

## OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF GENESIS

### Introduction to the Series – **SURVEY THRU THE BIBLE – BOOK BY BOOK**

This morning we begin an exciting new challenge for our adult Sunday School hour. We are going to study consecutively through the 66 books of the bible – tackling one book each Sunday. This Survey Thru the Bible approach offers a number of benefits:

- Provides the big picture for each book so we don't get lost in the details – Tracing the major themes of God's' revelation and showing how all the pieces fit together
- Involves stand-alone lessons – no problem if you missed the previous study; Pastor Harmon will be scheduling the teaching sessions – he and others will continue to do some teaching in this hour – but when I am called on to teach, I will just pick up with the next book; so this will take a couple of years to complete
- Appeals to believers at all levels of familiarity with the bible and spiritual maturity. If you are young in the faith, this survey approach gives you a good orientation. Most of you are a very mature audience – I am 72 myself so I can get away with saying that. This will be more than a review. It will open up new areas of understanding and allow you to go deeper in your grasp of theology, of biblical characters and stories, and the emphasis of what is most important in each book. How can we trace God's marvelous plan of redemption focused on Jesus Christ and His desire to glorify Himself from Genesis to Revelation?

Interestingly, the Scriptures are kind of like a **jigsaw puzzle**. My wife loves jigsaw puzzles – always has one in process. I find it frustrating – but she's great at it. If you can think back to when you first opened the Bible, if you think about it, it's like that, isn't it? When you open the book, it's multiple books – 66 of them by different authors in different time periods and historical and cultural contexts. And it's not just multiple books, it is multiple chapters. And it's not just multiple chapters, it is a whole bunch of verses. When you hear your first sermon, you are interacting with just one of the puzzle pieces. If you just jump into the middle of the bible somewhere and start trying to figure out how those littlest pieces, those verses and paragraphs fit, it becomes like putting a jigsaw puzzle together without a very important part. That part is the **box top lid**. Just imagine dumping out a thousand pieces without having that picture on the box top lid, and saying to yourself, "I'm going to put this puzzle together." Could you do it? Of course you could. Would you go crazy in the process? Probably.

39 books in OT / 27 in NT

#### Structure of OT

- 17 historical books (5 in Pentateuch = compound word meaning 5 books)
- 5 poetical books
- 17 prophetic books (5 major prophets)

## OVERVIEW OF GENESIS = BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

Title: Its title in English, “Genesis,” comes from the Greek of **Gn 2:4** [the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew bible in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC], literally, “*the book of the generation (genesis) of the heavens and earth.*” Means origin, generation, offspring --

Phrase used 10 times that provides the literary structure for the book = “*these are the generations of*” – we will follow an easier to remember structural outline based on the themes of the book

Authorship: **Luke 24:27, 44** – Christ attributes the 5 books of the Law to Moses – accepted universally by early Jewish scholars – only questioned by higher critical scholars who proposed what is called the documentary hypothesis – that the book was compiled by an editor from 3-4 different sources – not something we seriously need to consider

Moses was providentially prepared for this important task by virtue of his training in Egypt –

**Acts 7:22** – *Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds*

**Let’s dive into the book itself.**

“*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” **Genesis 1:1**

What a majestic start to this magnificent book – this priceless revelation of the mind of God.

There is no argument to prove the existence of God – just a presuppositional approach that the self-existent God who has existed from all eternity, who is not dependent on anyone or anything, who is all sovereign and all powerful – He alone has the credentials to tell us how this whole world started.

Importance of beginnings: Think of a small seed – might seem inconsequential; but once planted it grows into an impressive tree – In Genesis we have the introduction of a whole bunch of foundational seed doctrines and themes that are going to grow and develop throughout God’s progressive revelation

**J. Sidlow Baxter:** Besides being introductory, Genesis is explanatory. The other writings of the Bible are inseparably bound up with it inasmuch as it gives us the origin and initial explanation of all that follows. The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as the flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis. Or, to use an equally appropriate figure, as the massive trunk and wide spreading branches of the oak are in the acorn, so, by implication and anticipation, all Scripture is in Genesis. Here we have in germ all that is later developed. It has been truly said that “the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.”

