

# OpenTheo

## Genesis Introduction



### Genesis - Steve Gregg

In this introduction to the book of Genesis, Steve Gregg discusses how it provides essential information about the beginning of everything, including the human race, and the origins of marriage, atonement, and human inventions. While some view the first eleven chapters of Genesis as mythological, Jesus himself believed three out of four primary stories to be historically true, making it an important part of Christian belief. The book of Genesis is divided into pre-Abrahamic history and history of Abraham's family, and contains various patterns or prototypes that foreshadow something related to Christ.

## Transcript

Well, this morning we have our introduction to the book of Genesis, and also later in the morning we have the book of Genesis, which is good. We're finally going to get to that after all these introductory lectures. You're probably wondering if we're ever going to get into the Bible itself, or just be talking about the Bible.

But we're almost finished talking about the things we have to talk about before getting into the Bible itself. The book of Genesis is actually named from the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. Genesis is a Greek word.

It means simply beginnings. And in the Hebrew Bible, they didn't have very imaginative ways of naming the books of the Bible, so these early books of the Bible actually are named in the Hebrew Bible simply by the first words in the book. So, in the book of Genesis, the first words are, in the beginning.

And so that's what it's called in the Hebrew Bible, in the beginning, in its Hebrew words. Exodus, for example, is called, now these are the names, which is the opening words of the book of Exodus. In the Greek Bible, when the Septuagint was translated, each of the books were given a name in the Greek.

Exodus, for example, is a Greek word, which means a going out. Genesis, a Greek word that means the beginning, or beginnings. And of course, the book of Genesis is very much an essential book, in that it tells us things that no other book could tell us.

It fills the gap, for example, between the beginning of everything and the beginning of the human race. Without the book of Genesis, we really wouldn't know how we got here, or why, for that matter. And whether we were answerable to somebody for having brought us into being.

It fills an important gap between the beginning of history and the time when Israel came out of Egypt. Because if we had only the book of Exodus to start with, and didn't have the book of Genesis, we would find a race of slaves in Egypt at the beginning of Exodus. That's where our story would begin.

And we would find that for some reason or other, God had some sympathies toward them, and chose to bring them out of Egypt, and to make a special nation out of them, and punish Egypt in the process. We wouldn't know specifically why God singled out these particular slaves to champion their cause, as opposed to any other oppressed people in the world, but we find in the book of Genesis that those slaves that God rescues in the book of Exodus had a history, their ancestors had a history, of covenantal relationship with God. And that is why He was committed to them and came to their rescue.

But how they came to be in that covenant relationship is even a question that would have to be answered. Because we might say, well, is God a respecter of persons? Why would God have a special relationship with these people and not with others? And we find that actually God does not respect persons. God is not especially favorable toward Israel in the sense of, you know, saving them, taking them all to heaven because of their ancestors.

It's very clear in the teaching of Jesus and John the Baptist that no one will have a good relationship with God in eternity based on their ancestry. Remember John the Baptist said to the Jews, don't think to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our ancestor. He said, God could raise up from these stones children of Abraham if He wished.

In other words, it doesn't count for anything in itself. What counts with a relationship with God personally is your personal faith and obedience to God. But God did choose a people who were to fulfill His earthly purposes.

Israel was chosen for an earthly reason. That was to know God, to make His knowledge known to others, and most particularly to bring into the world the Messiah. Now, being in Israel didn't mean you were automatically personally on good terms with God.

There were people in Israel whom the earth swallowed and who died in other horrible ways because God was not favorable toward them as individuals. Because an individual's relationship with God has always been based on personal factors. But God selected a people, Israel, to be His mechanism, His agency, through which He would bring forth the Messiah, and prior to bringing forth the Messiah, through which He would preserve the

knowledge of Himself for the world.

And we find that this begins in Genesis, as do many other things. Genesis has the beginning of very many things. In chapter 1, we have the beginning of the universe and the solar system and life and humanity.

You know, the origins of the universe, the origin of life, is still a mystery, even to those most highly advanced scientists. They still don't know why the universe came into being. They don't know why there is something rather than nothing.

Philosophers of science have puzzled over this to this very day. The most modern scientists still don't know why there is a universe. They can say how they think it came about.

Of course, they talk now about the Big Bang as the origin of it all, but no one can say why it came about. And likewise, the origin of life remains an unsolved mystery to the most advanced scientists. The theory of evolution does not even begin to explain or try to explain the origin of life, because you can't have evolution until you have life.

If you have evolution at all, it is a result of mutations. And mutations don't exist until you have self-replicating molecules, which are life. You have to have life first, then you can perhaps have evolution.

But without living things already in existence, evolution does not begin to happen. And pre-biological, prebiotic evolution is a misnomer. You can't have evolution the way that scientists today like to talk about evolution, until you have something alive that reproduces itself and can mutate.

But when you have only non-living chemicals, there's nothing known to nature that would assemble them or cause them to self-assemble into the stuff that is required for life. Into protein molecules, for example, which have to exist before there's life. Science has no answers to how the universe, or I should say why the universe exists, nor how life came into being.

But actually, the Bible tells us, and we would hope that if God made us and wants to be in a relationship with us, he'd give us some information about these things, which are so important to us to know. We have in chapter 2 the origins of marriage. And we have to remember that marriage is not a human institution.

Man did not create marriage. People who do not know God, or do not make God central, or do not take Genesis seriously, assume that marriage is an institution that human beings eventually came up with on their own. After they evolved as a race from former lower species, they realized that they needed to have some kind of society, some kind of civilization, some organization into families and so forth.

