

GENESIS

Creation

Noah
undated

Abram
born
2166 B.C.
(2000 B.C.)

Abram
enters
Canaan
2091
(1925)

Isaac
born
2066
(1900)

VITAL STATISTICS

PURPOSE:

To record God's creation of the world and his desire to have a people set apart to worship him

AUTHOR:

Moses

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:

The people of Israel

DATE WRITTEN:

1450–1410 B.C.

WHERE WRITTEN:

In the wilderness during Israel's wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai peninsula

SETTING:

The region presently known as the Middle East

KEY VERSES:

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (1:27). "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (12:2, 3).

KEY PEOPLE:

Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Joseph



BEGIN . . . start . . . commence . . . open . . .

There's something refreshing and optimistic about these words, whether they refer to the dawn of a new day, the birth of a child, the prelude of a symphony, or the first miles of a family vacation. Free of problems and full of promise, beginnings stir hope and imaginative visions of the future. *Genesis* means "beginnings" or "origin," and it unfolds the record of the beginning of the world, of human history, of family, of civilization, of salvation. It is the story of God's purpose and plan for his creation. As the book of beginnings, *Genesis* sets the stage for the entire Bible. It reveals the person and nature of God (Creator, Sustainer, Judge, Redeemer); the value and dignity of human beings (made in God's image, saved by grace, used by God in the world); the tragedy and consequences of sin (the fall, separation from God, judgment); and the promise and assurance of salvation (covenant, forgiveness, promised Messiah).

God. That's where *Genesis* begins. All at once we see him creating the world in a majestic display of power and purpose, culminating with a man and woman made like himself (1:26, 27). But before long, sin entered the world, and Satan was unmasked. Bathed in innocence, creation was shattered by the fall (the willful disobedience of Adam and Eve). Fellowship with God was broken, and evil began weaving its destructive web. In rapid succession, we read how Adam and Eve were expelled from the beautiful garden, their first son turned murderer, and evil bred evil until God finally destroyed everyone on earth except a small family led by Noah, the only godly person left.

As we come to Abraham on the plains of Canaan, we discover the beginning of God's covenant people and the broad strokes of his salvation plan: Salvation comes by faith, Abraham's descendants will be God's people, and the Savior of the world will come through this chosen nation. The stories of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph that follow are more than interesting biographies. They emphasize the promises of God and the proof that he is faithful. The people we meet in *Genesis* are simple, ordinary people, yet through them, God did great things. These are vivid pictures of how God can and does use all kinds of people to accomplish his good purposes—even people like you.

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Read *Genesis* and be encouraged. There is hope! No matter how dark the world situation seems, God has a plan. No matter how insignificant or useless you feel, God loves you and wants to use you in his plan. No matter how sinful and separated from God you are, his salvation is available. Read *Genesis* . . . and hope!

THE BLUEPRINT

A. THE STORY OF CREATION (1:1—2:3)

God created the sky, seas, and land. He created the plants, animals, fish, and birds. But he created human beings in his own image. At times, others may treat us disrespectfully. But we can be certain of our dignity and worth because we have been created in the image of God.