Structure of the Book – very simple – 2 main sections:

- I. Chaps. 1-11 Beginnings on a Global Scale --

**Four Main Events:** Creation / Fall / Flood / Tower of Babel

- II. Chaps. 12-50 Beginnings on a National Scale for the Elect People of God

**Four Main People** = the Patriarchs of the Jewish Nation = Abraham / Isaac / Jacob / Joseph

What a **contrast**: Switching gears from global focus to a single person Abraham and his descendants – God controls world events and God controls individual lives

Look at where God places the **relative importance** of these two sections –

- Section 1 – covers over 2,000 years; but only 20% of space devoted to that
- Section 2 – zeroes in on about 350 years, but 80% of space devoted to that

[sadly I apologize that my study today will not reflect those percentages – I will be racing thru the second section because I have so much material to cover]

**Big Idea: God responds to man's sinful rebellion with His sovereign election and providential faithfulness to His covenant promise.**

Expanded Summary: When studying God's plan for mankind as events unfold — from Creation to the Fall to Redemption and then Restoration — one must start with the Book of Beginnings. Our destiny as revealed in the Book of Revelation is directly tied back to our origins. In Genesis we see the beginning on a global scale with the key events of Cosmic Creation, the Fall of Man, the Universal Flood and the Tower of Babel. Then God's elective purpose focuses on covenant and blessing related to Abraham and his descendants. The consistent pattern of man's sin and failure is contrasted with the character of the faithfulness of God and His goodness in remaining true to His promises. Blessing to all the nations will eventually come from the promised Messiah, the seed of the woman (**Gen. 3**), the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

As we **track through the book** we will try to emphasize the important lessons and theological themes that still have application to our lives today.

## **I. (Chaps. 1-11) THE BEGINNING ON A GLOBAL SCALE**

**A. (Chaps. 1-2) Creation** — The Beginning of Life Created by God — Fellowship

**1. Sovereignty of God in Creation** – All powerful self-existent God who has existed from eternity past created this world *ex nihilo* – not using any existing matter [in contrast to the

ancient creation accounts from other cultures]. God is not dependent on anyone or anything. He has His sovereign plan for history that He is working out.

**2. Historicity of Creation Events** – According to the Scriptures, the earth is relatively young – not the millions of years old claimed by evolutionists. According to the Scriptures, God created everything including man in six literal days – this might seriously offend people who bow the knee to the theories of modern-day scientists. How can we hold to such convictions? No time to get into the weeds on this. The Bible presents the creation story as history. Jesus as well as other biblical writers clearly support that claim.

**Mark 13:19** – talking about the end times – “*For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created*” – sounds pretty clear -- If Jesus is speaking on a timescale of 4,000 years from creation to His day, it makes sense to refer to something which was instituted on Day 6 as “*from the beginning of creation.*” But it makes no sense to refer to it as “*the beginning of creation*” if there were millions of years before the creation of mankind.

I am not smart enough to argue all of the scientific data (which itself is only limited and subject to misinterpretation) – but neither are the scientists.

I like the approach God takes with Job: **Job 38:1-7** -- I prefer the **eyewitness account** of the Creator who was the only one there.

If you deny the historicity of creation events, you open yourself up to all sorts of **theological problems**. Since death entered into the world through the Fall in the Garden – how can you have millions of years of death of various organisms before man comes on the scene?

People love to attack creationism because they don’t want to submit to God as the **authority** in their lives. Think of **1 Cor. 15** where Paul goes on at length about the implications of no resurrection. You could write a similar treatise on the implications of no biblical creationism.

We must move on.

**3. Implications of God creating all things GOOD** in the Garden of Eden –

- Work is not something bad
- The human condition is not intrinsically tied to sin until the Fall – remember Jesus is fully human and yet sinless
- Intimate Fellowship with God is the highest activity for man created in **God’s image**

**4. Establishment of 2 Genders (Male and Female) and Institution of Marriage --**

**Gen. 1:27** “*male and female He created them*” – hard to confuse this but our culture is stumbling over this basic truth of biology

**Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:6-9** Marriage is the one flesh God-ordained union of one man and one woman – Designed to be a permanent union for life; no concession for any type of homosexual relationships

**5. Beginning of the Sabbath Principle** of six days of work and the seventh day to rest

**\*\* Goal: New Creation – of the Heavens and Earth / of Redeemed Individuals**

**B. (Chaps. 3-6) Fall** — The Beginning of Human Temptation and Sin – Rebellion / Redemption

**1. Reality and Power of Satan** to Lie and Deceive and Wreak Havoc

How should we defend against temptation? How did Christ defeat Satan when He was tempted 3 times in the wilderness?

