

Genesis

Who, When, Where

Written by Moses. Moses was a Hebrew, born in Egypt towards the end of the 215 years that his people lived there. He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter as a baby and raised as part of the royal family. He left (ran away) from Egypt when he was 40 and lived in Midian to the east where he married and worked as a shepherd for his father in law. When he was about 80 Yahweh called him to return to Egypt and lead his people back to their promised land. He did, but it was a journey that took another 40 years. Moses himself never entered it, but he died at 120, just before they finally entered the land under the leadership of his disciple, Joshua.

So we think Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible shortly after the Exodus from Egypt. Presumably the things in Genesis were part of what he was talking to Yahweh about when he spent 40 days on the Mountain.

The book of Genesis itself covers a period of about 2,300 years, from the creation of Adam to the Israel family migration to Egypt.

Although the book is set elsewhere, Moses probably wrote Genesis on Mt Sinai. Canaan is the area around the modern country of Israel. Ur, where Abraham was born, was in what we now call southern Iraq, and Abraham lived for many years in Haran, southern Turkey before moving on after his father passed away.

Presumably the world geography was altered completely by the flood, so we have no idea where Eden, or any other pre-flood location was actually located.

Summary

Genesis is the story of the beginning of all things. Time. The Earth. Humanity. Marriage. Work. Language. The Jews. Sin. Christianity. Yahweh's plan for you.

Most of it was probably passed down orally from generation to generation, but Moses collated it all together and wrote it down.

Some of the people mentioned in Genesis lived a long time. Adam, for example, was still alive when Noah's father was born almost 900 years later! So they would quite possibly have had opportunity to check in person with Adam what things were like back in the garden of Eden.

Genesis also tells the story of man's rebellion against God and the destruction of all life on the planet (except for a single family) when God regretted having made man and flooded the whole world to wipe him out.

And the story of how Yahweh subsequently chose one man, Abram, and his descendants to be "His People". And that family's story starts to unfold as they follow God and are protected by him as they expand to become a tribe of sojourners living in a foreign land.

Before You Read

Genesis answers some of those big questions. Where did we come from? Why were we created? Is there a God? How long have humans been on this planet? Why do Chinese people speak differently to Europeans? And how much do they both have in common?

It also answers questions like. Does God care? Will he protect me? Is suffering ever part of God's plan?

And a lot of the things you read in Genesis are "types" or models, illustrations, of things which happen in the New Testament, particularly concerning Yeshua. They are real things which happened thousands of years ago, but which prophetically match real things which happened thousands of years later.

It's a big book. And there is a lot there. You will probably have to read it many times to understand more than the surface facts. But it will be worth it.

Key Verses

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

That says so much. Time began then too, not just the planet. And God created it. It didn't "just happen".

BTW: Hebrew words have different forms for one, two, or three or more. God here is in the form of three or more, but created is in the singular. It is like saying in English, "We is". What is God trying to teach us with this bad grammar?

Genesis 1:24

Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.

Marriage was instituted by God. Before the fall. It was something special to remind us that we are two parts of a whole.

Later on, (in the New Testament), we learn that marriage is also an illustration of the relationship between Yeshua and the church.

It's a big deal.

Genesis 1:26

God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

It's huge that mankind is made in the image of God. What does that mean to you? What does that mean in terms of our importance in Creation?

How do you rule over Creation? What does that look like in a practical way?

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them. God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Be fruitful and multiply wasn't a command. It was a blessing.

Genesis 2:3

God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because he rested in it from all his work of creation which he had done.

God rested.

Apart from anything else that probably means we should take a break every now and then too!

But more importantly, God made the seventh day, (Saturday), holy. Holy means "set apart for God's exclusive use", it is not the same as righteous. It has nothing to do with being good or bad.

The seventh day is holy. So are you, (if you are a Christian). You have been set aside for God's exclusive use. Do you live like that?

Can you imagine going into God's temple and getting one of the ceremonial bowls to take home and use as a bedpan?

How is that different to a Christian living a life which is no different to that of a non-Christian?

Genesis 2:15

Yahweh God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.

This is very important. Before the fall, before the world was cursed because of man's sin, God told man to work.

Work is a good thing. (Although after the fall work became much harder, but it is still a good thing).

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more subtle than any animal of the field which Yahweh God had made. He said to the woman, "Has God really said, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'"

Satan's strategy for the last 6,000 years has been the same. Start by getting them to doubt what God said.

