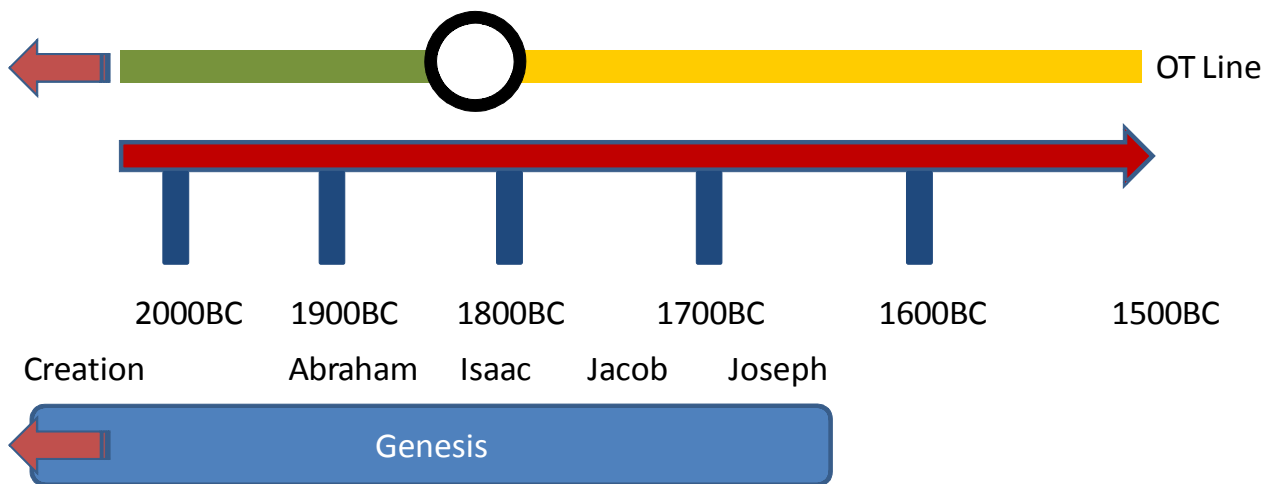


Session 1: A Kingdom made and lost

(Genesis)



The Old and New Testaments (OT and NT) both rely on what happens here in Genesis. How many times have you looked at the OT and Genesis? What do you think is the point of looking at this book? Can't we just skip it and learn all we need to know from the NT?...

"Who wrote Genesis then?"

The book itself makes no claim to authorship, however the traditional view says that the 1st five books of the Bible, known in part as the Torah by the Jews (meaning teaching), were dictated by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and hence we have the expression "The Law of Moses". More recent scholarly work tends towards Moses compiling eyewitness accounts on cuniform tablets from some of the characters mentioned in the book such as Adam. The first 5 books of the Bible are also known as the Pentateuch. This word comes from the Greek words 'penta' (= 5) 'teuchos' (= scroll). So 'pentateuch' indicates a 5 scrolled book.

BTW: the answer to the question above is 'God!': check out 2 Tim: 3:16.

Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action)

When you want to learn about God and His plan for us where better to start than the **beginning**? Genesis literally means "in the beginning", and when we open our Bibles at the first page we start with almost nothing – no world, no sky, no people, no churches. Let's have a look at our Bibles, start here and see where it takes us!

In Genesis 1:1-2:25 there is a description of the creation of the world. We're going to pick out a few key verses to see what they can tell us.

- **Read Gen 1:1, 1:3** – what do these verses tell us about God?

In the beginning God (prepared, formed, fashioned, and) created the heavens and the earth. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

God created the world step-by-step, creating earth, day, night, water, sea, sky, fish, birds, other animals and mankind.

"Was the world created in a literal 7 days?"

The word in the Hebrew for day is *yôm*. When compared to use in other Scriptures (such as Exodus 20:11) the accepted interpretation is a literal 24 hour period. Remember science is 'thinking God's thoughts after Him' as opposed to the other way round.

- **Read Gen 1:31-2:3** – what does this tell us about creation?

