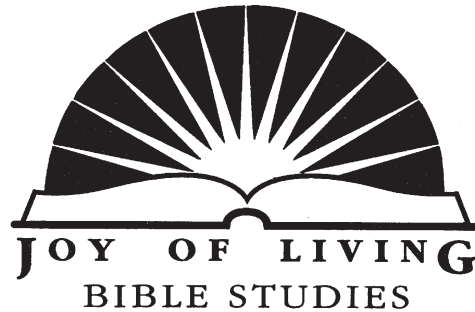


Genesis

Lesson 1



Introduction to Genesis

You are about to embark on the study of one of the most interesting and important books of the Bible. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," but there is a special importance to the book of Genesis since it is the book of "beginnings." It records for us the beginning of the heavens and the earth, people, sin, civilization, nations, agriculture, machinery, music and poetry. It tells us of the world's first marriage, the first child born, the first family, the first murder committed, the first drunkenness, the first kingdom established, the first heathen temple. Of more significance, Genesis is the beginning of God's revelation of Himself to humanity and records for us the first promise of redemption from our sin.

In Genesis we learn of the beginning of a special race of people, the Hebrews, also known as Israelites or Jews. These people would safeguard God's revelation by recording the Holy Word of God as the Spirit of God led them. The apostle Peter wrote, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Moses, the Author

The long-standing Jewish and Christian position is that Moses, guided by the Spirit of God, wrote the book of Genesis. Since the book closes about three hundred years prior to the birth of Moses, you may wonder how he could have written about what transpired before he was born. He may have obtained this information from historical records and oral traditions that had been handed down from his forefathers, and, like Luke for his Gospel, compiled the information under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Or, he may have received this information by direct revelation from God on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:3ff; 24:18ff; 34:1ff).

Originally the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—were regarded as one book, the *Pentateuch*. Originally written in Hebrew, these five books are called in that language the *Torah*, which means "instruction." Since these early writings were done on scrolls, it would have been difficult for one scroll to contain all the information, resulting in the division into five scrolls (which are now the five books). Traditionally each scroll was called by its first word. Genesis was called *Bereshith*, meaning "in the be-

ginning." The name *Genesis* was given to this first book of the Bible when it was translated from Hebrew into Greek in the third century B.C. *Genesis* is the transliteration of the Greek word meaning "origin, source or beginning."

Jesus spoke often about Moses and his writings. In Luke 24:27 we find, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." The writers of the many books of the New Testament also referred frequently to Moses, accepting his authorship of the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy. The Word of God definitely declares Genesis, as part of the Pentateuch, to be God's revelation delivered to Moses. Our Lord Jesus testified to its infallible truth in John 5:46-47, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Genesis and Science

Genesis does not attempt to grapple with or answer technical scientific questions. It deals with matters far beyond the realm of science. It is beyond the realm of science because science deals only with *phenomena*, the things that are perceived by the senses—things we can see, feel, taste, smell, or hear. Genesis, and the Bible as a whole, seeks to reveal the sacred meaning of God's being and purpose and His relationship with His creatures as He works out His plan for this world. These things cannot be perceived by the senses. The apostle Paul wrote, "For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Since there were no eyewitnesses to God's creation, we must accept by faith God's explanation of creation in Genesis 1. In Hebrews 11:3 we read, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." The Bible is not a science book but it is always compatible with proven scientific fact. Although the Genesis account is not a scientific account, it is accurate in every detail and can be completely trusted because it is the Word of God. In contrast, new scientific facts are continually coming to light, which cause man's theories—unproven explanations—to constantly change. H.L. Ellison states in the *International Bible Commentary*,

It is right and proper that those with scientific training should seek light on the secrets of nature and man's past from the Scriptures

as well as from the evidence of the physical universe. They are both the work of the same God and ultimately cannot be in conflict. But it must never be assumed that this information, incomplete by its very nature, and always liable to be modified as science advances, is a true understanding of the Scriptures and their purpose. We must never think that this world's wisdom and knowledge give a believer an advantage in the understanding of God's revelation, nor that ignorance is an aid to spirituality.¹

We are content to realize that eventually science will come to an agreement with the Word of God, which “stands firm in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89). Before the invention of the telescope, early astronomers numbered the stars in the thousands. Long before that, God had told Abraham to look up into the heavens. He promised Abraham descendants as innumerable as the stars (see Genesis 15:5). Now that scientists estimate that there are more stars than we can imagine in the observable universe—a number recently expressed as 1 followed by 25 zeros—their terminology fits in with the Scriptures.