He tried it again with Yeshua. But he knew what God had said and answered with "Yes he did. In fact it is written..."

How does Satan make you doubt God?

How do you answer?

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took some of its fruit, and ate; and she gave some to her husband with her, and he ate it, too

This should read, "When the woman remembered that God had said do not eat this tree", she walked away.

But we're not like that are we. We rely on our own wisdom instead of God's.

It looks like it's good for me, it's beautiful, and it will make me wiser. These are the three big mistakes we all make that lead us into sin. We convince ourselves that it's OK.

Adam was different. He wasn't deceived into by a serpent or by his own thinking. He just deliberately took it.

Adam is the one who plunged mankind into generations of darkness and cursed us to inherit that same propensity to sin which dominates our life on earth.

Genesis 3:15

I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel."

Offspring here is singular. Who is it? Her first offspring was Cain... did Yahweh mean Cain?

Or was there someone later on, descendant from Eve, who bruised Satan's head?

Genesis 6:5

Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was continually only evil.

Do you think things have improved since then?

How do you think God feels about that? What do you think he wants to do about it?

It will be interesting to see if and how your view on that changes as you read the rest of the Bible.

Genesis 9:1

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."

God repeats his blessing from Genesis 1. It's not a command, it's a blessing.

Genesis 9:3

Every moving thing that lives will be food for you. As I gave you the green herb, I have given everything to you.

In the beginning Adam and Eve were vegetarians. It was only after the flood that God gave us permission to eat animals.

I don't know why, but importantly, he did give us permission. So it's OK to eat meat. But he did say we shouldn't eat blood.

He also made animals afraid of us. Presumably up until then, they weren't.

Genesis 9:18-19

The sons of Noah who went out from the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham is the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these, the whole earth was populated.

Lots of people argue about whether creation was literally in 7 days, and whether the Earth is only about 6,000 years old, (as you can calculate from what the Bible says). But even those who surrender to popular science theory that the Earth is older, come unstuck right here. Regardless of how old the Earth is, the Bible clearly states here that every human on the planet is descendant from Noah, who was born around 5,000 years ago, (and who survived the global flood around 4,500 years ago). This is not compatible with a belief in evolutionary theory as it is currently taught. You have to choose.

Genesis 11:5

"Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do. Now nothing will be withheld from them, which they intend to do.

Everyone used to speak the same language. Some people think it was Hebrew. Who knows.

Yahweh knew that no evil would be impossible for us if we continued like that, so he created multiple languages.

He had told us to spread out. We had gathered in one city. He forced us to spread out by confusing our language.

And now, everyone is learning English and we have almost undone the confusion. What do you think we will do with it?

Genesis 12:1

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Leave your country, and your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.

It's a big That is a big call. If God said to you, "Go to such and such a country and be a Gentile" I'm sure you would go. (If you wouldn't, you need to read Jonah).

But God just said to Abram, ... "Let's go" "Where?" "I'll let you know when we get there" ... that takes faith to get up and follow that call. doesn't it! Kind of like, "Trust me Peter, step out of the boat."

Genesis 12:3

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.

Ever made fun of Jews?

Uh oh?

Genesis 12:12-13

It will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me, but they will save you alive. Please say that you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that my soul may live because of you."

Technically she was kind of his sister... In Genesis 20:12 we read that they shared a father, (Terah), but they had different mothers.

So Abram didn't qualify as chivalrous, and protected himself with a half truth, while exposing his wife to the risk of someone sleeping with her thinking she was unmarried.

I guess we all "bend" the truth. But should we?

Genesis 12:17

Yahweh afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

I wonder how many modern plagues, diseases, disasters are a consequence of our doing wrong against God?

Genesis 13:14-17

Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot was separated from him, "Now, lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring may also be counted. Arise, walk through the land in its length and in its width; for I will give it to you."

Yahweh made an unconditional covenant with Abram to give the land to him and his (non-existent) descendants.

This is huge. He is old and childless. God is promising him millions of descendants. And giving him a big piece of land which extends from Egypt to the red sea.

They have never had full control of that land. When do you think God will complete that promise?

Genesis 14:20

Abram gave him a tenth of all.

Gave who? Who is this Melchizedek?

Read Hebrews 7.

This is one of the key stories in the Old Testament, and explains why our eternal home will not be governed by Jewish Law.

