

Introduction To The Book Of Genesis

The First of Five (Pentateuch)

Pronounced: [Pen·ta·teuch [**penta took**]

The book of **Genesis**, the introductory book to the Word of God canonized into what is called the **Bible**, is the first of five books of the **Bible** written by **Moses** and are referred to collectively as the *Pentateuch*. In ancient times there were no “books” as are known today. There were scrolls, called *teuchoi* in Greek, which were stored in sheath-like containers. *Pentateuch* is the Greek word for “five-roll.”

Jews refer to the Pentateuch as “the Torah” (Hebrew: *tora*, “law” or “instruction”), and they treat it as the most important part of their Bible. The Pentateuch is also known as the “the Books of Moses.”

The composition of the Pentateuch is as follows:

1. **Genesis**

Greek for *origin* or *beginning* traces the birth of the universe, the earth, man, marriage, sin, nations, languages and the Israelites, God’s chosen people. But most importantly it introduces God’s prescribed way of grace and faith for man to have a relationship and fellowship with God as opposed to Satan’s contrived system of works to achieve the approbation (approval) of God, which is *religion*.

Genesis is both a history of man and of the *redemption* of man. It is a most important treatment of several of the fundamental doctrines within God’s Word.

2. **Exodus**

Greek for *the way out* recounts how in **400 years** the family of Abraham grew to a nation under slavery in Egypt, their deliverance from this bondage by the hand of God through Moses, and the establishment of the Law and the tabernacle.

3. **Leviticus**

A manual for the Levites, hence the name, describes the rituals for sinful man under the Mosaic Law, all of which are pictures and types of the sacrifice of Christ.

4. Numbers

A numbering (census) of the people that describes the historical events experienced by the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. The Hebrew title for the book is *Bemidbar*, “in the desert.”

5. Deuteronomy

Greek for *second law* is a re-telling of the law and a link with the historical books of the Bible that follow. It tells of the death of Moses and of his replacement by Joshua, his successor.

Although there have been attempts to discredit Moses as the human author God utilized to write the *Pentateuch*, there are substantial counter-replies refuting all objections. This commentary is not the format to catalog such arguments. Suffice it to say that the rest of God’s Word accepts Mosaic authorship, for example:

- The Pentateuch itself affirms Moses as the author—**Exodus 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Numbers 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 31:9**
- Other Old Testament books affirm Moses as the author—**Joshua 1:7, 8; 8:32, 34; 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Daniel 9:11-13; Malachi 4:4**
- The New Testament affirms Moses as the author—**Matthew 19:8; Mark 12:19, 26; Luke 20:28; 24:27, 44; John 1:17; 45; 5:46, 47; 7:19; 8:5; Acts 6:14; Romans 10:5; and 1 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 3:15.**

The fact that Jesus Christ certified the Mosaic authorship of the *Pentateuch* should settle the matter for Christians. The most important point every person, believer and unbeliever alike, should understand is the overall *theme* and *purpose* of the entire **Bible**, hence it’s beginning in the book of **Genesis**.

The Theme and/or Purpose

The theme and/or purpose of the book of **Genesis**, and of the entire **Bible**, is to introduce **God’s grace** toward mankind expressed in word, deed and type, which culminates in the birth, sacrifice (spiritual death and material death upon Calvary’s cross) and resurrection of His only unique **Son, Jesus Christ**. This revelation is expressed throughout the book and in the following New Testament scriptures:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45)

For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. (John 5:46)

So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them . . . And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:15, 27)

This is the message of all of God's Word, as is seen in the presentation of Jesus Christ by Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8:26-39**. The Bible is in fact a compilation of **66 separate books** written by the hand of God through the media of the Holy Spirit using some **40 different** human authors over a period of **thousands of years**, yet with one integrated and central theme, which is the grace and love of God for man through His Son Jesus Christ.

The key verses of **Genesis** are (1) *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel (3:15)*, and (2) *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (12:3)*.

Time Frame and Date of Writing

The book of **Genesis** divides into three geographical settings: (1) the Fertile Crescent (**chapters 1-11**), (2) Israel (**chapters 12-36**), and (3) Egypt (**chapters 37-50**). It spans a greater duration of time than any other book of the Bible; in fact, it covers a longer period of time than all the other **65 books** of the Bible put together. Approximate time frames follow:

1. **2,000** or more years, **4000-2090 B.C. (chapters 1-11)**
 - a. Creation, **4000 B.C.** or earlier, depending upon interpretation (**1:1**)
 - b. Death of Terah, **2090 B.C. (11:32)**

Genesis 1:1, 2 (Gap theory)
2. **193 years, 2090-1897 B.C. (chapters 12-36)**
 - a. Death of Terah, **2090 B.C. (11:32)**
 - b. Joseph to Egypt, **1897 B.C. (37:2)**
3. **93 years, 1897-1804 B.C. (chapters 37-50)**
 - a. Joseph to Egypt, **1897 B.C. (37:2)**
 - b. Death of Joseph, **1804 B.C. (50:26)**

Conservative scholars generally date the **Exodus** about 1445 B.C. Hence **Genesis** would probably have been written between this date and Moses' death about forty years later. It is also possible that this one book of the Pentateuch was written *before* the **Exodus**, since all events in the book predate the **Exodus**.

Outline

Genesis may be outlined in several different ways. One way is according to the genealogies (the families). It may be portrayed in broad or minute detail, but it is basically divided into two categories, **chapters 1-11** and **12-50** respectfully, as follows:

I. Earth's Earliest Ages (**chapters 1-11**)

The Creation (**1, 2**)

The Temptation and Fall (**3**)

Cain and Abel (**4**)

Seth and His Descendants (**5**)

Widespread Sin and the Universal Flood (**6-8**)

Noah after the Flood (**9**)

The Table of Nations (**10**)

The Tower of Babel (**11**)

II. The Patriarchs of Israel (**chapters 12-50**)

Abraham (**12:1-25:18**)

Isaac (**25:19-26:35**)

Jacob (**27:1-36:43**)

Joseph (**37: -50:26**)

Postscript

The normal tendency when one reads the book of **Genesis**, and for that matter the entire Pentateuch, is to see only the judgment and restrictive hand of God, the Law. The reader must understand that God is immutable, He never changes. If He is indeed the God of grace and love today, He was this in the beginning.

Certainly He is a most holy God who cannot excuse sin; and thereby brings judgment on those who refuse to turn from their sin utilizing His provided grace-escape by **faith alone in Christ alone**. But overshadowing all His dealings with man is His gracious love for him, which will be seen in this, the very beginning of time and matter, the book of **Genesis**.

Always remember that the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.