<i>Jacob & Esau born 2006 (1840)</i>	<i>Jacob flees to Harraan 1929 (1764)</i>	<i>Joseph born 1915 (1750)</i>	<i>Joseph sold into slavery 1898 (1733)</i>	<i>Joseph rules Egypt 1885 (1720)</i>	<i>Joseph dies 1805 (1640)</i>
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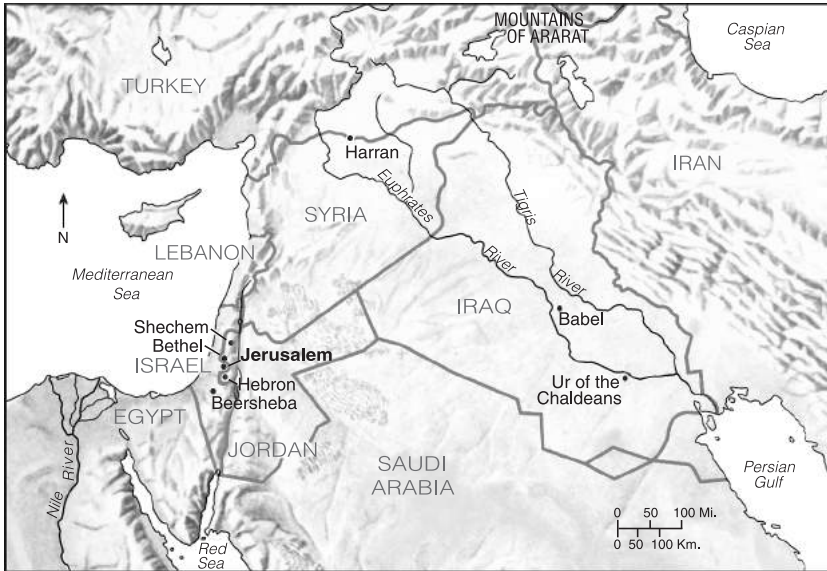
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| <p>B. THE STORY OF ADAM (2:4—5:32)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adam and Eve 2. Cain and Abel 3. Adam’s descendants <p>C. THE STORY OF NOAH (6:1—11:32)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The flood 2. Repopulating the earth 3. The tower of Babel <p>D. THE STORY OF ABRAHAM (12:1—25:18)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God promises a nation to Abram 2. Abram and Lot 3. God promises a son to Abram 4. Sodom and Gomorrah 5. Birth and near sacrifice of Isaac 6. Isaac and Rebekah 7. Abraham dies <p>E. THE STORY OF ISAAC (25:19—28:9)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jacob and Esau 2. Isaac and Abimelek 3. Jacob gets Isaac’s blessing <p>F. THE STORY OF JACOB (28:10—36:43)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jacob starts a family 2. Jacob returns home <p>G. THE STORY OF JOSEPH (37:1—50:26)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joseph is sold into slavery 2. Judah and Tamar 3. Joseph is thrown into prison 4. Joseph is placed in charge of Egypt 5. Joseph and his brothers meet in Egypt 6. Jacob’s family moves to Egypt 7. Jacob and Joseph die in Egypt | <p>When Adam and Eve were created by God, they were without sin. But they became sinful when they disobeyed God and ate some fruit from the tree. Through Adam and Eve we learn about the destructive power of sin and its bitter consequences.</p> <p>Noah was spared from the destruction of the flood because he obeyed God and built the ark. Just as God protected Noah and his family, he still protects those who are faithful to him today.</p> <p>Abraham was asked to leave his country, wander in Canaan, wait years for a son, and then sacrifice him as a burnt offering. Through these periods of sharp testing, Abraham remained faithful to God. His example teaches us what it means to live a life of faith.</p> <p>Isaac did not demand his own way. He did not resist when he was about to be sacrificed, and he gladly accepted a wife chosen for him by others. Like Isaac, we must learn to put God’s will ahead of our own.</p> <p>Jacob did not give up easily. He faithfully served Laban for over 14 years. Later, he wrestled with God. Although Jacob made many mistakes, his hard work teaches us about living a life of service for our Lord.</p> <p>Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and unjustly thrown into prison by his master. Through the life of Joseph, we learn that suffering, no matter how unfair, can develop strong character in us.</p> |
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MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Beginnings</i>	Genesis explains the beginning of many important realities: the universe, the earth, people, sin, and God’s plan of salvation.	Genesis teaches us that the earth is well made and good. People are special to God and unique. God creates and sustains all life.
<i>Disobedience</i>	People are always facing great choices. Disobedience occurs when people choose not to follow God’s plan of living.	Genesis explains why people are evil: They choose to do wrong. Even great Bible heroes failed God and disobeyed.
<i>Sin</i>	Sin ruins people’s lives. It happens when we disobey God.	Living God’s way makes life productive and fulfilling.
<i>Promises</i>	God makes promises to help and protect people. This kind of promise is called a “covenant.”	God kept his promises then, and he keeps them now. He promises to love us, accept us, forgive us.
<i>Obedience</i>	The opposite of sin is obedience. Obeying God restores our relationship to him.	The only way to enjoy the benefits of God’s promises is to obey him.
<i>Prosperity</i>	Prosperity is deeper than mere material wealth. True prosperity and fulfillment come as a result of obeying God.	When people obey God, they find peace with him, with others, and with themselves.
<i>Israel</i>	God started the nation of Israel in order to have a dedicated people who would (1) keep his ways alive in the world, (2) proclaim to the world what he is really like, and (3) prepare the world for the birth of Christ.	God is looking for people today to follow him. We are to proclaim God’s truth and love to all nations, not just our own. We must be faithful to carry out the mission God has given us.