So they came up with the idea of marriage. And on this view, marriage is a human institution created by and for society, and therefore, if society wishes to change its definition or regulate it according to the whims of current fashion, then society has every right to do so. If we want to define marriage as any loving relationship between persons of any genders, well, who's to say we shouldn't do that? If that's the majority rule, if people want to vote on that.

Well, the Bible indicates that it's not a matter of majority rule. Man did not create marriage, and therefore man does not define it or regulate it. And so in Genesis 2 we find the origins of marriage, and of course in verse 24 of chapter 2 it says, For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and plead to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

And that's the definition of marriage in Scripture. It's quoted by Paul. In Ephesians 5 it's quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19.

Obviously the New Testament writers saw Genesis 2 as defining the very essence of what marriage is, because it was God's idea. God created it. Man is not competent to redefine it, because it's not man's invention.

So we have the beginning of the universe and life. In chapter 1 we have the beginning of marriage. You see, Genesis is a book of many beginnings.

In chapter 3 we have the beginning of sin and death. These are things that are universally known among humans as long as we've known human history. People die, people sin, but they started doing it at some point.

It began somewhere. It began in chapter 3 of Genesis. By the way, in chapter 3 we also have the beginning of clothing.

And without Genesis we would not be able to say with any certainty why people should wear clothing. Now in the Pacific Northwest it's obvious why you wear clothing. It's cold.

But if you were in the tropics, would it matter? In many parts of the world it might be more comfortable to be without clothing. And yet all societies except the most isolated, let us say, have generally recognized the need for people to wear clothing for reasons other than mere protection from the environment, but more for the matter of modesty. And the origins of clothing and the sense of modesty, which has become essentially a universal human instinct, we have the beginnings of that strange instinct in Genesis 3, as well as the beginning of atonement.

Now, atonement is a factor in virtually all religions. Atonement means, you know, making peace with God. And all religions exist in order to try to bring about some sense of peace with either God, if that religion believes in God, or at least with the cosmos or with whatever it is that is ultimate.

And we have the beginnings of that in Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve finding themselves to be sinful, having their consciences pricked by their disobedience, seek to cover their nakedness so that they might not be ashamed in the presence of God. And yet they are incapable of adequately doing so, and so God himself covers them with the skins of animals. And this is the beginning of the concept of God covering sin for man.

This idea, of course, is developed through the rest of Scripture. And outside of Scripture, essentially, is at the root of almost all religions, probably every religion that's ever been created by man. We have the beginnings of religious worship.

Again, a universal human tendency in all societies. All societies worship. Man is a worshipping species.

Animals, as near as we can tell, do not experience awe. They do not worship God in the sense that, you know, by free choice. One could say that all that they do is, in a sense, glorifying God, because they always do what God wants them to do.

They do it by instinct, but they don't do it by choice. Human beings who can, if they wish, or may not, if they wish not, always do worship. They don't always worship the correct God.

Sometimes they worship themselves. Sometimes they worship money. Sometimes they worship other people.

Sometimes they worship the state. But all people worship. Human beings have this worshipping instinct.

And the origins of worship are found in Genesis 4, with the offerings of Cain and Abel that are described there. We have the origins of human invention and innovation also in Genesis 4, because there we read about Cain's descendants innovating certain things like musical instruments and metallurgy, working with metals. By the way, again, that's something only humans do.

Animals do not invent things. Animals do not innovate things. You might say, oh, but spiders do.

They have these tremendously well-engineered webs that they do. But they didn't invent it. No intelligent spider sat down in the early days and said, you know, I think this would work out really well, and then designed this blueprint for a spider web and then taught his descendants to do it and left it in writing for them.

Spiders do that from the day they're born. It's instinctive. God designed those webs.

Spiders didn't. Similarly, birds' nests, wasps' nests, beavers' dams, they are feats of engineering that are highly intelligent, but it's not the intelligence of the beaver or the

bird or the spider or the wasp. It's the intelligence of God.

But human innovation exists because man is made in God's image, and because man is made in God's image, he has creative instincts and creative capacities, as God does. And therefore, we see the beginning of human invention, inventing musical instruments, inventing whatever they invented with metal in those days, possibly weapons, they were the first things that began to develop with metal, it's hard to say. And they're still doing that.

But the origin of human innovation is in Genesis. The origin of cities and nations, that is, organized societies, is in Genesis. And you might think, well, I don't know how much you take these things for granted when you think without Genesis, we wouldn't really know why or how humans first began to organize into societies, where they let somebody lead them and they cooperated together.

You might think this would just kind of evolve over time, and maybe it would if it had, but it didn't. It didn't evolve over time. The first city was established by Cain himself, in Genesis 4. And the nations arose as separate ethnic groups, no doubt after the Tower of Babel, from the three sons of Noah, and we read about that in chapter 10 of Genesis, so we know where the original ancient nations came from and what their ancestries were.

In chapter 11, we have the origin of different languages. Now, when you think about it, if we didn't have the Tower of Babel story, how would you think these different languages came into being? Of course, evolution would be the only alternative to the biblical story, and yet, how would they evolve? Especially over the relatively short period of time that humans have been on the earth. Even if Genesis was not taken seriously, and if we assume that humans have been on earth as long as evolutionists say, which is maybe a million years, maybe a little more, in that period of time, why would all these languages develop? Think about it.

If the first humans to come up with speech taught it to their children, like you taught it to your children or you were taught it by your parents, then their children would pass along the same language, not a different language, to their children. Now, true, my children speak slightly different languages than I do. Every generation has their own vocabulary, but it's still intelligible, and you come up with an entirely different language and thousands of languages in relatively so short a time.

