



# GENESIS

Grace Community Fellowship

Winter 2008



# Genesis

## Syllabus

### Winter 2008

## Course Description

This course is designed as a basic study of the background and message of the book of Genesis. Particular attention will be paid to the application of specific truths within the book. Lecture, discussion, and questioning will be included in the class sessions. Homework will include the reading, analyzing, and synthesizing of the book.

## Course Objectives

- Each student will read the book of Genesis.
- Each student will understand the major themes, the flow, and the message of Genesis.
- Each student will have see Jesus revealed in the book of Genesis.
- Each student will feel more confident in their understanding and use of the Genesis in their own personal lives and in future ministries.

## Course Requirements

- Each student will read through the book of Genesis twice.
- Each student will complete a simple chart for the book of Genesis.
- Each student will turn in an “implication for their lives” for the book of Genesis.

## Other Details

**Suggestion Donation:** \$10.00

**Course Instructor:** Ken Carson

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**Course Time:** Sunday mornings, 9:30-10:45.

**Course Notes:** On the World Wide Web at <http://www.gcfweb.org/institute>

## Course Schedule:

Week	Date	Topic	Scripture
1	January 6	Introduction to the Torah	
2	January 13	Introduction to Genesis	
3	January 20	Creation of the World	Genesis 1
4	January 27	Creation of Humanity	Genesis 2
5	February 3	Fall of Humanity	Genesis 3-5
6	February 10	The Flood & the Tower	Genesis 6-11
7	February 17	The Covenant of Abraham	Genesis 12-17
8	February 24	Isaac & Ishmael	Genesis 18-26
9	March 2	Jacob	Genesis 27-33, 36
10	March 9	Joseph	Genesis 37, 39-47, 50
11	March 16*	Judah	Genesis 34, 35, 38, 48-49

- Homework due



# Week 1: The Torah

Genesis  
January 6, 2008

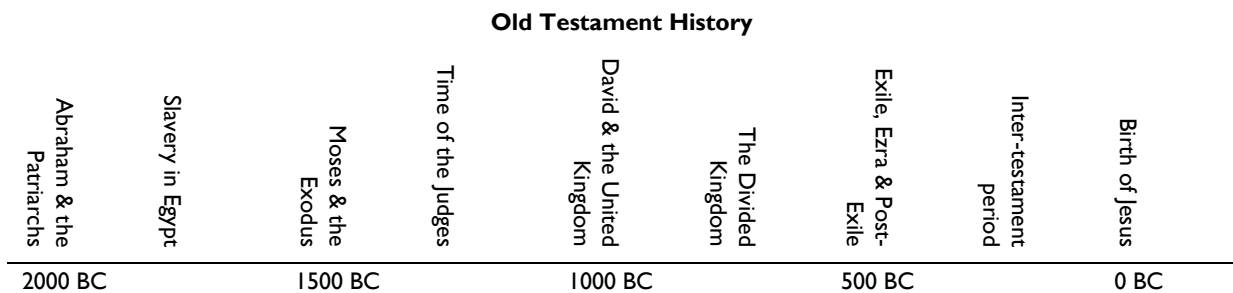
The book of Genesis is the very first book of the Bible. As such it is of special importance in scripture, serving as the foundation upon which all of scripture is built. But it is not just the first book of the Bible. It is also the first book of the Old Testament, and the first book of the Torah, the opening section of the Old Testament. Therefore, if we want to gain an understanding of the significance and the meaning of Genesis, we must begin by seeing the book in the context both of the Old Testament and the Torah.

## The Old Testament

The division between Old and New Testament in the bible is simple. The Old Testament was written before Jesus while the New Testament was written after Jesus. The Old Testament consists of 39 books written by at least 29 different authors over the course of 1,000 years and includes several different literary genres, including historical narratives, poetry, prophecy, and law.

### Historic Context of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is primarily the literary history of the nation of Israel from its founding around 2000 BC to its return from Babylonian exile in 500 BC.



