Genesis: God’s Promise for a Broken World

Bible Vibrance International | Genesis to Revelation | Book 1 of 66
Essential Edition | Version 1.1 | Berean Standard Bible

Book Card

Book: Genesis (Book 1 of 66)

Testament: Old Testament, Torah

Genre: Narrative, with genealogy and poetry

Author: The book does not name its author. Traditionally Moses, whose Law Jesus treated as Scripture that wrote of Him (Luke 24:44; John 5:46). Some scholars propose later compilation from earlier sources.

Date written: Uncertain: traditionally during Moses' lifetime, about the fifteenth or thirteenth century BC, depending on the date of the Exodus

Period covered: From creation to the death of Joseph. Uncertain: the lives of Abraham to Joseph are commonly estimated at about 2100 to 1800 BC

Setting: Eden, Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt

Original audience: Israel, the people God had brought out of Egypt

Chapters: 50

Key verse: Genesis 12:3

Central theme: God creates a good world, and after humanity's fall He promises to bless all nations through Abraham's family.

Christ in this book: Jesus is the promised offspring of Abraham through whom all nations are blessed (Direct: Galatians 3:16).

Place in the story: The beginning of everything: creation, sin, and the covenant promise the rest of the Bible unfolds.

1. Genesis in Brief

Genesis tells how God created a good world, how humanity fell into sin, and how God began to rescue the world through one family. Its English name comes from a Greek word for origin, and its Hebrew name, Bereshit, means in the beginning. It gives the origin of nearly everything the Bible later explains: creation, marriage, sin, death, the nations, and God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 1-12). The problem Jesus came to solve first appears in Genesis 3, and the promise He came to fulfill first appears in Genesis 12.

2. Setting the Scene

Genesis does not name its author. Traditionally, it is received as the first book of Moses. Jesus spoke of the Law of Moses as Scripture that wrote about Him (Luke 24:44; John 5:46). Some scholars propose compilation from earlier sources over a long period, often called the documentary or supplementary approach. If Moses wrote it, he wrote during Israel's forty years in the wilderness, which most scholars

holding this view estimate in the fifteenth or thirteenth century BC.

The events reach much further back, from creation to Joseph's death in Egypt (Genesis 1:1; Genesis 50:26). Most scholars estimate the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph at roughly 2100 to 1800 BC, though this is uncertain, and no known record outside the Bible names them. The setting moves from the garden of Eden to Mesopotamia, where Abram's family lived in Ur and Haran, then to Canaan and finally Egypt (Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:5; Genesis 46:6). The first audience was Israel, newly redeemed from Egypt. They needed to know who their God was, why the world was broken, and why He had chosen them. Genesis explained their destination too: God had promised Canaan to their ancestors and foretold their slavery and return (Genesis 15:13-16).

3. Why Genesis Was Written

Genesis was written to show that the God who called Israel is the Creator of all things. His purpose is to bless the whole world through the family He chose. The book opens with God alone: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). There is one God, He made everything good, and every human being bears His image (Genesis 1:27).

The key verse comes after eleven chapters of spreading sin. God speaks a promise to Abram, later named Abraham. "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3). This verse captures the whole book, answering the curse of Genesis 3 with blessing for every family on earth. The rest of Genesis shows God keeping that promise alive through barrenness, rivalry, deception and famine.

4. How Genesis Is Shaped

• Creation (Genesis 1-2)
• The Fall and the spread of sin (Genesis 3-11)
• Abraham (Genesis 12-25)
• Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 25-36)
• Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37-50)

The book falls into two halves. Genesis 1-11 tells the story of all humanity under a spreading curse, and Genesis 12-50 answers it through one family God chose to bless the world. Genesis marks its turning points with a repeated Hebrew heading, toledot, meaning generations or account. It appears about ten times, from Genesis 2:4 to Genesis 37:2, each time narrowing the focus to the line that carries the promise. Patterns repeat as well: barren wives, rival brothers, and younger sons chosen over older (Genesis 25:23).

5. Journey Through Genesis

Genesis opens with God creating everything by His word (Genesis 1:1-2:3). Over six days He formed and filled the world. On the sixth day He made humanity, male and female, in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28). Scripture says God saw everything He had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31). On the seventh day He rested and made it holy (Genesis 2:2-3).

A closer view of the first humans follows (Genesis 2:4-25). God formed the man from dust and breathed life into him (Genesis 2:7). God commanded the man not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or he would die (Genesis 2:16-17). God then made the woman from the man's side, and the two became one flesh, the first marriage (Genesis 2:22-24).