It just seems to me difficult to postulate how that would happen. No doubt there are theories that seem plausible that seculars have, but we don't have to guess about it because the Bible tells us where all the different languages came from and why. Then, of course, perhaps one of the most significant things in Genesis is it tells us of the origin of the people of Israel.

I don't suppose that's more significant than the origin of the universe or of life or perhaps

of some of these other things, but Israel becomes the most central concern in the rest of the Bible, and its origins are in the call of a man named Abraham or Abram in those days, later Abraham, in Genesis chapter 12. So we have the beginnings of institutions that are important institutions in Genesis. Almost all of them are in the first 11 chapters.

And by the way, the first 11 chapters of Genesis have been the ones most frequently challenged as for their historical reliability. There are perhaps many who are not Christians and are not Jews and do not believe the Bible who would allow there was a man named Abraham who might have been the ancestor of the Jewish people. His story begins in Genesis 12, or his birth is recorded in the early part of the story at the end of chapter 11 of Genesis.

But in the earlier chapters of Genesis, in the first 11 primarily, we have things that modern man usually thinks of as mythological. The six-day creation, a talking snake, the fall, the flood that covered the earth, the Tower of Babel. Certainly, secular people do not see these as reliable stories for the simple reason that secular people are naturalistic.

They don't believe in the supernatural. All of these stories involve supernatural intervention from God or in one case from the devil. And without the supernatural, you can't have those things.

And therefore, the modern mood against the supernatural in Western civilization entertains strong doubts about the historicity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. And many Christians of a slightly more liberal stripe than myself, I guess, have been willing to accommodate these doubts. And have been willing to say, yeah, well, the first 11 chapters were not really intended to be historical.

They would say the history really begins at chapter 12 with Abraham. The stuff before represents legends and myths of the Jews or maybe even poetic, fanciful descriptions, perhaps no more intended to be taken as historical than maybe the parables of Jesus were intended to be taken as historical stories. Just moral tales, folk tales that had a moral lesson to them.

That's how the modern attitude toward the first 11 chapters of Genesis generally hangs. But certainly, those chapters give every evidence of claiming to be historical. You would not need a whole chapter, for example, chapter 5, documenting only the generations from Adam to Noah and the age of every man at the birth of his son and how many years he lived after that, what his total age was.

That chapter would be totally unnecessary. If the authors were not trying to get across, or the author trying to get across, that these things really happened. That these events really happened in historical periods and are connected by these events, the number of whose years can be tallied.

Certainly, it's treated as if it's history. Likewise, the period from Noah to Abraham is treated similarly. Not with quite as much detail, but nonetheless, the number of years are given, the number of generations between Noah and Abraham.

It's treated as if it's history. Of course, one could say it's dishonest. One could say it's presented as history, but it isn't real history.

But no one can really reasonably say that it isn't presented with an intention of conveying the idea that this is historical. It is. And Jesus, of course, himself, believed that these stories were historical.

Of the four primary stories in the first 11 chapters of Genesis, Jesus singled out three of them, three of the four, named them, and spoke of them as if they were historical events. In Genesis, for example, he was asked in Matthew 19 what the rules were, what the ethics were for divorce, whether one ought to be able to divorce his wife for any reason he wishes or not, as some of the rabbis were saying. And Jesus said, well, haven't you read how it was that he who made them in the beginning made them male and female? And he said, that is, Jesus said that God said, the one who made them said, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

Now, Jesus said, therefore, what God has joined together, based on the statement that the two become one flesh, God declares the husband and wife become one flesh. He says, well, if God declares they're one flesh, then God has joined them together. Man then should not put them apart.

Now, here Jesus is giving a very relevant and important ethical teaching for human well-being. Obviously, the issue of divorce is one that people feel strongly about, especially people in unhappy marriages and people who are divorced. Divorce is a very important ethical issue because it damages children, it damages people, it undermines the stability of society.

And here Jesus is giving an ethical teaching on this based on what? On the assumption that Genesis 2.24 is historically true. When he's asked, well, what is the ethics of divorce? He says, well, didn't you hear how God did it? Let me quote it for you. He quotes Genesis 2.24 as if it's true, as if it really happened.

He says, now, that's how God did it, therefore, it's wrong to undo it. And so, certainly, Jesus believed the creation story in Genesis 2 was true, historically. Also, in Luke chapter 11, I guess it is, and it's paralleled in Matthew 23, Jesus was chiding his generation and their race as a whole, and he said that all the righteous blood shed from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who is the last martyr in the Jewish canon of Scripture, will come upon this generation, that is, will be held against them.



He's saying this generation is going to be punished for and held responsible for all the righteous blood that was shed from Abel to Zechariah. Now, certainly, Jesus couldn't say that if he didn't think Abel really died and really had righteous blood shed. You can't impose penalties on people for crimes that never occurred historically.

How could Jesus say, you are going to be held responsible for the blood of Abel, who was a mythical character? Well, you might as well hold someone responsible for Humpty Dumpty falling off a wall, because no one can be held responsible for something that never really happened. But Jesus said that the Israelites of his day would be held responsible for all the righteous blood shed, including the blood of Abel. Jesus felt that had really happened.

Likewise, in Matthew 24, in parallels, Jesus said, As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man. You know, he said, as it was before the flood. People were eating and drinking and giving in marriage and did not know until the flood came and took them all away.

So shall it be in the day when the Son of Man comes. So, you know, you can't really say it'll be like these days if they didn't really happen, if those days never existed. He said it will be in that day in the future the way it was in those days in the past, as if those days really existed.

