

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Genesis

Book 1

Basic Question behind the book:

Who am I and where did I come from?

Summary of book:

There are a lot of stories, familiar and not so familiar in these fifty chapters. At the end of the book we have the story of Joseph. Before that we have the accounts of his father Jacob and Uncle Esau. Before him we have the stories about Isaac and the first patriarch Abram (Abraham). Before Abram we have the account of the tower of Babel, preceded by the flood. There are lots of names and generations covered before that, and then we're back to the beginning of the book – the first human family who are made in God's image and intended for fellowship with God, but who choose selfishly to disobey and dethrone God; a decision that messes things up for them and for everyone ever since, which is seen first of all in the fratricide of Abel by Cain. Chapters 1 & 2 tell of the beginnings of all things. That's what the word Genesis means – beginnings. All of life begins with God, is sustained by God, is known by God, and ultimately returns to God.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To reflect on God's creation of the world and his desire to have a people set apart to worship and know him.

Author: Traditionally ascribed to Moses, but most likely conveyed by oral tradition for many generations before being finally written down, much later. There are comparable creation stories, flood stories and law codes found in Babylonian literature which might suggest a date during the exile. That makes sense: a group of people who have just lost everything might want to write things down in order to work out their identity and tell their story.

Recipients: The Jews initially, but basically all of God's people in all times and places. While its history speaks about one particular period and how they responded to the challenges they faced and how they walked with God, we can see some eternal truths and unearth some enduring convictions in these pages.

Dating: See above. The period of time it relates to is from pre-history up to the death of Joseph which would have been around 1600 BC.

Setting: The region known as the fertile crescent and the Middle East.

Other Reflections:

Genesis has led to many books being written about whether the six days are to be taken literally or poetically. Whatever the case, the message is the same: Life has meaning and purpose; an origin in the love of God and a destiny. Wow! And you didn't think your life was significant or important!

The gospel is to be found there in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Think about it and go looking for:

- Created by and for the loving purposes of God.
- Basically good but we've gone wrong because we've misused the gift of the freedom to choose.
- Judgment in the sense of the destruction that happens when we live by our own choices and not God's will, purpose and destiny for us. Also judgement in the sense of the intervention of God ultimately.
- The offer of salvation in the rainbow and in the calling / election of Abram.

Key verses:

"In the beginning God created.... And it was good!" (Genesis 1)

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is being done, the saving of many lives." (50:20)