KEY PLACES IN GENESIS



Modern names and boundaries are shown in gray.

God created the universe and the earth. Then he made man and woman, giving them a home in a beautiful garden. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were banished from the garden (3:23).

- 1 Mountains of Ararat** Adam and Eve's sin brought sin into the human race. Years later, sin had run rampant and God decided to destroy the earth with a great flood. But Noah, his family, and two of each animal were safe in the ark. When the floods receded, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (8:4).
- 2 Babel** People never learn. Again sin abounded, and the pride of the people led them to build a huge tower as a monument to their own greatness—obviously they had no thought of God. As punishment, God scattered the people by giving them different languages (11:8, 9).
- 3 Ur of the Chaldeans** Abram, a descendant of Shem and father of the Hebrew nation, was born in this great city (11:28).
- 4 Harran** Terah, Abram, Lot, and Sarai left Ur and, following the fertile crescent of the Euphrates River, headed toward the

land of Canaan. Along the way, they settled in the village of Harran for a while (11:31).

5 Shechem

God urged Abram to leave Harran and go to a place where he would become the father of a great nation (12:1, 2). So Abram, Lot, and Sarai traveled to the land of Canaan and settled near a city called Shechem (12:6).

6 Hebron

Abraham moved on to Hebron where he put down his deepest roots

(13:18). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived and were buried here.

7 Beersheba

The well at Beersheba was a source of conflict between Abraham and King Abimelek and later became a sign of the oath that they swore there (21:31). Years later, as Isaac was moving from place to place, God appeared to him here and passed on to him the covenant he had made with his father, Abraham (26:23–25).

8 Bethel

After deceiving his brother, Jacob left Beersheba and fled to Harran. Along the way, God revealed himself to Jacob in a dream and passed on the covenant he had made with Abraham and Isaac (28:10–22). Jacob lived in Harran, worked for Laban, and married Leah and Rachel (29:15–30). After a tense meeting with his brother, Esau, Jacob returned to Bethel (35:1).

9 Egypt

Jacob had 12 sons, including Joseph, Jacob's favorite. Joseph's 10 older brothers grew jealous, until one day the brothers sold him to Midianite merchants going to Egypt. Eventually, Joseph rose from Egyptian slave to Pharaoh's "right-hand man," saving Egypt from famine. His entire family moved from Canaan to Egypt and settled there (46:3–7).

A. THE STORY OF CREATION (1:1–2:3)

We sometimes wonder how our world came to be. But here we find the answer. God created the earth and everything in it, and made humans like himself. Although we may not understand the complexity of just how he did it, it is clear that God did create all life. This shows not only God's authority over humanity, but his deep love for all people.

The Beginning

1 In the beginning^a God created the heavens and the earth.^b **2** Now the earth was formless and empty,^c darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God^d was hovering over the waters.

1:1

^a Jn 1:1-2

^b Job 38:4; Ps 90:2;

Isa 42:5; 44:24;

45:12, 18; Ac 17:24;

Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11

1:2

^c Jer 4:23

^d Ps 104:30

1:1 The simple statement that God created the heavens and the earth is one of the most challenging concepts confronting the modern mind. The vast galaxy we live in is spinning at the incredible speed of 490,000 miles an hour. But even at this breakneck speed, our galaxy still needs 200 million years to make one rotation.

And there are over one billion other galaxies just like ours in the universe.