Everything changed in Genesis 3. The serpent questioned God's word and His goodness, and the woman ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to her husband (Genesis 3:1-6). Yet God came looking for them (Genesis 3:9). He pronounced judgment, but within it He promised that the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). God clothed them with garments of skins and sent them out of Eden (Genesis 3:21-24).

Sin spread quickly through the next generations (Genesis 4-5). Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). God gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, and in the days of Seth's son Enosh people began to call on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:25-26). The genealogy of Genesis 5 repeats a sober refrain, each man lived and then died, showing death reigning as God warned, yet a line of hope preserved. Enoch walked with God and was taken (Genesis 5:24).

By Noah's time, the Lord saw that every intention of the human heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). God resolved to judge the earth by a flood, but Noah found favor in His eyes (Genesis 6:8). God preserved Noah, his family and the animals in the ark (Genesis 6-8). Afterward God made a covenant, a binding commitment, never again to destroy the earth by flood, and gave the rainbow as its sign (Genesis 9:8-17). Yet sin survived the flood. Noah became drunk, his son Ham dishonored him, and Noah's curse fell on Ham's son Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27).

The nations then spread across the earth, family by family (Genesis 10). At Babel, people united to build a tower and make a name for themselves, and God confused their language and scattered them (Genesis 11:1-9). A final genealogy traces the line of Noah's son Shem to Abram, whose wife Sarai was barren (Genesis 11:10-32). The world's hope now rests on a childless couple.

God called Abram to leave his country, promising him land, a great name, many descendants and blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:1-3). In Egypt Abram lied about Sarai to protect himself (Genesis 12:10-20). He let his nephew Lot choose the best land (Genesis 13). After rescuing Lot from four invading kings, Abram was blessed by Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem (Genesis 14:18-20). God then promised offspring as many as the stars (Genesis 15:5). "Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). God confirmed His covenant in a solemn ceremony (Genesis 15:7-21).

Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram, and Ishmael was born (Genesis 16). God renamed Abram as Abraham and Sarai as Sarah, and gave circumcision as the sign of His covenant (Genesis 17:5, 10-15). Abraham pleaded for Sodom, but it was destroyed for its wickedness while Lot was rescued (Genesis 18-19). Lot's daughters later bore Moab and Ammon (Genesis 19:36-38). Abraham repeated his old lie to Abimelech (Genesis 20). At last Isaac was born, as God had said, and God promised that Ishmael too would become a nation (Genesis 21:1-3; Genesis 21:13).

Then God tested Abraham, commanding him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-2). Abraham obeyed, and God stopped him and provided a ram in Isaac's place (Genesis 22:11-14). God then swore

that through Abraham's offspring all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:16-18). When Sarah died, Abraham bought a burial cave, his first piece of the promised land (Genesis 23). God guided Abraham's servant to Rebekah, Isaac's bride (Genesis 24). Abraham died in a good old age (Genesis 25:7-8).

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob, and God said the older would serve the younger (Genesis 25:19-26). Esau sold his birthright for a meal (Genesis 25:29-34). God renewed the promise to Isaac, who repeated his father's lie about his wife (Genesis 26). With Rebekah's help, Jacob deceived his blind father and took Esau's blessing (Genesis 27). Fleeing, Jacob dreamed of a stairway to heaven and received Abraham's promise (Genesis 28:12-15). In Haran, Jacob the deceiver was deceived. His uncle Laban substituted Leah for Rachel, whom he loved, and Jacob married both (Genesis 29:21-30). Through the two sisters and their servants Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob had eleven sons and a daughter, Dinah (Genesis 29:31-30:24). God prospered Jacob despite Laban, then called him home (Genesis 30:25-31:55).

Returning home, Jacob wrestled all night with a man and refused to let go without a blessing. God renamed him Israel (Genesis 32:24-28). He was reconciled with Esau (Genesis 33). After Dinah was violated, her brothers Simeon and Levi took violent revenge (Genesis 34). God renewed His promise to Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 35:9-12). Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, the twelfth son (Genesis 35:16-19). Esau's descendants, the Edomites, close this movement (Genesis 36).