So Jesus confirmed that he believed, and by the way, Christians believe what Jesus believed by definition. By definition, if you don't believe what Jesus believes, you're not a follower of Jesus. Right? I mean, rabbis had disciples.

The disciples believe what their rabbi taught them. Jesus is our rabbi, our Lord, our God, even, and we are his disciples. We believe what he said, or we aren't his disciples.

And therefore, a true Christian, once he realizes what Jesus said about this, would have to agree that the first 11 chapters of Genesis were treated by Christ as historical events, and that's how we will accept them. At least that's how I will. Now, in addition to recording the beginnings of all these important things in the first 11 chapters of Genesis, oh, and by the way, if those aren't historical, then we don't know the beginnings of all those important things.

Right? If the first 11 chapters are not historically true, but simply myths, then we really still don't know where the world came from, or life, or marriage, or clothing, or language, or any of those things. And that's just fine for modern people, because they don't want the answer to those questions to be the answers given in Genesis 11. They want them to be otherwise.

Modern people want to give an evolutionary answer, and I hope it doesn't seem like I'm just picking on evolution all the time. It's a hobby horse, but you have to realize that

naturalistic evolution is the only alternative to the biblical story that Western civilization considers to be credible. I mean, there are other stories told in the Hindu religion and the pagan religions about how the universe came about from battles between gods and things like that.

No Western civilization has ever, in modern times, embraced those. But in Western civilization, modern people embrace two different accounts alternately. They either accept the biblical account, or they accept an evolutionary account, where nature has produced all these things, and life, the world, everything came about by natural causes.

Although there's absolutely no known laws of nature that could do it, they hope to find them. And that language, and marriage, and human society, and all that has just evolved. So obviously, moderns do not mind losing the record of the first 11 chapters to explain these things, because they don't want the explanation to be that explanation.

But Jesus accepted it, so Christians, as again, I say by definition, accept what Jesus said. That's what Christian means. Now, the roots of all the later revelation in the Bible also are found in Genesis.

That is, without the information in the book of Genesis, we would really be at a loss to make sense out of most of what the rest of the Bible says. For example, the characters who are introduced in the book of Genesis are mentioned dozens of times in the other books of the Bible. Adam, Cain, Abel, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the sons.

These men are mentioned dozens and scores of times throughout the rest of the Bible. Genesis is quoted over 60 times in the New Testament, in 17 of the 27 books. There's 27 books in the New Testament, 17 of them verbally quote Genesis.

This is different than alluding to. There's lots more allusions. There's over 200 allusions to Genesis in the New Testament.

But actual quotes, by quotes I mean it says, as it is written, and then quotes a verse from Genesis, like 60 times in the New Testament. And when you include the allusions to the book of Genesis in the New Testament, you've got about 200 of those. Obviously, the New Testament is shot through with information that has its origins in Genesis.

Over a hundred of these allusions to Genesis in the New Testament are actually allusions to the first 11 chapters. Which, as I point that out, because, as I said, the first 11 chapters are those that are the most seriously under attack as historical information by modern thinkers. But about half, about a hundred, of the allusions to Genesis in the New Testament are allusions to those 11 chapters.

And six of them are from Christ's teaching directly. Now, a reasonable question arises when we come to Genesis about where the information came from. I mean, Christians say, well, it came from God.

But, I mean, when it comes down to it, if Moses wrote this, where did he get the information? Did God just reveal it to him, or did he have information from earlier sources? That's really the question. Moses' life begins in the beginning of Exodus and continues until his death in Deuteronomy. But Genesis records information prior to, actually centuries prior to, Moses' lifetime.

Now, the information in Exodus through Deuteronomy, Moses could have written largely from his own experience. He wouldn't need sources for that. He lived through that time.

He was the main character around which all those events focused. But in Genesis, Moses was not present. And, therefore, if he wrote Genesis, he would have had to have something other than his own experience to go on.

And two possibilities seem to exist. One is that it could be that God just directly revealed it to Moses. This is a theory that some people hold.

We know that Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai the first time when he received the Ten Commandments. It probably didn't take God 40 days to carve the Ten Commandments in stone. That could be done much more quickly than that.

What was going on the other 40 days? And then Moses came down, broke the Ten Commandments, and went back up for another 40 days. So, he spent a total of 80 days on the mountaintop with God. And then, of course, Moses spent a lot of time in the tent of meeting after that, meeting with God on a daily basis.

But some people think, well, what was happening up there all that time was God was dictating to him or revealing to him the things that we have in the book of Genesis. That is not impossible, since God can do that kind of thing, and Moses certainly had the opportunity to receive it. The book of Genesis could have been written down in 40 days or certainly 80 days under dictation easily enough.

Although it's a little difficult to take that view when you realize that the book of Genesis is punctuated with certain statements that suggest that there were different sources for the different information. Now, this is not the same thing as the documentary hypothesis where they say, well, these different traditions were floating around orally and someone, you know, gathered them all up and put them down on a piece of paper or parchment or whatever. This is saying that Genesis is not the earliest divine revelation.

God revealed himself to people before Moses' time. They may have written down some of the things that God revealed to them. Certainly God revealed things to Adam.

He actually walked with God in the cool of the day. God revealed himself to Enoch. God revealed himself to Noah and to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph.

There were all these men received divine revelations before Moses came along. Now, it's

not unthinkable that these men might have written down records of what God revealed to them or even in some cases written down the records of their own, just their own family histories, which wouldn't even have to be given by divine inspiration, but involved divine intervention. In any case, it was divine history.