Some scientists say that the number of stars in creation is equal to all the grains of all the sands on all the beaches of the world. Yet this complex sea of spinning stars functions with remarkable order

1:3
^ePs 33:6, 9; 148:5;
 Heb 11:3
^f2Co 4:6*

1:5
^gPs 74:16

1:6
^hJer 10:12

1:7
ⁱJob 38:8-11, 16;
 Ps 148:4

1:9
^jJob 38:8-11;
 Ps 104:6-9; Pr 8:29;
 Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5

1:11
^kPs 65:9-13; 104:14

³And God said,^e "Let there be light," and there was light.^f ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."^g And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a vault^h between the waters to separate water from water."⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it.ⁱ And it was so. ⁸God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,^j and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation:^k seed-bearing plants and trees

BEGINNINGS

Origin of the universe

The Bible does not discuss the subject of evolution. Rather, its worldview assumes God created the world. The biblical view of creation is not in conflict with science; rather, it is in conflict with any worldview that starts without a creator.

Equally committed and sincere Christians have struggled with the subject of beginnings and come to **differing conclusions**. This, of course, is to be expected because the evidence is very old and, due to the ravages of the ages, quite fragmented. Students of the Bible and of science should avoid polarizations and black/white thinking. Students of the Bible must be careful not to make the Bible say what it doesn't say, and students of science must not make science say what it doesn't say.

The most important aspect of the continuing discussion is not the process of creation, but the origin of creation. **The world is not a product of blind chance and probability; God created it.**

The Bible not only tells us that the world was created by God; more importantly, it tells us who this God is. It reveals God's personality, his character, and his plan for his creation. It also reveals **God's deepest desire: to relate to and fellowship with the people he created**. God took the ultimate step toward fellowship with us through his historic visit to this planet in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. We can know in a very personal way this God who created the universe.

The heavens and the earth are here. We are here. God created all that we see and experience. The book of Genesis begins, "God created the heavens and the earth." Here we begin the most exciting and fulfilling journey imaginable.

and efficiency. To say that the universe "just happened" or "evolved" requires more faith than to believe that God is behind these amazing statistics. God truly did create a wonderful universe.

God did not need to create the universe; he chose to create it. Why? God is love, and love is best expressed toward something or someone else—so God created the world and people as an expression of his love. We should avoid reducing God's creation to merely scientific terms. Remember that God created the universe because he loves us.

1:1ff The creation story teaches us much about God and ourselves. First, we learn about God: (1) he is creative; (2) as the Creator he is distinct from his creation; (3) he is eternal and in control of the world. We also learn about ourselves: (1) since God chose to create us, we are valuable in his eyes; (2) we are more important than the animals. (See 1:28 for more on our role in the created order.)

1:1ff Just how did God create the earth? This is still a subject of great debate. Some say that with a sudden explosion, the universe appeared. Others say God started the process, and the universe evolved over billions of years. Almost every ancient religion has its own story to explain how the earth came to be. And almost every scientist has an opinion on the origin of the universe. But only the Bible shows one supreme God creating the earth out of his great love and giving all people a special place in it. We will never know all the answers to how God created the earth, but the Bible tells us that God did create it. That fact alone gives worth and dignity to all people.

1:2 Who created God? To ask that question is to assume there was another creator before God. At some time, however, we are forced to stop asking that question and realize that there had to be something that has always existed. God is that infinite Being who has always been and who was created by no one. This is difficult to understand because finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite. For example,

we can try to think of the highest number, but we can't do it. Likewise, we must not limit the infinite God by our finite understanding.

1:2 The statement "the earth was formless and empty" provides the setting for the creation narrative that follows. During the second and third days of creation, God gave *form* to the universe; during the next three days, God *filled* the earth with living beings. The "darkness . . . over the surface of the deep" was dispelled on the first day, when God created light.

1:2 The image of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters is similar to a mother bird caring for and protecting its young (see Deuteronomy 32:11, 12; Isaiah 31:5). God's Spirit was actively involved in the creation of the world (see Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). God's care and protection are still active.

1:3—2:7 How long did it take God to create the world? There are two basic views about the days of creation: (1) each day was a literal 24-hour period; (2) each day represents an indefinite period of time (even millions of years).

The Bible does not say how long these time periods were. The real question, however, is not how long God took, but how he did it. God created the earth in an orderly fashion (he did not make plants before light), and he created men and women as unique beings capable of communication with him. No other part of creation can claim that remarkable privilege. It is not important how long it took God to create the world, whether a few days or a few billion years, but that he created it just the way he wanted it.

1:6 The "vault between the waters" was a separation between the sea and the mists of the skies.