In the past, many people thought the world was flat, and others thought that it rested on the back of a giant turtle. What does God's Word say? “He suspends the earth over nothing” (Job 26:7), and, “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth” (Isaiah 40:22). Again we see that science brings human understanding of the universe into alignment with the Word of God.

Since people have traveled into space, many of them have attested to the fact that only God could have created the order that they have seen in space. Astronaut Eugene A. Cernan said he was convinced the universe “didn't happen by accident.” Commenting on the view from space he said, “The earth looks big and beautiful, and blue and white. You can see the Antarctic to the North Pole and the continental shores. The earth looks so perfect. There are no strings to hold it up, no fulcrum upon which it rests. You think of the infinity of space and the infinity of time. You feel like you are looking back at the earth as God must be looking now, and as He must have when He created it. I am convinced of God by the order out in space.” Yes, surely we can look at the universe and say, “Oh, Lord, how great You are.”

What Genesis Teaches

The study of Genesis will be an enjoyable and enlightening study. It will change the way you perceive God Himself, the world and time. Genesis speaks to many of the great questions of the soul:

1. The eternal nature of God
2. Where did man come from?
3. What is the source or cause of sin?
4. How can sinful man get back to God?
5. How can a man please God?

The key to what Genesis teaches is found in the sublime statement, “In the beginning God.” Many people take the Bible from its inspired setting and try to make it revolve around their own specula-

tions and ideas. But the Bible says: “In the beginning God.” It does not say, “In the beginning man.” The “book of beginnings” begins with God—creation begins with God.

Everything points back to God, and yet how often we forget Him! We do not count Him in the beginning of all things, even in our lives. Often our eyes are fixed on circumstances instead of on God. So many people live just within the little circle of their own experiences. It would do us all good if we would read Genesis 1:1 and stop after the word “God”. Yes, in the very beginning of creation, in the beginning of the very first day, God was there. Is He in the beginning of every one of your days? What a difference it makes in our lives when He is!

A Daily Appointment with God

Make a daily appointment with God. Find a quiet spot. Take your Bible and your Bible study material with you. Remember how very important your appointment with God is and make time to be with Him daily. Ask yourself the following things:

1. *How much time will I spend alone with the Lord each day?* Set a specific amount of time and write it on your calendar to set that time aside.
2. *What will I put aside in order to spend this time with the Lord?* Some examples might be watching television, casual telephone conversations, surfing the internet, or reading for entertainment. Each person will have to decide what his or her priorities are and what can be changed in their daily schedule to make time to spend with God.
3. *What is the best time for my appointment with God?* Consider whether you are a “morning” person or an “evening” person, and when you are least likely to be interrupted.
4. *Where is the quietest place for me to pray and study?* Look for both physical quiet, and visual quiet—a place that won't constantly remind you of all the other things urgently awaiting your attention.
5. *Do I really want to spend time with God?* If your answer is “yes,” God will bless you as you work out the details of how and when to do it. If your answer is “no,” pray that God will give you a desire, a hunger to spend time with Him. He will do this for you!

1. H.L. Ellison, “Genesis,” *The International Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. F.F. Bruce, 112 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986).

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write your answers and the verses you use.
- ☞ Challenge questions are for those who have the time and wish to do them.
- ☞ Personal questions are to be shared with the class only if you wish to share.
- ☞ If you desire, insert your name in the assigned verses to make them more personal.

First Day: Read the Introduction to Genesis.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Introduction to Genesis, or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down, carry it with you, tack it to your bulletin board, on the dashboard of your car, etc. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its "address" (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Genesis 1, concentrating on verses 1-8.

1. From Genesis 1:1-8, list the verses where you find the phrases "God created" or "God said" and record with the verse what you learn God created.

2. God spoke and by His Word created. Read and record what the following verses say about God, the creator of all things.