And it's not unreasonable to assume that the families that were most devout collected the earlier things like, you know, Noah would perhaps have the things that Adam could have recorded. If Adam could write, we don't know exactly when writing originated, but it could well be that just as language was given to Adam at the moment of his creation, so the ability to read and write could have been planted in him too, programmed in. It might seem strange to someone with an anti-supernaturalist worldview to think that way, but everything in Genesis seems strange to someone with an anti-supernaturalist worldview.

But when you see how totally supernatural the origin of everything was in the early chapters, that God might have programmed Adam not only with the ability to speak language, which we know was present, but also to read and write it, then Adam may well have written down the portion that he knew. And, of course, Noah may have written down the portion he knew and so forth. And these records would become sacred records to those people who were pious and who wanted to retain the knowledge of God and could well have been preserved by Abraham's family and eventually fallen into Moses' hands as he became the leader of the nation.

And he may have put together these records. There's a very real possibility that this is the case. Now, if it was orally transmitted rather than in written documents down to Moses' time, or I should say Abraham's time, because in Abraham's time we know there was writing.

And this is an important thing because some people say, well, writing probably wasn't invented much before Abraham's time. But remember, they once said writing didn't exist in Moses' time. And they were way off the mark on that one.

Because since then the engraved laws of Hammurabi, which date from actually around Abraham's time more than Moses, they testify that there was writing in use hundreds of years before Moses' time. How many hundreds of years before, no one knows. Maybe as far back as Adam.

But suppose we only could say for sure that there was writing in the time of Abraham because of the laws of Hammurabi. That's the only external to the Bible, the earliest we know about human writing. But there was writing in the time of Abraham.

But you see, Adam's life, or I should say Adam's son, Seth's life, overlapped with that of Methuselah. That is, because people lived so long, generally over 900 years, many generations overlapped. Methuselah was eight generations from Adam.

But Adam's son Seth lived well into the lifetime of Methuselah. Which means that Seth had heard from Adam, the story of creation for example, and knew from living through the subsequent history all that had happened, he could have told Methuselah. Methuselah's life overlapped that of Shem, the son of Noah.

And Shem's life overlapped that of Abraham. So even though we're talking about 20 generations, the story would only have to be told really from Shem to Methuselah, from Seth to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Shem, and Shem to Abraham. I mean, it could have been told that few times.

It's not as if it had to be told thousands of times over those thousands of years before Abraham came along. But my theory is, and it's not mine, I didn't invent it, it's a common belief of many evangelicals, that there were at least nine documents, written documents, that came down to the hand of Moses. And that these documents are actually identified for us in the book of Genesis.

I'll tell you about that a little later on in this lecture, how to identify them. But Moses probably had written information from earlier generations that he put together into the book of Genesis when he wrote it. Now, with every large book, it's kind of good to outline it or break it into parts so you can see it in smaller components.

It's kind of hard to hold in your mind's eye the content of an entire book that's 50 chapters long in one glance. But if you break it into smaller parts, it's easier to see it and to manage the whole bit of information. And the book of Genesis can be divided into different ways.

One way would be into two primary parts. Certainly there are two primary sections, and the major division is between chapter 11 and 12. So that the first 11 chapters would be pre-Abrahamic history, and then chapters 12 through 50 would be the history of Abraham and his family after that.

So that Abraham is the focal point. And the first three verses of Genesis 12 are the focal point. They are the Abrahamic covenant.

They're the promises that God made to this man, Abraham, which unfolded for the rest of biblical history, including our own time. The promises to Abraham are continuing to unfold. They didn't exist before chapter 12, but after chapter 12, hardly anything else mattered.

And so that would be the major division. If you just thought of Genesis in two parts, you've got the pre-Abrahamic history. Remember, that's 2,000 years on either side.

The creation is 4,000 years before Christ. Abraham is 2,000 years before Christ. So the first 11 chapters cover 2,000 years, and the rest of the Old Testament covers 2,000 years.

Very disproportionate coverage of the same length of time in each case. Which, of course, tells us something about the importance that the biblical writers attributed to these two seasons. The season before Abraham could be covered, at least everything of great importance could be covered in 11 chapters.

The same length of time after Abraham took the rest of the Old Testament to record everything that was important. But there's another way to divide it into smaller pieces, and that is you could reasonably divide the book into four parts of almost equal length, which makes it kind of simple. You would still have the first 11 chapters as your first section, the pre-Abrahamic history, but then the rest of it could be divided into three more sections of approximately very similar length.

Because chapters 12 through 25 would be the life of Abraham himself. That takes us up to the halfway point of the book. And then chapters 25 through 36 would be the story of Isaac and his sons, Jacob and Esau.

And then the last few chapters, 14 chapters really, is the life of Joseph from 37 through 50. But only 13 of those are really about Joseph because chapter 38 is about Judah, but that's kind of a parenthesis in there. You could say that the book divides into these four sections, pre-Abrahamic history, the first 11 chapters, the story of Abraham himself in chapters 12 through 25, the stories of Isaac and his two sons, Jacob and Esau, in chapters 25 through 36, and then the life of Joseph, the longest section of all.

Now, a further possibility of dividing it would be into nine separate parts. And this is where I mentioned there is evidence of perhaps nine documents, maybe more, that were probably passed down to Moses and became part of the compilation that we call Genesis. And these are punctuated and identified by the use of the Hebrew word toledoth.

Toledoth is translated, at least in the King James, it was consistently translated generations. And in the New King James, for some reason, they don't show that same consistency, and it makes it a little bit confusing, I suppose. But the first instance of this word, toledoth, is in chapter 2 and verse 4, where it says, this is the history of the heavens and the earth.