And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good (suitable, pleasant) and He approved it completely. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. And God blessed (spoke good of) the seventh day, set it apart as His own, and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had created and done.

In Gen 1:27, we learn something very special about human beings, what is that?

- **Read Gen 1:26-29 and 2:15** – what do you think were the reasons that God created mankind?

God said, Let Us [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] make mankind in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the [tame] beasts, and over all of the earth, and over everything that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it [using all its vast resources in the service of God and man]; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves upon the earth. And God said, See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the land and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and guard and keep it.

At the end of chapter 2 it all seems pretty perfect, right? We're obviously not living in the garden now, so what went wrong?

- **Read Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-7** – what instruction does God give to Adam? What happens next?
- **Read 3:1-5** – what do you think the serpent did?
- **Read Gen 3:6-7** – what was Adam and Eve's response?

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and blessing and calamity you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Now the serpent was more subtle and crafty than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made. And he [Satan] said to the woman, Can it really be that God has said, You shall not eat from every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit from the trees of the garden, Except the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. But the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil and blessing and calamity. And when the woman saw that the tree was good (suitable, pleasant) for food and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in order to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some also to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves apronlike girdles.

Looking at the last 2 questions, do you think that sometimes, similar things happen to us today?

- **Read Gen 3:8-24** – what were the results of their actions?

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? He said, I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat? And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled (cheated, outwitted, and deceived) me, and I ate. And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all [domestic] animals and above every [wild] living thing of the field; upon your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust [and what it contains] all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her [a]Offspring; He will bruise and tread your head underfoot, and you will lie in wait and bruise His heel. To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your grief and your suffering in pregnancy and the pangs of childbearing; with spasms of distress you will bring forth children. Yet your desire and craving will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. And to Adam He said, Because you have listened and given heed to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it, the ground is under a curse because of you; in sorrow and toil shall you eat [of the fruits] of it all the days of your life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return. The man called his wife's name Eve [life spring], because she was the mother of all the living. For Adam also and for his wife the Lord God made long coats (tunics) of skins and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us [the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit], to know [how to distinguish between] good and evil and blessing and calamity; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live [b]forever— Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So [God] drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the [c]cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep and guard the way to the tree of life.

[a] Genesis 3:15 Christ fulfills through his victory over Satan the wonderful promise here spoken. See also Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31; Rom. 16:20; Gal. 4:4; Rev. 12:17.

[b] Genesis 3:22 This sentence is left unfinished, as if to hasten to avert the tragedy suggested of men living on forever in their now fallen state.

[c] Genesis 3:24 Cherubim are ministering spirits manifesting God's invisible presence and symbolizing His action (E.F. Harrison et al., eds., Baker's Dictionary of Theology).

As noted above in the footnotes, Gen 3:15 is considered as the first prophesy about Jesus. It reveals to us that the descendant of the woman is Jesus and He would be responsible for destroying the serpent (aka Satan/the devil).

prophesy – something that has been revealed by God to a person. It can be a prediction or illustration of something that will happen in the future. There are well over 100 direct references to Christ in the OT. Can you reference any?

At this point in Genesis we know life is no longer perfect. God has been disobeyed and sin is now part of everyday life.

sin – disobeying God and breaking his rules. 1 John 2: 15-17 show us that the 3 things that are in the world and not of God: 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'. Can you see how the devil uses each one in the passage we have read? He has not changed.

If you read Genesis chapter 4 you would learn about how Cain murdered Abel, and in chapter 6 how God is so upset with how wicked the people in the world are that he decides to send a flood to cover the whole earth and wipe everything out.

But all is not lost! Gen 6:8 says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

In this case grace means approval; God was pleased with how Noah and his family behaved. What character quality would you associate with Noah and why?

Genesis chapters 7-9 show that God did send this flood, but he looked after Noah and his family.

"Did the flood cover the whole world then?"

Genesis 7:19-23 makes it clear it was. What is the significance of the reference to the Flood made in Matthew 24:37-39?

"So how what about the dinosaurs?"