**2. Sin introduced Death -- Fear, Shame and Guilt into our experience.** We struggle with these emotions in every area of life. Fourfold Alienation –

- between man and God
- between man and man
- internally within ourselves
- between man and God's created order in nature

**3. Hope of Redemption** introduced right at the outset in the curse God placed on the serpent – **protoevangelium** = first good news

**Gen. 3:15** *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”*

Beginning of Messianic prophecy which becomes more and more specific and detailed as we progress through Genesis and then the rest of the OT

**4. Reality of Natural Depravity** – we are all born with a sinful nature – the proclivity towards selfishness and rebellion. Doctrine of Total Depravity. We are separated/alienated from God and powerless to save ourselves. Look at God's verdict as sin and wickedness grow rapidly:

**Gen. 6:5** *“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

**5. Beginning of Family and Civil Strife** – seen in Cain's murder of Abel

**\*\* Goal: Redemption accomplished by the Seed of the Woman [Rebellion countered by Obedience of 2nd Adam]**

**C. (Chaps. 6-10) Flood** — Judgment/Deliverance — The Beginning of Redemption Amidst Growing Corruption — Days of Noah and the Flood of Judgment and the Ark of Deliverance – Judgment/Salvation

**1. Difficulty of maintaining a faithful testimony** in the midst of a wicked society.

Noah knew what it was like to be mocked and ridiculed.

In the last days (in which we are living now) people will be living lives of pleasure – oblivious of their need to repent – mocking God and saying “Where is the promise of His coming”

They believe in uniformitarianism – all things will continue just as they are today –

**2 Pet. 3:5-7** “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, <sup>6</sup> through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

**2. Horror God’s Judgment due to Holiness of God contrasted with Magnificence of God’s Salvation (pictured in the ark)**

**3. God Makes a Covenant with Noah – Sign of the Rainbow – Mercy of God**

Never again will God destroy the world with a flood – shows that it was a worldwide flood, not just some local disaster

**4. Noah has Moral Failures as well**

**\*\* Goal: Destruction of World by Fire and Ultimate Lake of Fire While Sparing the People of God Via Ark of Salvation**

**D. (Chap. 11) Dispersion of Babel** – The Beginning of Division into Nations with Separate Languages — Pride

**1. Sinful Goal of Independence and Autonomy** -- Man’s pride and desire for autonomy; refusing to submit to the clear commands of God – God had commanded them to fill the earth – now God scatters them to accomplish His purposes

**2. Judgment of Division of Languages / Scattering**

**\*\* Goal: Unity of God's People in the One Family of God [Pride countered by Humility of Christ]**

## **II. (Chaps. 12-50) BEGINNINGS ON A NATIONAL SCALE – THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD**

[Overlapping outline divisions – tracking each patriarch from birth until death]

### **A. (12-25) Abram / Abraham – Picture of Sovereign Election and Life of Pioneering Faith**

**W. H. Griffith Thomas:** It must be evident . . . that there was no intention of writing an universal history of man, but only of recording the development of the Divine will and purpose for and through Abraham. It is history written with a special purpose.

Abraham called the Father of the Faithful

#### **1. Faith Reflected in Abram's Response to God's Call – Gets Moving in Faith**

**Gen. 12:1-3** *"Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

#### **2. Faith Separates from Worldliness – (13:5-18) – Separation from Lot**

**Gen. 13:9** *"Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."*

#### **3. Faith clings to God's Promises --**

##### **God's Sovereign Election of Abraham and his descendants – 3 Covenant Promises**

- Land
- Family / Descendants
- Channel to bring Blessing to the World

Key Verse – quoted by Paul in Romans

**Gen. 15:6** *"Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."*

#### **4. Faith Lives Out Key Theological Questions:**

**a. Is Anything Too Difficult for the Lord? (18:14)    Greatness of God**

Fulfillment of promise required **God opening the womb** of Sara – [subsequently opened womb of Rebecca, wife of Isaac who bore Jacob and Esau – **25:21**; and womb of Rachel, wife of Jacob who bore Joseph and Benjamin – **29:31**] – God works thru our weakness so He gets all the glory.

**b. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen. 19:24-28**

Intermarriage with Canaanites forbidden – God did not want His people to worship foreign gods; they were to maintain their identity as His special people – that was threatened by integration with surrounding pagan cultures

**5. Faith Passes the Final Exam When the Pressure Is Most Intense – Time of Crisis**

**Faith Reflected in Abraham's Willingness to Offer up Isaac as a Sacrifice – Gen 22**

*(22:7-8) "And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"<sup>8</sup> And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together."*

Going to give up his own son at God's command – **Heb. 11:17 ff** Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead!

**Heb 11:17-19** *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; <sup>18</sup> it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called."<sup>19</sup> He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type."*

**6. Faith's Failures Overcome by God's Mercy** – repeated attempts to protect himself by human scheming

**Dr. Thomas Constable:** On the one hand, Genesis reveals much about the person and work of God. This revelation helps us to trust and obey Him. It is through His personal revelations to the main characters in Genesis that God revealed Himself initially (e.g., Adam and Eve, Noah, and the patriarchs).