The word history there is toledoth. And it can mean history, certainly, but the New King James doesn't translate it as history consistently in the other occurrences, which is why it becomes more confusing. Because in chapter 5, verse 1, we have the second occurrence of this word.

It says, this is the book of the genealogy of Adam. That word genealogy is toledoth. So you've got, in chapter 2, verse 4, the New King James translates it as history.

In chapter 5, verse 1, they translate it as genealogy. And in chapter 6, verse 9, which is

the next one, it says, this is the genealogy of Noah. And in chapter 10, verse 1, it says, now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah.

So you can see that the New King James is fairly consistently translating it as genealogy in all the cases except for the first one, where they translate it as history. In the King James, it was customary to just use the word generations. The generations of the heavens and the earth, the generations of Adam, the generations of this and of that.

Now, this word toledoth does mean something like the history of, or the record of the history of. And scholars do not fully agree among themselves as to whether these announcements that we're now looking at the history of so-and-so, the history of so-and-so, whether these expressions are introducing a section or summarizing a section that's just passed. Now, in other words, the history or the generations or the toledoth of the heavens and the earth are found, it's mentioned in chapter 2, verse 4. Is that a summary statement of the first chapter and the first three verses of chapter 2? Is it a closing statement? Who knows? It gives the story that says, and this is the history of.

You've just read the history of the heavens and the earth. Or, when you read this is the generations or the toledoth of, is it introducing what's about to come? Like, we're now about to read the history of the heavens and the earth. We're now about to read the history of Adam, and so forth.

Scholars don't fully agree, and I don't know that we can say for sure. My own intuition would be, which of course isn't inspired, that perhaps these are summary statements at the end of a section. After all, chapter 2, verse 4, where it says this is the history of the toledoth of the heavens and the earth, it follows, of course, the history of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

True, the material that follows also talks about the early days, but really the material that follows talks more about the creation of Adam. And Eve, and could be summarized in chapter 5, verse 1, where it says, this is the book of the genealogy of Adam, or the origins of Adam. In the Septuagint, the word toledoth is translated Genesis.

So, in the Greek Old Testament, toledoth is translated Genesis. So, this is the Genesis, this is the beginning, this is the origins of. And so, although you'll certainly find many scholars who take it the other way, I think very probably that Genesis 1, 1, through the beginning of Genesis 2, 4, is seen as the origins of the heavens and the earth.

And then from there to chapter 5, verse 1, where we read this is the origins of Adam, that statement would be summarizing what has gone before, rather than what's going ahead. You understand what I'm saying? Now, seen that way, there are 11 times it says something like that, although in chapter 36, there's only a brief section, which mentions twice the generations of Esau. Just a little section in verses 1 through 9 of chapter 36, and that could be, I mean, a very small separate document.

There is no statement of the sort summarizing the last part of Genesis, although Exodus 1, 1 or Exodus 1, 5 might be seen as serving that role in summarizing what's gone on before. Now, these are the names of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt, or verse 5, all those who were descended from Jacob. This could be seen as a summary.

This question is a little bit gnarly one. It's not easy to decide, because on the view that I'm suggesting, then in every case except the first instance, the name that is given could be also the name of the one who recorded it. For example, chapter 5, verse 1, this is the history or the origins or the genealogies of Adam.

It could have been written by Adam. In fact, it might even mean this is the record that Adam has passed down in writing. And then this is the record that the sons of Noah have passed down to us, and this is the record that Terah has passed down to us, and so forth.

And if that is true, then it would seem most likely that the material prior to the statement is what is being described, just given, for the most part, given the contents of it. For example, Genesis 5, verse 1, saying this is the origins or the genesis, the toledoth of Adam. If Adam were the author, he would have to have written what's before it, not what's after it.

Because the contents of the rest of Genesis 5 is the descendants of Adam all the way down to Noah, and Adam wouldn't have known that. Adam couldn't have recorded the genealogy all the way to Noah. He didn't live that long.

He could have recorded what was before it. Now, we're not going to solve this problem here. I'm just letting you know that this possibility exists.

We encounter this same phrase again and again in Genesis, and it's very possible that it is giving us a punctuation of the book telling us, OK, everything up to this point we got from Adam. Everything before that, I mean, the next section we got from Noah or his sons or something similar to that. And these documents could have been passed down so that Moses had them on Mount Sinai and was able to compose the book of Genesis from them.

Now, real quickly, I want to talk about many of the important types that we find in the book of Genesis. And if you don't know what a type is, the word type, the English word type, is basically a transliteration of a Greek word, tupos, which is spelled T-Y-P-O-S. It looks like typos, like typographical errors.

But it's tupos in the Greek, T-Y-P-O-S. Tupos means a framework or a mold. It would be the words the Greeks would use if they were talking about our modern custom of having a jello mold.

You pour jello into a mold and it hardens into that shape, and then you take off the mold and it retains that shape. That's what a mold is, a type. Now, because the word is more



broad in its meaning, it came to mean a pattern or what we might even call a prototype.

The first of something setting a pattern that would later be copied at a later time. And when we say that something in the Old Testament is a type of something else, usually it's a type of Christ or it's a type of something related to Christ. And what we're saying is that God ordained something in the Old Testament to foreshadow, to give some kind of a foreglimpse of something that would be made completely known through Christ himself.

So that certain characters, certain things, certain laws in the Old Testament are said to be types of Christ. We think of the Passover as an obvious example. God instituted the Passover in the book of Exodus.

And in the New Testament, it says in 1 Corinthians 5, it says, Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. So clearly the Passover of the Old Testament was a type of Christ, our Passover. And in Genesis, there are quite a few things that can be identified as types.