There were dinosaurs on board, Genesis 6:19-20 make that clear. Looking at the measurements given in Genesis 6:15, creationist-based research has shown that the Ark was massive (scientific term!) and 16,000 or so animals would have taken considerably less than half the space available. The 55 kinds of dinosaurs would have likely been 'young adults' or 'teenagers'.

Sadly sin was still part of the world after the flood, as you can see if you read chapter 11 and the story of the Tower of Babel, where men disobeyed God's instructions and decided to build a tower to the heavens and show off instead of looking after the earth.

"How did the languages of the world come about?"

Before Babel everyone on earth spoke the same language (Genesis 11:1) and they knew what 'language' was! The people journeyed east and wanted to make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower. Today the site of the 'Great Ziggurat of Ur' in Sumur (Iraq) stands as testimony to what the tower would have been like. This pride forced God's hand into confusing their language and scattering the people over the earth (Genesis 11:7-8). So, the people were scattered and the one 'confused' yet common language *developed* into the multiple languages we have today.

We are now going to skip ahead to chapter 12 and a man named Abram, later called Abraham by God. He is described as one of the Patriarchs, which means he is considered to be one of the fathers of the Israelite nation.

➤ **Read Gen 12:1-7** – what was God's plan for Abram, and what does he do about it?

Now [in Haran] the Lord said to Abram, Go for yourself [for your own advantage] away from your country, from your relatives and your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you [with abundant increase of favors] and make your name famous and distinguished, and you will be a blessing [dispensing good to others]. And I will bless those who bless you [who confer prosperity or happiness upon you] and [a]curse him who curses or uses insolent language toward you; in you will all the families and kindred of the earth be blessed [and by you they will bless themselves]. So Abram departed, as the Lord had directed him; and Lot [his nephew] went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the persons [servants] that they had acquired in Haran, and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the locality of Shechem, to the oak or terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, I will give this land to your posterity. So Abram built an altar there to the Lord, Who had appeared to him.

[a] Genesis 12:3 To look with disfavour on the Jews was to invite God's displeasure; to treat the Jews offensively was to incur His wrath. But to befriend the Jews was to bring down upon one's head the rewards of a promise that could not be broken.

God is now starting to prepare a Chosen People for Himself. Abram was a normal guy, but he trusted God, followed the instructions that he was given and ended up moving to Canaan.

- **Read Gen 15:1-7** – what does God promise Abram?

After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am your [a]Shield, your abundant compensation, and your reward shall be exceedingly great. And Abram said, Lord God, what can You give me, since I am going on [from this world] childless and he who shall be the owner and heir of my house is this [steward] Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram continued, Look, You have given me no child; and [a servant] born in my house is my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, This man shall not be your heir, but he who shall come from your own body shall be your heir. And He brought him outside [his tent into the starlight] and said, Look now toward the heavens and count the stars—if you are able to number them. Then He said to him, So shall your descendants be. And he [Abram] believed in (trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to) the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness (right standing with God). And He said to him, I am the [same] Lord, Who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land as an inheritance.

[a] The reference is to the Lord as Abram's King.

However it is not always easy to be patient and wait for God's timing; in chapter 16 Abram and his wife doubt God will give them a child (never mind many descendants) and take matters into their own hands. God keeps his promises though, and in chapter 21 we learn of the birth of Isaac.

Do you think it is sometimes difficult to trust God will look after you? Are we tempted to take matters into our own hands?

In Genesis 22:1-18 Abraham's faith is tested. Can you relate an incident in which your faith has been tested?

- **Read Gen 22:1-18** – when God learns Abraham is faithful, what does he promise (see verses 17-18)? What do you think verse 18 means?