Psalm 33:6

Hebrews 11:3

3. a. Read John 1:1-3. Who made everything?

 b. Read John 1:14-15,29-30. Who is the Word?

 c. How does Colossians 1:15-17 express this same truth about Jesus?

4. a. Read Psalm 146:5-6. What does David say our Creator does for us?

 b. Why does the Lord answer and help David when he calls to Him? Read Psalm 91:14-16.

5. a. Personal: Do you love the Lord and acknowledge His name (see Luke 12:8-9) or do you talk about “God” but refuse to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is your Savior? What promise does Romans 10:13 give to the one who calls upon Jesus Christ? Have you called upon Him to save you from the penalty for your sin?
- b. Personal: If you have called upon Jesus’ name, what are some of the blessings that are yours from Psalm 91:14-16? Write these blessings down, inserting your name in them.

Third Day: Review Genesis 1, concentrating on verses 9-19.

1. a. How did God bring forth the dry land? (Genesis 1:9)
- b. Challenge: How do the following Scripture passages describe the same event?
Job 38:8-11

Proverbs 8:27-29 (“Wisdom” is speaking in these verses)
2. a. In Genesis 1:10a what did God call the water and dry ground?
- b. What did He “see” about them? (Genesis 1:10b)
3. a. Describe the vegetation God created on the third day. (Genesis 1:11)
- b. Challenge: What would seeds allow the plants and trees to do?
4. a. What did God create on the fourth day? (Genesis 1:14-19)
- b. What were the purposes of these creations? (Genesis 1:14-15)
- c. What promise does God give to Noah and to us in Genesis 8:22 about these seasons, days and years?
5. What do the following verses say about God and His promises?
Numbers 23:19

Psalm 145:13
6. Personal: There may be droughts in certain areas and at times harvests may fail, yet the seasons continue their unchanging cycle. God’s faithfulness to His promises is proven with each sunrise. Think of this truth as it applies to your life. What difference does this make to you?

Fourth Day: Review Genesis 1, concentrating on verses 20-25.

1. From Genesis 1:20-21a, describe what God created on the fifth day.

2. a. In these few words God encompasses the creation of all birds and all the creatures that live in the water, from huge whales to microscopic creatures. What does God say about them all in verse 21b?

 b. What does He command them to do in verse 22?

3. a. What did God say the land should produce? (Genesis 1:24a)

 b. What three groups of animals did God create “according to their kinds”? (Genesis 1:24b)

4. What did God “see” regarding this new group of created creatures? (Genesis 1:25b)

5. Personal: From what God has seen and said after He created each thing, how do you think God felt about His creation? Does this change your thinking about creation? Is there something you need to do or perhaps stop doing that would show that you care about what God made?

Fifth Day: Review Genesis 1, concentrating on verses 26-31.

1. In whose image was man created? (Genesis 1:26a)

2. a. Each of the following verses gives us a clue to what God is like. Write how God is described in each verse and if this is a characteristic expressed by people.

 Deuteronomy 16:22

 Psalm 2:4

 Zephaniah 3:17

 Romans 12:19

 Hebrews 12:6

 1 Peter 5:7

 1 John 4:8

- b. Personal: These are only a few of the many verses giving us an idea of what our infinite God is like. Is there another verse describing God that you particularly like? Which of the above is especially meaningful to you and why?

3. What does Genesis 1:27 say regarding the gender of who was created in the image of God?
4. What were they commanded to do in Genesis 1:28?
5. What were they given to eat in Genesis 1:29?
6. a. What was God's pronouncement regarding His creation on Genesis 1:31?
b. Challenge: Do you ever wonder what changed the "very good" into the mess the world is in today? What do you believe might have caused it? We will learn more in the next chapter and lesson.

Sixth Day: Read Psalm 104, a psalm of creation.

1. Find verses that illustrate the power of God's work of creation.
2. Find verses that illustrate the beauty of God's creation.
3. Find verses that portray God as our loving Father who cares for each of us.
4. Find verses that illustrate how wonderfully God provided for the animals and birds on earth.
5. Choose some verses of praise to God that the Psalmist recorded, and put them into your own words.
6. Personal: Psalm 104:31-34 could be used for a prayer. Put this into your own words and make it a part of your prayer today as you consider God's wonderful creation.