### Abraham and the Patriarchs

The father of the nation was Abraham. Around 2000 BC, God called Abraham to move from Mesopotamia to a new land, and promised him that he would become the father of a great nation. For four generations Abraham's family sojourned in this land, until due to famine the family moved to Egypt.

### Moses and the Exodus

Over time this family grew and became enslaved to the Egyptians. After 400 years of slavery, God rescued the Israelites through Moses, freeing them from their slavery. As the nation traveled back to the land promised to Abraham, God gave Moses the *Torah* (law), which served as the civil and religious law for the new nation.

### David and the United Kingdom

Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel conquered and settled in the land promised to Abraham, but forgot the God who made the promise. A 400 year period of time known as the "time of the

judges” (named for the judges who governed Israel at this time), was known for its immorality and idolatry. Coming out of this period God raised up King David, who united the tribes of Israel under one kingdom, ushering a brief golden age of prosperity and religious revival.

### **The Divided Kingdom and Exile**

David’s son Solomon ascended to the throne and continued this golden age. However, in his old age he turned to the worship of other gods and oppressed the people with heavy taxation. So after his death, the northern tribes of Israel rebelled and formed their own kingdom, which was called Israel, while two tribes in the south remained loyal to the house of David in the kingdom of Judah (named after the largest of the loyal tribes). During the time of the divided kingdom, Israel rejected the worship of the true God, and as a result God allowed them to be conquered by Assyria in 722 BC. Judah had several good kings who followed after God, but eventually it too fell into idolatry, and God allowed them also to be conquered, this time by Babylon in 586 BC.

### **Post-Exile**

For 70 years Judah was forced by Babylon to leave their homeland and live in exile. During that time Persia conquered Babylon, and the Persian king Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Israelites rebuilt their society and their religion during the post exilic period.

## **Contents of the Old Testament**

### **The Hebrew Bible**

The ancient Hebrew bible arranges the Old Testament around 24 books grouped into three sections: the Torah (law), the Nevi'im (prophets) and the Ketuvim (writings). These sections correlate to the timing of the books compilation and addition to the canon:

- The Torah was most likely compiled by Joshua at the end of the Exodus and before the time of the judges, shortly after the death of Moses (~1500 BC).
- The Nevi'im was mostly written primarily around the time of the exile as an explanation as to why Israel had been taken into captivity (~600 BC).
- The Ketuvim was compiled by Ezra after the exile as part of his efforts to re-institute temple worship (~450 BC). Much of this was originally written, however, during the time of David and Solomon (~1000 BC)

Because this arrangement is based upon periods of history, studying the Old Testament according to this arrangement helps a student to more easily understand the historical and spiritual background into which these books were written. The overriding purpose of the books become more apparent, and provides the context for the message.

### **The English/Greek Old Testament**

By contrast, our modern English arrangement consists of 39 books arranged into five sections. This arrangement, along with the names for the books, came out a translation of the Old Testament into Greek called the Septuagint (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). In this translation, some books were split (Samuel, Kings, Ezra-Nehemiah), and they were rearranged more according to literary genre than historical context. It is also through this Greek translation that we get our modern English titles to the books (e.g. Genesis is Greek for “origins”).

Because this arrangement is based on literary genre, studying the Old Testament using the Greek/English arrangement helps the student to use consistent hermeneutical techniques for each genre.

## Purpose and Theme of the Old Testament

Why would God use the historical literature of one nation as His revealed Word for the entire world? What makes Israel's history so special and distinct from the history and literature of other nations?

The history and literature of Israel is special because the Jews are God's "chosen people." This is the nation through which God would reveal himself to the nations (Isaiah 42:6) and through which God would reveal His Chosen One (Isaiah 49:6, Galatians 3:8). To be the chosen people is to be the family or nation through which the Messiah would descend. Therefore God specially worked in this nation in order to prepare all things at just the right time to reveal His Messiah (Galatians 4:4).