Jacob favored Joseph, Rachel's first son, and Joseph's dreams of rule angered his brothers. They sold him to traders bound for Egypt (Genesis 37:2-28). The narrative pauses in Genesis 38 for Judah, the fourth son, who wronged his daughter-in-law Tamar and then confessed that she was more righteous than he (Genesis 38:26). This chapter prepares for the later change of heart in Judah, the brother who had proposed selling Joseph (Genesis 37:26-27).

In Egypt, the Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2). Falsely accused, he was imprisoned, yet the Lord was still with him (Genesis 39:21). He interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials (Genesis 40). Joseph then explained Pharaoh's dreams of seven years of plenty followed by seven of famine. Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt, second only to himself (Genesis 41:39-41).

The famine drove Joseph's brothers to Egypt for grain, and they bowed before him without recognizing him (Genesis 42:6-8). Across two journeys, Joseph tested them to see whether they had changed (Genesis 42-44). When Benjamin was about to become a slave, Judah offered himself in Benjamin's place (Genesis 44:33). Joseph then revealed himself and told his brothers that God had sent him ahead of them to preserve life (Genesis 45:4-8).

God told Jacob not to fear going to Egypt, for there He would make him a great nation (Genesis 46:3-4). The family settled in Goshen (Genesis 47:27). Before he died, Jacob blessed Joseph's sons and then all twelve sons, declaring that the scepter would not depart from Judah (Genesis 48-49; Genesis 49:10). After Jacob's burial in Canaan, Joseph reassured his fearful brothers (Genesis 50:15-21). Joseph died asking that his bones be carried to the promised land (Genesis 50:24-26).

6. What Genesis Reveals About God

Genesis reveals God as the sovereign Creator who speaks and it is done (Genesis 1:3). Humanity has

unique dignity, made in His image, which is why taking human life is so serious (Genesis 9:6). Sin begins as distrust of God's word and spreads into every relationship, bringing death (Genesis 3; Genesis 6:5). God is the Judge of all the earth, who always does what is just (Genesis 18:25). His covenants carry the story, first with Noah and all creation, then with Abram (Genesis 9:9-17; Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:7).

Above all, Genesis shows grace, God's undeserved favor, coming first. God seeks the hiding couple, favors Noah, and calls Abram without any merit in him (Genesis 3:9; Genesis 6:8; Genesis 12:1). Abram is counted righteous, right with God, because he believed the promise (Genesis 15:6). Genesis also shows God's providence, His rule over all events, even human evil. Joseph summed it up. "As for you, what you intended against me for evil, God intended for good, in order to accomplish a day like this—to preserve the lives of many people." (Genesis 50:20).

7. Christ in Genesis

The first thread is a Canonical Trajectory. After the Fall, God spoke to the serpent. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15). Genesis does not name this seed, and the Hebrew word can mean many descendants or one. The New Testament develops the theme toward Jesus, born of a woman, who by His death broke the devil's power (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14).

The second connection is Direct. Paul says Scripture preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham in the promise that all nations would be blessed in him, and that the promised offspring is Christ (Galatians 3:8, 16). The third is a Confirmed Pattern. Hebrews says Abraham reasoned that God could raise Isaac from the dead, and figuratively received him back (Hebrews 11:17-19). That pattern was fulfilled when God gave up His own Son and raised Him (Romans 8:32; Acts 2:24). The fourth is a Canonical Trajectory. The ruler promised from Judah's line (Genesis 49:10) is fulfilled in Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

8. Genesis in the Story of Scripture

Genesis ends with promises still waiting: a great nation, a land, and blessing for the nations. Exodus opens with Israel multiplying in Egypt and God remembering His covenant with Abraham (Exodus 1:7; Exodus 2:24). The line of Judah leads to David and his royal house. Jesus grounded marriage in creation (Matthew 19:4-5). Paul explained faith through Abraham and sin through Adam (Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:12-21). The Bible ends where Genesis began, with the tree of life and no more curse (Revelation 22:1-3).

9. Hard Passages, Clear Answers

Bible-believing interpreters differ here on the days of creation in Genesis 1. Some read them as ordinary days, some as long ages, and some as a literary framework arranging God's work. All agree that God alone created everything (Hebrews 11:3). Interpreters also differ on the sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: some see fallen angels, some the godly line of Seth, and some powerful rulers. Every view sees deep corruption before the flood.

God's command to sacrifice Isaac troubles many readers (Genesis 22:1-2). Abraham's faith appears in his words that God would provide (Genesis 22:8). The text states plainly that this was a test, and God stopped Abraham and provided a substitute (Genesis 22:12-13). The law later forbade child sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:31). The account reveals God's provision, not His approval of such offerings.