On the other hand, Genesis reveals much about the nature of man. Not only did God reveal the perversity and depravity of man, but He also identified many positive examples of faith and obedience in the lives of the godly.

In Genesis we learn that **faith in God** is absolutely essential if we are to have fellowship with Him and realize our potential as human beings.

**7. Faith Relies on the Good Providence of God** – Provision of wife for Isaac (**24:1-67**)



## **B. (26) Isaac** – Life of Covenant Blessing (Gen. 26)

Passage begins and ends with an account of tremendous trials and pressure faced by Isaac and Rebekah. **Verse 1** speaks of a severe famine in the land and **verses 34-35** close with the grief experienced on account of Esau taking wives from the tribe of the Hittites. These types of trials can easily erode faith in the promises of God and cause us to lose sight of the hope of His high calling.

Although Isaac lived the longest of all the patriarchs [180 years – 5 years more than Abraham] less is recorded of him than of the others. This is the only chapter exclusively devoted to his life. His was a quiet, peaceful, normal life.

[**S. Lewis Johnson**: His actions in this chapter closely parallel those of his father Abraham. For example, he has to contend with the famine in the land just as his father did, he has to take a trip down into the land of the Philistines just as his father did, he has to deal with the king of the Philistines whose name was Abimelech, that was a dynastic title and so he had to contend with Abimelech just as Abraham had to contend with Abimelech. And then of course he has the same experience of lying about his wife. Abraham lied about Sarah twice, and even though Isaac must have known about this for the traditions were handed down, still he lies about Rebekah.]

**R. Kent Hughes**: Structure: three parallel declarations of God's presence at the beginning, middle, and end of the account.

1. The first was **future**: "*Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you*" (v. 3).  
Location: Gerar – land of Philistines
2. The second was **present**: "*Fear not, for I am with you*" (v. 24). Location: Beersheba
3. And the third was **past**, as the pagan king Abimelech observed, "*We plainly see that the Lord has been with you*" (v. 28).

How Isaac related to and appropriated the reality of God's presence had everything to do with how he lived. And so it is with us.

Text centers around **3 Instances of God Reaffirming His Covenant Promises** – all emphasizing the **Presence of God bringing blessing and protection to His chosen people**

## **C. (27-36) Jacob / Israel** – Life of Wrestling with God and then Submitting

### **1. Stealing of the Blessing rightfully belonging to first born son Esau (Gen 25)**

Shows his selfish character; Jacob tricked his brother Esau (who ended up "despising" his birthright) and deceived their blind father Isaac to steal the blessing meant for Esau. This act of dishonesty led to significant consequences, including strained family relationships and Jacob fleeing from his home.

### **2. The Blessing of God's Presence (28:10-22) -- similar to story of his father Isaac**

When Jacob was fleeing from Esau, he had a dream of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. God spoke to him and reaffirmed His promise. This was a significant moment of divine encounter.

The presence of God brings comfort and assurance. Even in our lowest points, God is with us and affirms His promises.

### **3. Wrestling with God – Picture of the Power of Prayer Leading to Submission**

**(Genesis 32:22-32):** In a mysterious encounter at Peniel, Jacob wrestles with a divine figure (often interpreted as God or an angel). This encounter results in Jacob's name being changed to **Israel** ("*he struggles with God*"), signifying a transformation in his identity and relationship with God.

Sometimes, we need to wrestle with God, expressing our doubts, desires, and frustrations, but ultimately we must surrender to His will.

### **4. Transformation of Jacob – from selfishness (deceiver, conniver)**

Jacob's life is a testament to God's sovereignty, grace, and the power of personal transformation. Despite his imperfections, God's hand was upon him, shaping his destiny and the future of Israel. Through Jacob's story, we see that God is committed to fulfilling His promises, no matter how imperfect the people involved may be.

### **5. Importance of Repentance and Reconciliation (with Esau – Gen. 33:1-17)**

## **D. (37-50) Joseph – Life of Sovereign Providential Blessing**

The life of Joseph, found in **Genesis 37-50**, is one of the most powerful and poignant narratives in the Bible. His story is full of highs and lows, but throughout it, we can discern many valuable lessons. Here are some key lessons from Joseph's life:

### **1. Trust in God's Sovereignty**

- **Joseph's dreams and his brothers' betrayal (Genesis 37:1-11):** Joseph had dreams that he would one day rule over his family, but instead of being supportive, his brothers sold him into slavery out of jealousy. Despite this, Joseph's life eventually aligned with the dreams God gave him, showing God's sovereignty over all circumstances.
  - **Lesson:** Even when circumstances seem contrary to God's promises, we can trust that He is sovereign and will fulfill His purposes in our lives, even through unexpected and difficult situations.

