

Old Testament Survey: A Chronological Approach

*[27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
[Luke 24:27]*

Genesis: The Beginning

[1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [Gen 1:1]

1. Introduction

A. Genesis is a book of beginnings. It introduces the basics of the biblical message. It tells the story of the beginning of the human race (1-11:9) and the Hebrew race (11:10-50:26). We see the beginning of the cosmos (1:1), the natural world (1:2-25), the human race (1:26-28), marriage (2:22-24), sin (3:1-7), salvation (3:15), sacrifice (3:21), family (4:1-15), civilization (4:16-21), government (9:1-6), covenant (15:1-5), and faith (15:6).

B. Genesis is the story of God. God is a personal being who cares about His creation and the human struggle of the fallen world. It is also the story of humanity under God.

C. The author of Genesis is Moses. He was the ultimate author, compiler, and editor of the Genesis record.

2. Background

A. Genesis involves 3 basic settings. 1. The ancient history of the world from creation until the birth of Terah (2296 BC) takes place in the Fertile Crescent (1-11). 2. The birth of Terah to Joseph's arrival in Egypt (1899 BC) takes place mostly in Canaan (12-36). 3. Joseph's arrival in Egypt and his death (1806 BC) takes place mostly in Egypt (37-50).

B. Dates of the Patriarch's (BC): Abraham (2166-1991), Isaac (2066-1886), Jacob (2006-1859), Joseph (1916-1806).

3. Structure

A. A key structural marker used through Genesis is the 10 "toledoth," which means, "the records of." Toledoth introduces different literary sections.

B. Literary Outline based on "toledoth": 1. Records of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26). 2. Records of the descendants of Adam (5:1-6:8). 3. Records of Noah (6:9-9:29). 4. Records of the sons of Noah (10:1-11:9). 5. Records of Shem (11:10-26). 6. Records of Terah (11:27-25:11). 7. Records of Ishmael (25:12-18). 8. Records of Isaac (25:19-35:29). 9. Records of Esau (36:1-37:1). 10. Records of Jacob (37:2-50:26).

C. Thematic Outline: 2 key divisions= 1. Primeval (Ancient) History- the beginning of the human race (1-11:9). 2. Patriarchal History- the beginning of the Hebrew race (11:10-50:26).

I. Primeval History (1-11:9)

A. Creation (1-2)

B. Fall (3-5)

C. Flood (6-9)

D. Nations 10:1-11:9)

II. Patriarchal History (11:10-25:11)

A. Abraham (11:10-25:11)

B. Isaac (25:12-26:35)

C. Jacob (27-36)

D. Joseph (37-50)

4. Message

Genesis provided Israel with an explanation of her place in the history of the world. Moses explains how God's original plan for creation was marred by sin and how Israel was set aside for the special purpose of mediating God's redemptive blessings to the world. As a divine history of the world, Genesis covers more time than any other biblical book. It emphasizes the importance of the Abrahamic covenant. Genesis was intended to cause Moses' generation to trust God by better understanding their past heritage, present purpose, and future destiny as they anticipated entrance into the Promised Land.

I. Primeval History (1-11:9)

The opening prologue (1-11) explains to Israel her purpose by tracing God's redemptive program and messianic lineage from Eden to Abraham. This section explains the terrible progress of sin and the reason God's redemptive program was necessary. This section is the foundation of the biblical worldview, and without this part the rest would be somewhat incomprehensible.

A. Creation (1-2)

A. These chapters describe God's original work of creation. From the beginning, Genesis assumes the existence of God (Elohim) and the fact of creation. Knowledge of the original creation would help the people better understand how sin and the Fall negatively impacted the wonderful world God made. Knowledge of God's 6 days of work and 1 day of rest would help Israel understand the pattern of their work and rest (Exodus 20:8-11).

B. Humanity was the pinnacle of God's creation because they are made in His image (1:26-27). Man and woman were given the role as theocratic administrators who would co-rule God's creation on His behalf (1:28, 2:8-20). Man's stewardship over creation (2:15) as well as the presence of the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9, 17) would remind Moses' audience that they too had the responsibility of obedience in order to experience God's blessing (Lev. 26, Deut. 28).

C. Genesis 1 summarizes the creation of the world, and Genesis 2 scrutinizes it in greater detail with a focus on humanity.

D. Creation is one of absolute beginning (ex nihilo- out of nothing) by the power of God's spoken word. The original creation was instantaneous, having the appearance of age and living things (plants, animals, and eventually humans from the dust of the ground). These living things reproduce after their kind (1:12, 21, 24, 25).

E. Genesis clearly refutes: 1. Atheism- there is no God. 2. Pantheism- all is God. 3. Polytheism- many God's exist. 4. Materialism- matter is eternal. 5. Humanism- man is the measure of all things. 6. Naturalism- nature is ultimate.

F. The Genesis account of creation contradicts secular evolution, which theorizes that all life, including humans, evolved over billions of years from lower life forms by natural processes. The results of the naturalistic evolutionary hypothesis have left a spiritual void that erases all moral and ethical accountability and ultimately abandons all hope for humanity.

B. Fall (3-5)

A. The major crisis for the newly created world comes in Genesis 3 with the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. This resulted in their expulsion from the garden of Eden. Their descendants would follow in their rebellion which resulted in the continuing story of human depravity and its terrible consequences. Spiritual death and human suffering came immediately and eventually resulted in their physical death (3:3, 19). Death reigned because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:14), and human depravity is clear from Genesis 3 forward. The immediate consequences were fear, guilt, shame, and a broken relationship with God.

B. God graciously provided for their redemption by clothing their inadequacy (3:21) and predicting their ultimate salvation by the "seed" of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (3:15). Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy of the Bible. It is the gospel announced by God Himself to our first parents (protoevangelium). This is the first ray of hope for humanity after the Fall. God would one day send one who would defeat His enemy. This would eventually allow for the restoration of all things to God's original design and restoration of man's position as theocratic administrators.

C. The genealogy from Adam to Noah traces the line from which God's blessing (3:15) would come (4:25-5:32) and contrasts it with the ungodly line of Cain (4:17-24). The repetition of death in Genesis 5 testifies to the reality of the curse.

C. Flood (6-9)

A. The growing power of sin approached epic proportions as the human race became involved in perpetual wickedness (6:1-7). God moved to destroy humanity through the flood. God graciously preserved Noah and his family safely through the flood in the ark. The global extent of the flood is indicated by the fact that all the high mountains were covered (7:19), all living things on land perished (7:21), the length of the flood (371 days), and the great size of the ark (1,400,000 cubic feet, 1.5 football fields long) (see also 1 Pet. 3:3-7).

B. God's intent to restore creation is seen in His provision of the Noahic covenant following the flood (8:20-9:17). The creation of human government with the power of capital punishment would serve as a deterrent preventing humanity from regressing back to the level of violence seen in the pre-flood (antediluvian) world.

D. Nations (10:1-11:9)

The subsequent dispersion of the nations at the tower of Babel (10:1-11:9) indicates that obedience results in blessing and disobedience results in scattering. Unfortunately, such scattering would recur many times throughout Israel's history (Lev. 26, Deut. 28). The confusion of languages that resulted continued unabated until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The scattering of the nations set the stage for the calling and selection of Abraham which would eventually result in salvation being brought to all peoples.

[9] After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" [Rev. 7:9-10]

