

Genesis - Introduction

- The Hebrew title for what we know as the Book of Genesis is **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (bə-re'shiyth) which is the first word of the book and means “In the beginning”.
- Our English title Genesis comes from the LXX translation of the key Hebrew word **תּוֹלְדוֹת** (tōlə-dōth) in Gen 2:4 which is the Greek word **γενέσεως** (geneseōs).
- Authorship
 - Scripture identifies Moses as the human author of the Torah/Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) [Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Num 33:1–2; Deut 31:9–11; Josh 1:7-8; 8:30-35; 1 Kings 2:3-4; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1; Dan 9:11-13; John 5:45-47; Rom 10:5; Mark 12:26; Luke 24:27].
 - Mosaic authorship of Genesis was accepted for centuries until a movement inappropriately named “higher criticism” came along.
 - This movement, which began in the 18th century, approached the Pentateuch from the viewpoint that these books were simply the writings of men, thus denying their divine inspiration.
 - These “higher critics” developed a documentary theory known as JEDP.
 - The theory is based upon the idea that there were multiple literary sources for the Pentateuch.
 - This theory is based upon the ideas of Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) who believed the Pentateuch was written by Ezra who compiled some traditional documents and added some ideas of his own.
 - The “J” document – named for the frequent use of the term Yahweh (Jehovah) – was supposedly written in the Southern Kingdom around 850 B.C.
 - The “E” document – named for the frequent use of the term Elohim – was supposedly written in the Northern Kingdom around 750 B.C.
 - Around 650 B.C. some unknown person supposedly combined “J” and “E” to produce “JE”.
 - The “D” document – named because it introduced Deuteronomy – was supposedly written under the supervision of Hilkiah as part of the reforms of Josiah around 620 B.C.
 - The “P” document – named because it addresses priestly matters – was supposedly written somewhere between 570 and 445 B.C.
 - This theory postulates that Ezra then compiled these documents (JE, D and P) and added some text of his own during the fourth century B.C.
 - This theory is highly developed and deviously plausible, so it has seduced the scholarly community with its crafty deception for years.
 - Quite a few so-called biblical scholars still maintain this distorted view of the authorship of the Pentateuch even today.

- There are many good writings that easily debunk the JEDP theory, so that will not be addressed here.
- Suffice it to say that the working premises of JEDP include the denial of divine authorship and the rejection of textual evidence of human authorship, both of which render the theory meaningless.
- As it turns out, the traditional view that Moses wrote Genesis (and the rest of the Pentateuch) has only been strengthened by these attacks.
- The proper interpretation of the Book of Genesis requires that one recognize the truth that the entire book was written by a single human author (Moses) under divine inspiration.
- It should be noted that the events of Genesis occurred prior to the birth of Moses.
- Moses was an eyewitness to the events of the other four books of the Torah.
- However, since God inspired Moses in the writing of Genesis, it is not necessary for him to have been an eyewitness of any of those events.
- Historicity
 - The Book of Genesis was not written as a mere chronicle of events – history for history’s sake.
 - Accordingly, not every event in human history during the covered time period is recorded.
 - Nonetheless, the historical events which are recorded in the Book of Genesis are accurate records of actual events, not myths or legends.
- Structure
 - The Book of Genesis has two common motifs – blessing and cursing.
 - Blessing and cursing both come from God and have an effect on man from his very beginning.
 - Blessing reflects divine approval of man’s obedience by faith and cursing reflects divine disapproval of man’s disobedience in unbelief.
 - Genesis can be broken down into an initial section followed by eleven sections marked by headings.
 - These headings include the Hebrew word תּוֹלְדוֹת (tōlə-dōth) which is often translated “generations” or “histories”.
 - It is better to understand this word as meaning “this is what came of...”.
 - The sections of the Book of Genesis are...
 - Creation [1:1 -2:3]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of the heavens and earth [2:4-4:26]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Adam [5:1-6:8]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Noah [6:9-9:29]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Shem, Ham and Japheth [10:1-11:9]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Shem [11:10-26]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Terah [11:27-25:11]
 - תּוֹלְדוֹת of Ishmael [25:12-18]

- תולדות of Isaac [25:19-35:29]
- תולדות of Esau [36:1-8]
- תולדות of Esau, father of Edom [36:9-37:1]
- תולדות of Jacob [37:2-50:26]
- As we shall see, the headings mark the starting point which is often not the central concern.
- This is particularly true in the תולדות of Terah which is primarily concerned about Abraham and his descendants.
- Since we are going to cover Genesis 1-11, we will conclude our study with the תולדות of Shem.
- Theology
 - The Book of Genesis does not attempt to argue for the existence of God.
 - This book presupposes that God exists and that He has revealed Himself to us through His word and His works.
 - This book makes the very important assertion that everything exists because of God.
 - This book introduces us to the nature of God and establishes Him as Sovereign Lord of the universe.
 - This book shows us that God desires to bless mankind, but will not tolerate disobedience and unbelief.
 - This book is foundational for the doctrines of the rest of the Bible and should not be overlooked.