## **God Works Behind the Scenes**

- **Joseph's rise to power (Genesis 41:14-46):** From being a slave to becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt, Joseph's rise to power was orchestrated by God. He interpreted Pharaoh's dream, which led to his promotion, and he used his position to save Egypt and the surrounding nations from famine.
  - **Lesson:** God often works behind the scenes in ways that we cannot immediately see. Joseph's story reminds us that God's plan for our lives is unfolding, even when we can't perceive it at the moment. Trusting His guidance is essential, even when the path seems unclear.

## 2. Faithfulness and Perseverance in Adversity and Loneliness

- **Joseph in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-6):** After being sold as a slave in Egypt, Joseph worked diligently in Potiphar's house and gained his master's trust. He remained faithful and honorable, even when faced with the temptation of Potiphar's wife.
  - **Lesson:** Integrity and faithfulness to God in the midst of challenges and temptation are crucial. Our character is often forged in adversity, and faithfulness in small things can lead to greater opportunities.
- **Joseph in prison (Genesis 39:20-23):** Even after being unjustly imprisoned, Joseph continued to serve faithfully. He interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, but he was forgotten for two more years.
  - **Lesson:** Patience is a virtue that is often developed through waiting. God's timing is perfect, and though it may seem like we are overlooked or forgotten, He is at work, preparing us for His purposes in the right season.

## 3. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- **Joseph forgives his brothers (Genesis 45:1-15):** When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, they did not recognize him. Instead of seeking revenge for the harm they caused him, Joseph forgave them, revealing his identity and inviting them to live in Egypt to escape the famine.
  - **Lesson:** True forgiveness is transformative, not only for the one forgiven but also for the one who forgives. Joseph's willingness to forgive demonstrated the power of grace and reconciliation. Forgiveness may be difficult, but it is key to healing relationships and moving forward.

## 4. God Can Use Evil for Good

- **Joseph's perspective on his brothers' betrayal (Genesis 50:19-20):** After their father Jacob passed away, Joseph's brothers feared he would retaliate against them. However, Joseph reassured them, saying that what they intended for evil, God used for good—to save many lives during the famine.

- **Lesson:** God is able to take even the most painful and unjust circumstances and use them for His greater purposes. What others may intend for harm, God can turn into opportunities for growth, blessing, and salvation.
- **Genesis 50:20** *“And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”*
- double causation – primary cause and secondary cause

## **CONCLUSION:**

Cycle of **Creation / Fall / Redemption / Restoration** – seen fully in book of Revelation

Crucial for understanding **Book of Revelation** – cf. first 3 chaps and last 3 chaps. – remarkable parallels (**Dr. Ken Boa**)

- Creation / New heaven and new earth
- Darkness he called night / there shall be no more night
- God made 2 great lights = sun and moon / no need for sun and moon
- In the day you eat of it you shall surely die / there shall be no more death
- Satan appears as deceiver of mankind / disappears forever
- Garden into which defilement entered / city into which no defilement will enter
- Walk of God with man interrupted / walk resumed and perfected
- Initial triumph of serpent / ultimate triumph of lamb
- I will greatly multiply your sorrow / no more sorrow or pain
- Cursed shall be the ground / no more curse
- Man’s dominion broken in fall of first man Adam / Restored in the rule of the new man Christ
- First paradise is closed / new paradise is opened
- Access to tree of life disinherited in Adam / Access reinstated in Christ
- Driven from God’s presence because of sin and alienation / they shall see His face

## Focus on Christ:

[We already briefly mentioned Messianic prophecy beginning with 3:15 – followed by Abrahamic Covenant with implied line of Messiah; thru Isaac, Jacob, tribe of Judah]

**Gen. 49:10** *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*

Messianic Types – historical fact illustrating spiritual truth

- Adam type of Christ – **Rom. 5:14** – both entered the world thru a special act of God as sinless man; called second Adam
- Abel's acceptable offering of a blood sacrifice that points to Christ
- Melchizedek – king of righteousness, of Salem = peace – **Heb. 7:3** – made like the Son of God; priest of the Most High God
- Joseph and Jesus both objects of special love by their father; both hated by their brethren; rejected; conspired against; sold for silver; condemned though innocent; raised to prominence by power of God

Next Sunday – **Exodus** – It would be helpful if you read the book during this week to prepare.