Genesis also records lies, favoritism, deceit and violence within God's chosen family, often without stopping to condemn them. Narrating an act is not approving it. Consequences speak: Jacob the deceiver was deceived, and Jacob rebuked Simeon and Levi and later cursed their anger (Genesis 29:25; Genesis 34:30; Genesis 49:5-7). The promise survived because God was faithful, not because the family was good.

10. The Whole Book in Brief

Genesis moves from a good creation, through human rebellion and its spreading ruin, to a family chosen by grace to carry blessing to the world. Its heroes fail repeatedly, yet God's promise never fails. He seeks, judges, saves and rules even through evil. Genesis ends in Egypt with a coffin and a promise, waiting for the offspring who would undo the curse. The God who spoke light into darkness will bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 1:3; Genesis 12:3).

Coverage Map

Creation: Genesis 1:1-2:3; Genesis 2:4-25
The Fall and the spread of sin: Genesis 3; Genesis 4-5; Genesis 6-9; Genesis 10-11
Abraham: Genesis 12-15; Genesis 16-21; Genesis 22-25
Isaac and Jacob: Genesis 25-28; Genesis 29-31; Genesis 32-36
Joseph and his brothers: Genesis 37-38; Genesis 39-41; Genesis 42-45; Genesis 46-50
Result: Chapters 1 to 50: all 50 chapters covered

Reference List

Every Scripture reference in order of first appearance. (Q) marks verbatim Berean Standard Bible quotations; all others are references.

Luke 24:44; John 5:46; Genesis 12:3 (Q); Galatians 3:16; Genesis 1-12; Genesis 3; Genesis 12; Genesis 1:1 (Q); Genesis 50:26; Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:5; Genesis 46:6; Genesis 15:13-16; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 1-2; Genesis 3-11; Genesis 12-25; Genesis 25-36; Genesis 37-50; Genesis 1-11; Genesis 12-50; Genesis 2:4; Genesis 37:2; Genesis 25:23; Genesis 1:1-2:3; Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 1:31; Genesis 2:2-3; Genesis 2:4-25; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 2:22-24; Genesis 3:1-6; Genesis 3:9; Genesis 3:15 (Q); Genesis 3:21-24; Genesis 4-5; Genesis 4:8; Genesis 4:25-26; Genesis 5; Genesis 5:24; Genesis 6:5; Genesis 6:8; Genesis 6-8; Genesis 9:8-17; Genesis 9:20-27; Genesis 10; Genesis 11:1-9; Genesis 11:10-32; Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 13; Genesis 14:18-20; Genesis 15:5; Genesis 15:6 (Q); Genesis 15:7-21; Genesis 16; Genesis 17:5, 10-15; Genesis 18-19; Genesis 19:36-38; Genesis 20; Genesis 21:1-3; Genesis 21:13; Genesis 22:1-2; Genesis 22:11-14; Genesis 22:16-18; Genesis 23; Genesis 24; Genesis 25:7-8; Genesis 25:19-26; Genesis 25:29-34; Genesis 26; Genesis 27; Genesis 28:12-15; Genesis 29:21-30; Genesis 29:31-30:24; Genesis 30:25-31:55; Genesis 32:24-28; Genesis 33; Genesis 34; Genesis 35:9-12; Genesis 35:16-19; Genesis 36; Genesis 37:2-28; Genesis 38; Genesis 38:26; Genesis 37:26-27; Genesis 39:2; Genesis 39:21; Genesis 40; Genesis 41:39-41; Genesis 42:6-8; Genesis 42-44; Genesis 44:33; Genesis 45:4-8; Genesis 46:3-4; Genesis 47:27; Genesis 48-49; Genesis 49:10; Genesis 50:15-21; Genesis 50:24-26; Genesis 1:3; Genesis 9:6; Genesis 18:25; Genesis 9:9-17; Genesis 15:18;

Genesis 17:7; Genesis 12:1; Genesis 50:20 (Q); Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14; Galatians 3:8, 16; Hebrews 11:17-19; Romans 8:32; Acts 2:24; Revelation 5:5; Exodus 1:7; Exodus 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:12-21; Revelation 22:1-3; Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3; Genesis 6:1-4; Genesis 22:8; Genesis 22:12-13; Deuteronomy 12:31; Genesis 29:25; Genesis 34:30; Genesis 49:5-7

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which has been dedicated to the public domain.

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