

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The purpose of Genesis is to give the origin of all things, both the cosmic order of the universe and the covenant relationship of God's people—demonstrating that God is the Creator and Originator of redemption. Many have noted that Genesis is the “seed-plot” of the whole Bible, since every truth can be traced back to its source in this first book of God's Word. Genesis is the foundation upon which all revelation rests.

Author

Moses, the seer-prophet

Audience

Originally Israel, but this theological history speaks to everyone

Date

Sometime between 1520 and 1400 BC

Type of Literature

Theological history

Major Themes

Origin of God's Creation. The first word of Genesis in Hebrew is *beresheet* and means “first,” “chief,” or “firstfruits.”

Blessed to Be a Blessing. Blessing is perhaps the most important theological “glue” that holds Genesis together and connects it to the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Origin of God's People. Coinciding with this renewed desire for God-empowered abundant living through an intimate, vibrant relationship with the Lord is his calling of a people to himself.

History of God's Redemption. From the beginning, the Lord God wanted nothing more than to plant himself in the dust of Adam and become life within him. Genesis launches Yahweh's redemptive history.

Outline

There are ten sections in the book of Genesis after its prologue, and each one begins with the Hebrew word for “Generation,” or “The Family History”:

Prologue — 1:1–2:3

Generations of Heaven and Earth — 2:4–4:26

Generations of Adam — 5:1–6:8

Generations of Noah — 6:9–9:29

Generations of Noah's Sons — 10:1–11:9

Generations of Shem — 11:10–26

Generations of Terah — 11:27–25:11

Generations of Ishmael — 25:12–18

Generations of Isaac — 25:19–35:29

Generations of Esau — 36:1–37:1

Generations of Jacob — 37:2–50:26