Adam and Eve, for example, we have the New Testament identifying these for us. Adam and Eve and their marriage that God created is said to be a picture, a type of Christ and the church. Paul says so in Ephesians 5, verses 31 and 32, where Paul quotes Genesis 2.24. He says, this is a great mystery.

I speak of Christ and the church. He's talking about husband and wife, which is a statement made in Genesis in connection with Adam and Eve. And so we see Adam is like a type of Christ.

Eve, a type of the church. By the way, if you ever in your life get into any kind of debates with Roman Catholics, they may sometimes try to say that Eve is a type of Mary. Roman Catholics often find Mary as the mother of us all, you know.

Eve, the name Eve means living, and it says of Eve that she's the mother of all living. And to the Roman Catholic, Mary is all of our mother and therefore Eve, Mary is like a second Eve. Well, it doesn't really fit very well because they will admit that Adam is a type of Christ.

That Eve was not Adam's mother, Eve was Adam's wife. And in the New Testament, Eve, if she's a type of anything, is a type of the church, the bride of Christ. Adam, a type of Christ.

Eve, a type of the church. Adam himself is seen as a type of Christ. In fact, he's the only person in the Old Testament that the New Testament specifically uses the word type in referring to.

It says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 14 that Adam was a type. In the Greek of Romans 10, 14, the word typos, type is used. Adam, it says, was a type of him who is to come, meaning Christ.

So Adam is a type of Christ. Abel is apparently a type also of all righteous people who are persecuted. So the New Testament would suggest in 1 John chapter 3, verses 12 and 13, it says do not, well he said, we should not be like Cain who hated his brother and slew his brother.

And why did he slay him? It says because his own works were evil and his brothers were righteous. Then John says, do not marvel, my brother, if the world hates you. They're like Cain and your deeds are righteous and they hate you, just like Cain hated Abel.

If that's not exactly a type, it's at least a parallel. Also, Abel's sacrifice that he offered. Abel was the first human that we read of offering a blood sacrifice.

And all blood sacrifices in the Old Testament, including the first of them, are types of Christ who would offer his blood as a sacrifice. The ark of Noah and the flood are types of the ultimate final judgment, according to many passages in the New Testament. 1 Peter 3.21, 2 Peter 3, verses 5 through 7, Matthew 24, 37 through 39, the time of Noah, the judgment that came on the world through the flood, is a foreshadowing and a type of the judgment of the world in the end of the world.

Ishmael and Isaac are identified as types of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, respectively, in Galatians 4, verses 21 through 31. Ishmael, born of the slave woman. Actually, their mothers are the covenants.

Hagar is said to be the Old Covenant, the slave woman who bears children into bondage. And Sarah represents the New Covenant or the New Jerusalem and bears three children. And so, Ishmael and Isaac are like the people of the Old Covenant versus the people of the New Covenant, or children of the flesh versus children of the promise, as Paul puts it.

When Abraham offered Isaac, on Mount Moriah, the Bible does not say that was a type, but almost all Christians have felt that that's a type of God offering his son. Interestingly enough, it was on the same mountain range where Jesus later died, 2,000 years later. Mount Moriah is believed to be on the same mountains as Mount Calvary, where Jesus died.

And also, when Abraham offered Isaac, he made a prediction that the Lord would provide for himself a ram for burnt offering. And this is understood to be a prediction of the Lord providing Christ as our ransom. Anyway, Hebrews chapter 11 talks about how Abraham offered up Isaac, and it says, and he received Isaac back from the dead in a figure, or in a manner of speaking.

It says that in Hebrews 11, verses 17 through 19, that when, although Isaac didn't really die, he was almost dead, God gave him back to his father. The writer of Hebrews says that's sort of like God giving him back from the dead, which could be a picture of Christ also being offered and coming back from the dead. The obtaining of a bride for Isaac is a

very fascinating story.

It's so fascinating it's told twice in its entirety in one chapter, a very long chapter. And it certainly resembles in all of its features, which we'll discuss at a later point when we get to that chapter, it resembles what it says in Matthew 22, where Jesus said, the King of God is like a king who wanted to make a marriage for his son. The father making a marriage for Christ, finding a bride, Rebekah being a picture of the bride of Christ and Isaac of Christ himself, Abraham being a picture of the father.

We'll see how many ways that parallels when we get to the treatment of chapter 24 of Genesis. And then Joseph, the Bible nowhere identifies Joseph actually as a type of Christ, but there are about 33 features of the story of Joseph that scholars have seen paralleled with Christ himself. And while he is not specifically said to be a type of Christ, it's very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Joseph, as much as any other Old Testament character could be, seems to be a foreshadowing of Christ and has been rejected by his brethren and becoming the savior of the world.

Really, there's many, many areas where Joseph can be seen to parallel Christ. Now, very quickly, I just want to say that God is called by a number of names in the book of Genesis. And throughout the rest of Scripture.

And as you get to other parts of Scripture, you'll find even additional names for God. The names of God are given as revelations of something about his character. A name means far more in the ancient Hebrew culture than it does in our society.

We give our children names because they sound good to us, or we're naming them after one of our ancestors, or we think it's clever and we think people will be impressed that we gave them such a clever name or whatever. We just like the sound of it. But in biblical times, names were given to people which were considered to be descriptive of what they would be.

As in the case of Esau, which means hairy. He was covered with hair when he was born. They called him hairy.

And he was later called Edom, which means red. It turns out his hair was all red. So he was a redheaded, hairy man.

So hairy, in fact, that he could be impersonated by goat's pelts. When Jacob was impersonating his brother Esau to his blind father Isaac, he covered himself with goat skins with hair on it. And when Isaac thought, well, that's Esau, okay.

The right man was a hairy man, covered with red hair from birth. That might give some support to the theory of evolution, you know. Sort of a throwback to the orangutan or something.

But actually, it illustrates that he was called Edom because that means red and that was a nickname. He was given the name Esau because that means hairy. It was typical for people to give names that meant something.

Also, when God revealed his name to his people, he revealed himself under names that mean things. And that reveals something about his character or his relationship with people. The following names of God appear in the book of Genesis.

The earliest one, Elohim, is in the opening verse and many other verses afterwards. Elohim is a word that can be translated gods because it is a plural word. But the usage of it in many sentences requires that it be treated as a singular word because the grammar is such that the word Elohim is joined with a verb that is in a singular form.

And therefore, requires that the subject must be treated as singular even though it's Elohim, which is a plural word. So, mystery, right from the very opening sentence of the Bible. It's mysterious that a plural word is used in a singular way of God.

And perhaps suggestive of the Trinity. Some have thought probably as good an explanation as any of that phenomenon. Then there's the name Yahweh or Jehovah.

In the Hebrew, this is just four letters and they're all consonants. It's the Hebrew letter that corresponds with the English J or Y. And then the letter that corresponds with the letter H. And then the letter that corresponds with the English V or W. And then, again, the letter that corresponds with H. So, you've got a J-H-V-H or a Y-H-W-H, depending on how those consonants are vocalized. But the point here is there's no vowels in it.

And you can't pronounce a word with no vowels. You can make a guttural sound of all consonants, but you can't make a syllable without a vowel. And this is called the unpronounceable name of God.

But not so much because it lacked vowels, but because it was considered to be too reverent. Too holy a name for the Jews. Most Jews didn't want to pronounce it.

It was too holy for them. It is the name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush, but it's used earlier than Moses' time. At the burning bush, Moses said, what name? What is your name, God, so I can tell the children of Israel that you sent me? I can mention your name.

He says, tell them I am sent you. And that's just these four consonants. They are the root of the Hebrew phrase I am, the one who is, or something along those lines.

But the vowels that we attach to them are humanly added. The Masoretic text of the Hebrew is what introduced vowels here. The Masoretes put vowel points in here.

They took the vowels from another word, Adonai, and added them to what's called the

Tetragrammaton. These four letters that can't be pronounced by themselves. It's called the Tetragrammaton, the four letters.

And when you add the vowels from Adonai to this, you can pronounce it Jehovah or Yahweh. And so it's alternately. It's the name of God that the closest meaning you can get to it is I am.

And it's the name that God used particularly in identifying himself with those that he had a covenant relationship with. And Israel in particular later on. El Elyon means literally the most high God.

It's found in Genesis 14 where Melchizedek is the first person to use it. Abraham is the second. He picks it up from Melchizedek.

Abraham knew God as Yahweh. But when he met Melchizedek, Melchizedek referred to God as El Elyon. I mean the most high God.

And later in that same passage, Abraham refers to God by that name also apparently influenced by Melchizedek. God is the most high God. All the nations had their gods, but our God is the most high of all.

Not to suggest that the others are real gods, but to suggest that of all the gods imagined in pagan religions, ours is still the superior one to them all. El Roy is the name that Hagar used to speak of God after she realized that God sees her. And El Roy means the God who sees me.

Adonai is a very common Hebrew word used frequently of God and of others. It means my Lord or my Master. Sometimes it just means Sir.

And so you'll find it used sometimes addressing human beings, men, or sometimes of God. When it speaks of God, it's referring to his role as Master or Lord. Yahweh El Olam are the names, obviously Yahweh.

And El means God and Olam means eternity. So Yahweh El Olam means Yahweh the Eternal God or the God of Eternity. It tells us something about God.

That's the name that Abraham used when he built a certain altar at a certain point after a conflict with neighbors. El Elohi Yisrael means God the God of Israel. Now Israel means Jacob.

In Genesis there was no nation of Israel. It wasn't a nation yet, it was just a man. A man named Israel, named Jacob.

And El Elohi Yisrael is the term that Jacob used for God at the very end of his sojourning with his uncle Laban. You might remember when Jacob fled from Esau and had that dream about the ladder and woke up. Jacob said, you know God, if you keep me safe and

bring me back to my father's house in prosperity and so forth, then I'll let this stone be your house and you will be my God and I'll give you 10% of everything.

A good Jewish businessman there. Sounds like a good deal. Keep me alive, keep me safe, make me prosper, I'll give you 10% commission.

And I'll also let this rock be your house, by the way. Throw that in for a sweet deal, huh? But most importantly he said, and you will be my God. You see, he wasn't his God.

Jacob did not own God as his own God in those days. Whenever he referred to God, he called him the God of Abraham and the fear of my father Isaac. Remember that? In those days, Jacob didn't say my God because God wasn't his God.

But at the end of all that, when God kept his promises to Jacob and Jacob's deal was sealed, he built an altar and said, it's El Elohi Yisrael, God, the God of me, Israel. My God is what it means when it comes from the mouth of Jacob. This is my God now.

And then El Shaddai, which is found frequently in later Jewish writings and even earlier ones like Job. Shaddai means almighty, or at least that's the best translation most etymologists can come up with it. There's a variety of theories about what Shaddai means, but the accepted meaning is the almighty God.

So these names of God are used in Genesis at various points. There's God revealing himself by stages, more things about himself to primitive people who didn't know anything except what God revealed to them. And those revelations of himself were often in the form of the names he chose to reveal himself by.

And so we'll close there.