Israel was not chosen because it was especially righteous or had any special qualities. Indeed, Israel repeatedly failed to live up to the standard that God had for them. Instead, the history of Israel is a testimony not to the greatness of the nation, but to the sovereignty, faithfulness and the grace of God.

It is not that God didn't work in and among other nations. In fact several times the Old Testament refers to priests and prophets of His who are at work in other nations (Genesis 14:18, Exodus 18:1ff, Numbers 22). However, Israel is unique because the salvation of all humanity would come through this nation.

Therefore, the Old Testament is not just a history of Israel, but it is the revelation of God's plan of salvation for all of humanity, culminating in the coming of the Messiah. The Old Testament is not a record of all God's interaction with humanity during this time, nor is it even an exhaustive record of all that happened in Israel. Instead the Old Testament is a deliberate collection of books which are carefully written and compiled to reveal how God founded, developed, nurtured, disciplined and raised the nation through whom He would reveal His Messiah in order to bring salvation to the entire world.

## The Torah

### Contents of the Torah

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Torah, which is a Hebrew word which can be roughly translated as "the law." The Torah or the "book of Moses" is divided into five sections or books. The Hebrew names for these books are taken from the first phrase in book, while the Greek and English names are taken from the theme of each book. These five books are also known as the "Pentateuch," which is the Greek name meaning "five cases," referring to the five containers in which the scrolls would have been kept.

The books are chronological, with the events recorded and most likely written one after the other. However, the books are also highly unified, having been written by one author and carrying one single theme throughout.

Greek Name	Hebrew Name	Events/Themes	When written
Genesis	"In the beginning"	Creation of the world Calling of Abraham	Probably After giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.
Exodus	"These are the names"	Redemption from slavery The civil & criminal law Building the tabernacle	After giving of the law at Mt. Sinai
Leviticus	"And He called"	The ceremonial law	Probably after the establishment of the tabernacle
Numbers	"In the wilderness"	The census Wilderness wanderings	Sometime prior to Deuteronomy
Deuteronomy	"These are the words"	Second giving of the law	Prior to entry into the promised land

## Literary Style of the Torah

The Torah is a unique blend of historical narrative and law. While this may seem an odd mixture of literary genre, in the ancient world this was a distinct genre known as a suzerain-vassal treaty. This treaty between a powerful king and his vassal had a structure where the king recounted the shared history before outlining the legal requirements of the treaty. While certain parts of the Torah (Exodus 20-24, Deuteronomy 1-31, Joshua 24) follow the strict suzerain-vassal structure, the entire Torah's mix of history and law would have been understood by its original readers.

In addition to this historical-law genre, at key points in the Torah, the author interjects a poem or song followed by a brief epilogue. This poem-epilogue serves to tie the historical narrative to the either readers' current situation or some yet future event. Because of this the placement and message in this poetry is important to see the key purpose of the Torah<sup>1</sup>.

Preceding Narrative	Song	Epilogue	Future Connection
Creation of Humanity	Gen. 2:23	Gen. 2:24-25	Marriage principles are founded in the creation of man and woman.
The Fall	Gen. 3:14-19	Gen. 3:20-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current hardship is a result of the fall.</li> <li>• Hope will come from the woman's offspring.</li> </ul>
Joseph's Narrative	Gen. 48:15-20	Gen. 48:21-22	Promise that God will take you back to the land of their fathers
Jacob's Narrative	Gen 49:1-27	Gen 49:28-50:26	Jacob's burial in Canaan & Joseph's request for burial demonstrates the promise of a return to the land.
Crossing the Red Sea	Ex 15:1-18	Ex 15:19-20	People forget God's power and begin to grumble.
Balaam	Num 23-4		
Deuteronomy	Duet 32-33	Duet 34	Death of Moses while looking into the promised land.