After these events, God tested and proved Abraham and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Here I am. [God] said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I will 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 split the wood for the burnt offering, and then began the trip to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. And Abraham said to his servants, Settle down and stay here with the donkey, and I and the young man will go yonder and worship and [a]come again to you. Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on [the shoulders of] Isaac his son, and he took the fire (the firepot) in his own hand, and a knife; and the two of them went on together. And Isaac said to Abraham, My father! And he said, Here I am, my son. [Isaac] said, See, here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt sacrifice? Abraham said, My son, [b]God Himself will provide a lamb for the burnt offering. So the two went on together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there; then he laid the wood in order and [c]bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar on the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took hold of the knife to slay his son. But the [d]Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! He answered, Here I am. And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear and revere God, since you have not held back from Me or begrudged giving Me your son, your only son. Then Abraham looked up and glanced around, 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 for a burnt offering and an ascending sacrifice instead of his son! So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide. And it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it will be provided. The

Angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time And said, I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, that since you have done this and have not withheld [from Me] or begrudged [giving Me] your son, your only son, In blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore. And your Seed (Heir) will possess the gate of His enemies, And in your Seed [[e]Christ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed and [by Him] bless themselves, because you have heard and obeyed My voice.

[a] Genesis 22:5 Abraham was not lying to his servants or trying to deceive them. He believed God, Who had promised him that this young man's posterity was to inherit the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12:2, 3).

[b] Genesis 22:8 We must not suppose that this was the language merely of faith and obedience. Abraham spoke prophetically, and referred to that Lamb of God which He had provided for Himself, Who in the fullness of time would take away the sin of the world, and of Whom Isaac was a most expressive type (Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible with A Commentary). For Abraham was a prophet (Gen. 20:7). Jesus said Abraham hoped for "My day [My incarnation]; and he did see it and was delighted" (John 8:56).

[c] Genesis 22:9 Isaac, who was perhaps twenty-five years old (according to the ancient historian Josephus), shared his father's confidence in God's promise. Was not his very existence the result of God keeping His word? (Gen. 17:15-17.)

[d] Genesis 22:11 See footnote on Gen. 16:7.

[e] Genesis 22:18 We have the authority of the apostle Paul (Gal. 3:8, 16, 18) to restrict this promise to our blessed Lord, Who was the Seed through Whom alone all God's blessings of providence, mercy, grace, and glory should be conveyed to the nations of the earth (Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible with A Commentary).

God builds his new kingdom through people that have faith in Him. Although none of them are perfect (just like us) He keeps His promises to look after them and give them what they need.

Consider: God gives **Isaac and Rebekah** the children that they want – **Esau and Jacob** (Genesis 25)

Consider: **Jacob** was God's chosen one in spite of being a “deceiver” and the younger brother (Genesis 27-32). He wrestled with God and is blessed by Him.

Consider: God protects **Joseph** when his brothers turn on him and sell him as a slave. His exile from his family serves a greater purpose.

Joseph's story highlights God's greater plan. If we read Genesis 37 we can read about how Joseph does not get on with his brothers, and is disliked so much they sell him as a slave.

However, Joseph does well in Egypt, becoming an important member of Pharaoh's household (Genesis 41).

➤ **Read Gen 41:15-16, 37-41** – why do you think Joseph became powerful and important in Egypt?

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream and interpret it. Joseph answered Pharaoh, It is not in me; God [not I] will give Pharaoh a [favourable] answer of peace. And the plan seemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find this man's equal, a man in whom is the spirit of God? And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Forasmuch as [your] God has shown you all this, there is nobody as intelligent and discreet and understanding and wise as you are. You shall have charge over my house, and all my people shall be governed according to your word [with reverence, submission, and obedience]. Only in matters of the throne will I be greater than you are. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was now perfectly placed to look after his family when famine struck (Genesis 42-45).

As a result of Joseph's position in Egypt, all of the ancestors of the Israelites end up living in Egypt (Genesis 46), where the Israelite nation remains until Exodus, our next stop!

For the Bible students...

Consider: every person in Genesis is an historical figure. However, the NT gives us an increased understanding that these individuals were also a pattern and shadow of what was to come. Look up Romans 5:14 and Colossians 2:16-17. Discuss the following suggestions as types of Christ.

Adam – sonship. miraculous birth, love for his wife.

Noah – the Ark offering salvation from judgement and destruction.

Isaac – son of promise offered up as a sacrifice.

Joseph – shepherd care, loved by his father, his name means revealer of secrets.