hope (the birth of Seth) (end of 4)
3. The generations of Adam (5:1-6:8)
4. The generations of Noah (6-9)
  - a. Sin (6:1-7:6)
  - b. The flood (7:6-24)
  - c. God saves Noah (8:1-9:17)
  - d. Sin remains (9:18-29)
5. The generations of the sons of Noah (10:1-11:9)
  - a. The table of nations (10)
  - b. The tower of Babel (11:1-9)
6. The Generations of Shem

#### B. Patriarchal History (11:27-50:26)

##### 1. The generations of Terah (11:27-25:18) - A story about God's promises and responsive faith

- a. A promised land (12-14)
  - i. The covenant (12:1-9)
  - ii. Disbelief (12:10-20)
  - iii. The covenant reaffirmed (13)
  - iv. A blessing (14)
- b. A promised son (15-21)
- c. The promise is kept through faith (22:1-25:18)
  - i. The sacrifice of Isaac (22)
  - ii. A wife for Isaac (24)

##### 2. The generations of Isaac (25:19-37:1) - a story about God's choice and God's call

- a. God's sovereign choice (25:19-27:46)
  - i. The birth of Jacob and Esau (25:19-28)
  - ii. Esau sells his birthright (25:29-34)
  - iii. Isaac blesses Jacob (27:1-45)
- b. God blesses and judges Jacob (27:46-30:24)
  - i. Jacob is sent to find a wife (27:46-28:9)
  - ii. Jacob's dream (28:10-22)
  - iii. Jacob marries Leah and Rachel (29:1-30)
  - iv. Jacob's children (29:31-30:24)
- c. God returns Jacob to the land of promise and becomes his God (30:25-33:20)
  - i. Laban's tricks, Jacob's blessing (30:25-43)
  - ii. Jacob wrestles with God (32:22-32)
  - iii. Jacob and Esau reconcile (33)
- d. The promise is still future (34:1-37:1)
  - i. The attack of Dinah (34)
  - ii. The covenant renewed (35:1-15)

### 3. The Generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26) - a story about God's faithfulness and sovereignty in His promise

- a. God's presence in adversity (37:2-40:23)
  - i. Joseph's dreams (37:2-11)
  - ii. Joseph sold into slavery (37:12-36)
  - iii. Potiphar's wife (39:7-23)
  - iv. Joseph interprets the prisoners' dreams (40)
- b. God demonstrates His sovereignty by raising up Joseph and humbling his brothers (41:1-47:26)
  - i. Pharaoh's dreams (41)
  - ii. The brother's go to Egypt (42-44)
  - iii. Jacob comes to Egypt (46:1-47:12)
  - iv. Joseph and the famine (47:13-26)
- c. God will continue to fulfill His promise (47:27-50:26)
  - i. Jacob requests burial in Canaan (47:27-31)
  - ii. Jacob blesses his sons (48:1-49:28)

## IV. How does Genesis point to Christ?

### A. There are many pictures or types of Christ in Genesis

1. The seed of Adam that will crush the serpents heel
  - a. Genesis 3:15 - *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*"
2. The sacrifice and clothes that were provided for Adam and Eve
  - a. Genesis 3:21 - *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*
3. Noah and the Ark and a picture of salvation
  - a. Genesis 6:17-19, 7:6-7 - *For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female...Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.*
4. Abraham and the command to sacrifice Isaac
  - a. Genesis 22:1-14 - *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."*
5. Joseph and saving his family
  - a. Genesis 50:19-21 - *But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

## **B. But in reality, there is no part of Genesis that is not directly tied to Christ**

1. Creation is the story of Christ: Christ was functionally present at creation
  - a. John 1:1-3 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
  - b. Colossians 1:15-17 - *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities---all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*
2. The fall is the story of Christ: it was ordained to demonstrate the riches of the grace of Christ
  - a. Romans 3:5-8 - *But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world? But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come?--as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.*
  - b. Ephesians 3:10-11 - *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
3. The promise is the story of Christ: the response to the fall was to promise Christ
  - a. Romans 16:20 - *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*
  - b. Hebrews 2:14-15 - *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*
4. The story of Noah is the story of Christ: Noah represents the judgment and salvation that Christ will bring
  - a. Matthew 24:37-39 - *For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*
  - b. I Peter 3:18-22 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*
5. The promise to Abraham is the story of Christ: he receives two promises that are truly fulfilled in Christ
  - a. The promise of a son - Matthew 3:17 - *and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*
  - b. The promise of land - Hebrews 4:1-3, 8-10 - *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest...For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*
6. Isaac and Jacob are the story of Christ: Isaac and Jacob demonstrates how we are chosen in Christ
  - a. Romans 9:6-13 - *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls--- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

7. The story of Joseph is the story of Christ: God was sovereign in Christ's afflictions for His own glory
  - a. Acts 4:27-28 - *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

## V. Use in the New Testament

### A. 42 specific and unique references to Genesis in the New Testament in 19 books

1. Matthew - 5 references
2. Mark - 2 references
3. Luke - 3 references
4. John - 2 references
5. Acts - 3 references
6. Romans - 6 references
7. I Corinthians - 2 references
8. II Corinthians - 1 reference
9. Galatians - 2 references
10. Ephesians - 1 reference
11. Colossians - 1 reference
12. I Timothy - 1 reference
13. Hebrews - 5 references
14. James - 1 reference
15. I Peter - 1 reference
16. II Peter - 2 references
17. I John - 1 reference
18. Jude - 1 reference
19. Revelation - 2 reference

### B. I won't go through all of these references to Genesis, but let's examine just four books to see how the New Testament uses Genesis - Romans, Galatians, Hebrews and II Peter

1. Romans
  - a. Chapter 1 - the creation of the world shows God's attributes but mankind has fallen into sin
  - b. Chapter 4 - Abraham was justified by faith and not by works and is the father of all who have faith
  - c. Chapter 5 - Christ is a second Adam. The first Adam was a transgressor and brought death to all, but Christ was obedient and brings life to His people.
  - d. Chapter 8 - the creation has been subjected to corruption a reference to the fall and the curse on the ground
  - e. Chapter 9 - the choice of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau demonstrates God's sovereign choice as to who will receive His promises
  - f. Chapter 16 - God will crush the serpent as was promised in Genesis 3
2. Galatians
  - a. Chapter 3 - Abraham believed and was justified and is the father of all who have faith and the promise to Abraham is the promise of Christ
  - b. Chapter 4 - Ishmael and Isaac represent two covenants of God
3. Hebrews
  - a. Chapter 2 - through Christ, God has crushed the serpent as was promised in Genesis 3
  - b. Chapter 6 - the fulfillment of the promise of Abraham is certain in Christ
  - c. Chapter 7 - Melchizedek was a type of the priesthood of Christ
  - d. Chapter 11 - Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are all representatives of faith
  - e. Chapter 12 - Christ's blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel
4. II Peter
  - a. Chapter 2 - Noah, Sodom and Lot are examples of judgment and salvation
  - b. Chapter 3 - Creation and the flood are rebuttals of the scoffer