The poetry would have been written to allow the listener to more easily remember the point of the passage. Each poem and the accompanying epilogue have a way of connecting these past events with a current or soon future circumstance.

## Purpose and Theme of the Torah

Deuteronomy 31-34 is the grand climax of the Torah, ending with Moses final exhortation, the two chapters long "Song of Moses," and an epilogue regarding the death of Moses. This final poetic interjection summarizes all the narrative of the Torah, reminding them of all the great things God had done for their nation. It is accompanied by the admonishment to obey this God who has done such wonderful things for them.

<sup>1</sup> John H. Sailhamer. "Genesis." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), electronic edition STEP file.

These chapters summarize then Moses purpose for writing the Torah:

- Moses wanted to Israelites to obey the laws of the Torah so that they might live well in the land they were about to enter (Deut 30:16-20).
- Moses wanted to encourage the Israelites to be strong and courage as they entered the promised land by reminding them of how God had delivered them in the past (Deut 31:1-8)
- Moses wanted the Torah to be read regularly and formally every 7-years at the Feast of Booths (Deut 31:9-13)
- Moses wanted the Torah to be a testimony to the stubborn rebelliousness of the people of Israel (Deut 31:24-29)
- Moses wanted the Torah to be passed down from generation to generation so that they might prosper in the Promised Land (Deut 32:45-47).

### **Purpose for Today**

The Torah was the rule of law for Israel in the Promised Land. It included civil, criminal and ceremonial legal requirements. Obedience to the law would result in prosperity and peace in their society. Disobedience would result in chaos and anarchy.

Obedience to the Torah, however, does not result in salvation. The Torah was never intended as a means of salvation (Galatians 3:21, Romans 3:28). Salvation for the Jews of this time came through faith in God alone (Romans 4:1-10).

Furthermore, the stipulations found in the law are very specific to Israel, and are not necessarily transcendent laws for our society today. They are the covenant guidelines between God and Israel which formed the constitution and legal structure for Israelite society.

How then do laws established to govern a society 3,500 years old have any relevance today? If the Law is not transcendent, either on a spiritual level (for it was never designed for our salvation) nor a civil level (for laws applying to a culture 3,500 years ago has little relevance), why should we read and study the Torah today? The following are some reasons:

- The Torah reminds us the we are part of a larger story of God's interaction and relationship with humanity.
- The Torah reveals the holiness of God.
- The Torah reveals the mercy of God.
- The Torah serves as a tutor and a guide to righteous living.
- The Torah serves to show us our own sinfulness so that we might recognize our need for God's mercy (Romans 7:7, Deut 31:24-29).
- An understanding of the Torah is critical for understanding most of the Pauline epistles in the New Testament.
- The Torah points to redemption in Christ.

### **Theme**

God's establishment of the nation Israel and the protection of the Messianic line.

Hebrew Arrangement		Greek/English Arrangement	
The Torah (Law)	"In the beginning" (Genesis) "These are the names" (Exodus) "And He called" (Leviticus) "In the wilderness" (Numbers) "These are the words" (Deuteronomy)	Law	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
The Nevi'im (Prophets)	<u>Former Prophets:</u> Joshua Judges Samuel Kings  <u>Latter Prophets:</u> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel  <u>The Twelve:</u> Hosea                      Nahum Joel                         Habakkuk Amos                        Zephaniah Obadiah                    Haggai Jonah                        Zechariah Micah                        Malachi	History	Joshua Judges Ruth I Samuel II Samuel I Kings II Kings I Chronicles II Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther
		Poetry	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon
The Ketuvim (Writings)	<u>Sifrei Emet (The 3 Poetic Books):</u> Praises Proverbs Job  <u>Hamesh Megillot (The Five Scrolls):</u> Ruth Song of Solomon The Preacher (Ecclesiastes) How! (Lamentations) Esther  <u>Other Historical Books</u> Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah The Words of the days (Chronicles)	Major Prophets	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel
		Minor Prophets	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi