

GENESIS

Introduction to Genesis

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF GENESIS

A. **Genesis is the foundation of the Old Testament.** Much of the O T will not make sense without an understanding of the Book of Genesis.

1. **Adam** is mentioned by name in Deut. 32:8, 1 Chr. 1:1, and Job 31:33.
2. **Noah** is named in 1 Chr. 1:4, Isa. 54:9, and Eze. 14:14 and 20.
3. **Abraham** is named in Ex. 2:4, Lev. 26:42, Num. 32:11, Deut. 1:8, Josh. 24:2, 1 Kings 18:36, 2 Kings 13:23, 1 Chr. 1:28, 2 Chr. 20:17, Neh. 9:7, Ps. 47:9, Isa. 29:22, Jer. 33:26, Eze. 33:24, Micah 7:20, and many others.
4. **Jacob** is mentioned in Josh. 24:4, 1 Sam. 12:8, and 18 other Old Testament Books. God changes his name to **Israel** and his sons become the twelve tribes of God's chosen people. "Apart from the Book of Genesis, there is no explanation for Israel nor, consequently, for all the rest of the Old Testament."

B. Genesis is foundational for the New Testament as well.

1. The New Testament quotes or alludes to passages in Genesis at least **200** times!
2. Each of the first **eleven** chapters of Genesis is referred to somewhere in the New Testament.
3. Every New Testament **author** refers to some passage in Genesis.

Examine the relationship of Genesis and the New Testament by completing the chart.

| Author/Speaker | New Testament Reference | Genesis Reference | Topic |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Matthew/Jesus | Matthew 19:5 | 2:24 | Marriage |
| Mark/Jesus | Mark 13:19 | 2:4 | Creation |
| Luke/Jesus | Luke 11:51 | 4:11 | Blood |

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| John | John 1:1 | 1:1 | The beginning |
| Paul | Galatians 3:8 | 12:3 | God's blessing |
| James | James 2:21 | 22:9 | Isaac/altar |
| Peter | 2 Peter 2:7-8 | 19:9 | Lot |
| Jude | Jude 14 | 5:18 | Enoch |

C. Genesis also provides a foundation for **history.**

1. "Genesis" is the transliteration of the Greek which is taken from the Hebrew title of the book "Bershith." "Bershith" means "in the **beginning**." The word "Genesis" means "**origins**" or "beginnings."
2. Genesis tells the origin of many things.

Match the reference in Genesis to the appropriate beginning.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| Genesis | 1:1 | The beginning of sin |
| | 1:20 | The beginning of the universe |
| | 2:16-17 | The beginning of language |
| | 3:1-7 | The beginning of civilization |
| | 3:15 | The beginning of chosen people |
| | 4:1-2 | The beginning of nations |
| | 4:16-22 | The beginning of the promise of Christ |
| | 11:1-7 | The beginning of families |
| | 11:9 | The beginning of death |
| | 12:1-3 | The beginning of life |

When properly understood, Genesis also tells us of the origin of order and complexity, the laws of thermodynamics, the atmosphere and hydrosphere, the animal kingdom, culture, government, and religion.

II. THE AUTHOR OF GENESIS

A. The Primary Source is **God, specifically the Holy Spirit.**

2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

Regardless of what man or men is/are responsible for writing the book, the truth of the book depends upon its primary source. If Genesis is false at any point, we must attribute the error to God for the man wrote as the Holy Spirit moved him.

B. A liberal, humanistic theory concerning the authorship of Genesis: The **Documentary** Hypothesis

(Because this theory is mentioned or espoused in numerous commentaries, we will briefly explain and consider it.)

1. This hypothesis is often called the JEDP theory. Each letter stands for a word.

J – Jehovah (YHWH) document

E – **Elohist** document

D – Deuteronomic Code

P – **Priestly** writings

Julius Wellhausen added the final touches to the still popular documentary hypothesis in 1895. Briefly, the hypothesis suggests that the Pentateuch is a combination of **four** separate documents that were compiled and edited to create the final form which we now possess.

J is a document written around King **Solomon's** time, 950 B.C. and is identified by its use of "YHWH" (Jehovah) as the name for God and by its narrative style. This writer supposedly drew some of his accounts from Babylonian myths and legends.

E is a document written around **850** B.C. and is characterized by the use of "Elohim" as God's name.

JE was a **combination** of J and E around 650 B.C. with some added sentences or paragraphs tying the two together.

D was written by men of **prophetic** influence by 621 B.C.

P was written by priests during the **exile** by 450 B.C.

JEP were all combined and edited to form one document by **400** B.C.

JEDP became the final result after additional editing by **350** B.C.

2. Note the consequences of accepting the hypothesis:

- a. **Mosaic** authorship is rejected.
- b. People of the Pentateuch are not **real** people but idealized heroes.
- c. The Pentateuch is not real **history** but a reflection of what later writers thought.
- d. The laws and practices of the Pentateuch were not really commanded by **God**.
- e. The claims that **God** selected a people and acted redemptively in their behalf are **fabrications**.

3. An evaluation of the hypothesis:

- a. When the criteria for separating the four documents are applied, scholars **disagree** widely as to which document a certain passage should be attributed.

One scholar, so called, will say this passage belongs to E and another says that it belongs to P, while still another will attribute it to JEP. There is no agreement among those that subscribe to this hypothesis.

- b. There is no external, **historical** evidence for the existence of J, E, D, P, JE, or JEP.

In other words, there is not a single historical reference in any writing, anywhere that these precursor documents ever existed!

- c. There is no **archeological** evidence for the existence of J, E, D, P, JE, or JEP.

There is also no trace of any of these precursor documents in any archeological find; whereas, ancient manuscripts (or fragments thereof) of all of the O T books in the form we recognize today have been discovered.

- d. To accept the documentary hypothesis is to reject the **biblical** testimony. We examine it next.

C. The Biblical Testimony

1. **Other Old Testament authors attribute Genesis to Deuteronomy, known as “the law” (Torah), to a single individual. Look up some of the references below and insert his name: **Moses****

Josh. 8:31, 1 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 14:6, 1 Chr. 22:12, Ezra 3:2, Neh. 8:1, Dan. 9:11, Mal. 4:4

2. **New Testament authors refer to Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch as the Law of **Moses**.**

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.*" Is it oxen God is concerned about?

3. ****Jesus** attributes the Law to Moses.**

Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*"

Nowhere in the Bible is another potential author of any of the Pentateuch mentioned or suggested. The unanimous testimony of Scripture is that Moses was the man inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS

A. **Symbolic** Interpretation

Liberal and neo-orthodox scholars have tried to interpret Genesis as symbolic rather than historical. By so doing, they can accommodate evolution and other theories while keeping the “spiritual truths.”

For instance –

Adam is not a real man but a symbol of mankind.

The fall of Adam and Eve is not an historical event but a symbol of man’s sin against God.

B. **Historical** Interpretation

Conservative scholars suggest that the words of Genesis mean what they say.

For instance –

God really did create the world in six days.
 Adam was a real man and Eve was his wife.
 Noah survived a world-wide flood in an ark.

An historical interpretation would conclude that the events of Genesis are factual history.

C. How Did New Testament Authors Interpret Genesis?

They had to decide whether Adam, Noah, and Abraham were real men involved in historic events or mythological symbols of spiritual truth. Read the New Testament references to the following Genesis accounts and write “symbolic” in the blank if it seems that the writer did not believe the person or event was real and literal. Write “historical” if the writer speaks as if the people and events are factual history.

| Genesis Account | New Testament Reference | Type of Interpretation |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| First man – Adam | Luke 3:38 | Historical |
| Death because of sin | Romans 5:12 | Historical |
| Temptation of serpent | 2 Cor. 11:3 | Historical |
| The Great Flood | 2 Peter 3:6 | Historical |
| Abraham lived in Haran | Acts 7:4 | Historical |
| Tithes paid to Melchizedek | Hebrews 7:4-5 | Historical |

D. How did Jesus interpret Genesis?

The fact that New Testament authors interpreted Genesis historically should be sufficient to direct us; but the fact that the Lord Jesus interpreted Genesis historically ought to be normative for the Christian.

Matthew 24:37-39 ³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

To what Genesis account is Jesus referring? [Noah and the flood](#)

Does Jesus refer to the account as historical? [Yes](#)

If this account were not historical, but only symbolic, what would that mean about the second coming of Christ? [It too could be symbolic.](#)

E. Conclusion

1. Jesus and the inspired New Testament writers all treated Genesis as literal, **factual**, and historical.
2. To dismiss the historicity of Genesis threatens the historicity of the **rest** of the Scripture.

If Genesis 1:1 is not factually true, why is John 3:16 factually true?

If there was no real first Adam, is the second Adam real?

If there was no world-wide flood of judgment, why will the next judgment be world-wide?

If God did not really save Noah from the flood, why would He really save me?

Does what you believe about Genesis really matter? Jesus says it does. Write His words below.

John 5:46 For if you believed **Moses**, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.

IV. THE STRUCTURE OF GENESIS

For ease of study, we will borrow an outline of Genesis from Dr. Alan Stringfellow.

A. Four Major Events

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|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. The Creation | Genesis 1-2 |
| 2. The Fall | Genesis 3-4 |
| 3. The Flood | Genesis 5-9 |
| 4. The Babel Crises | Genesis 10-11 |

B. Four Outstanding Persons

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Abraham | Genesis 12-23 |
| 2. Isaac | Genesis 24-26 |
| 3. Jacob | Genesis 27-36 |
| 4. Joseph | Genesis 37-50 |