Genesis 15:13

Yahweh said to Abram, "Know for sure that your offspring will live as foreigners in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them. They will afflict them four hundred years.

They were already living as foreigners in a land not theirs... So this was going to go on for another 400 years before they would own the land.

Kind of a good news, bad news promise?

But 400 years later, after moving to Egypt during a famine, (as Yahweh's incredible provision for them), living there for 215 years, including a generation of slavery, fleeing from there in the midst of incredible miracles, wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, they finally re-entered the land under the leadership of Yeshua, (Joshua), and took ownership of the land promised to their ancestor Abram 400 years before. When Yahweh promises, Yahweh delivers.

Genesis 15:18

I have given this land to your offspring, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.

Check that on a map. That's from Egypt to Iraq. Much bigger than they have right now. But Yahweh, the god who always delivers his promise... is going to give it to them. Stay tuned.

Genesis 16:2

Sarai said to Abram, "See now, Yahweh has restrained me from bearing. Please go in to my servant. It may be that I will obtain children by her." Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

That one sentence started all the problems we currently have in the Middle East, 3,000 years later. By not waiting for God to provide the fulfillment to God's promise in Genesis 15, Sarai set the course of history.

Most Arabs trace their ancestry back to Abraham. Through Ishmael. The Jews trace theirs back through Isaac. And so both believe they have a legitimate claim to the promise that was made to their ancestor Abraham. Ownership of the land we call Israel.

Wait for God to fulfil his promise his way, in his time.

Genesis 18:4

"Let a little water be fetched, wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. I will get a morsel of bread so you can refresh your heart. After that you may go your way, now that you have come to your servant."

This is what Abraham said when Yahweh and two "friends" came to visit. Very humble. If we read on, the morsel of bread he prepared was 3 seahs of flour. That's more than 25 litres of flour. And they cooked a whole calf, ... quite a meal.

In ancient times we seem to have been more humble and modest. These days we talk ourselves up so much I think we're more likely to promise a ton of bread, and the best beef you ever tasted... and deliver a morsel.

Genesis 25:23

Yahweh said to her, "Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will be separated from your body. The one people will be stronger than the other people. The elder will serve the younger."

Before they were born, Yahweh had decided that they would become two peoples. He had decided that the older would serve the younger.

He chose Jacob over Esau, just as he previously chose Isaac not Ishmael, and afterwards would choose Joseph not his 10 older brothers.

We just read in the chapter before how Abraham's servant had travelled thousands of miles and ended up at a particular well, at exactly the moment his master's grand-niece had turned up there to draw water.

Never doubt that Yahweh runs everything.

Genesis 50:20

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is today, to save many people alive.

Joseph learned this huge lesson in life. Other people did things intending to harm him. But in all that God was working good. God was using that to bring blessing to his whole family. (And the generations who would come after them).

Joseph endured being sold by his brothers, being falsely imprisoned, being forgotten by people he had helped... But he never once looked like giving up. Never once looked suicidal. Because he knew that God was working good in it.

If God asked you, "Do you mind if I make your life totally miserable, to bring about great blessing for others?" How would you react?

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

So, big stuff.

Let's start with those "boring genealogies". If we add them all up we are told that Terah, Abraham's father, was born 1878 years after Adam was created. Later on we read more clues, and eventually, we can add them all up to find out that Adam was created just under 6,000 years ago.

Now, there is a lot of disagreement about whether the days in Genesis 1 were literal (ie, 24 hours each), or figurative. So there is argument about whether the solar system, and the planet existed for a long time before that or not. But if you believe the Bible you have very little choice but to accept that mankind has been here less than 6,000 years.

Personally, I do believe those days were literal, and that the whole universe around us was created only thousands of years ago.

There are some amazing stories here. The first sin. Abraham chosen by Yahweh. God visiting mankind and making promises to him. A flood that killed everything. And even Joseph, sold by his brothers into slavery, but yet through God's plan, through that betrayal, going on to save those very brothers and the rest of his family from starvation and famine.

And as well as answering a lot of questions, it also raises more.

Who were these Nephilim, the half breed children of the sons of God and the daughters of men? What does that even mean?

Why did God choose an old Iraqi with an infertile wife to become "His People"?

Were they really six literal days?

Why did God let Joseph go through such hard times before he rescued him?

I'm sure you have some of your own.