

GENESIS

Title

The English title, Genesis, comes from the Greek translation (Septuagint, LXX) meaning “origins”; whereas, the Hebrew title is derived from the Bible’s very first word, translated “in the beginning.” Genesis serves to introduce the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT) and the entire Bible. The influence of Genesis in Scripture is demonstrated by its being quoted over 35 times in the NT and hundreds of allusions appearing in both Testaments. The story line of salvation that begins in Gen. 3 is not completed until Rev. 21–22, where the eternal kingdom of redeemed believers is gloriously pictured.

Author and Date

While 1) the author does not identify himself in Genesis and 2) Genesis ends almost three centuries before Moses was born, both the OT (Ex. 17:14; Num. 33:2; Josh. 8:31; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11, 13; Mal. 4:4) and the NT (Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; 24:27, 44; John 5:46; 7:22; Acts 15:1; Rom. 10:19; 1 Cor. 9:9; 2 Cor. 3:15) ascribe this composition to Moses, who is the fitting author in light of his educational background (cf. Acts 7:22). No compelling reasons have been forthcoming to challenge Mosaic authorship. Genesis was written after the exodus (c. 1445 B.C.), but before Moses’ death (c. 1405 B.C.). For a brief biographical sketch of Moses read Ex. 1–6.

Background and Setting

The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past. God then, by willful act and divine word, spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt, which he fashioned in his image to become Adam. God made mankind the crowning point of his creation, i.e., his companions who would enjoy fellowship with him and bring glory to his name.

The historical background for the early events in Genesis is clearly Mesopotamian. While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the historical moment for which this book was written, Israel first heard Genesis sometime prior to crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (c. 1405 B.C.).

Genesis has three distinct, sequential geographical settings: 1) Mesopotamia (chs. 1–11); 2) the Promised Land (chs. 12–36); and 3) Egypt (chs. 37–50). The time frames of these three segments are: 1) Creation to c. 2090 B.C.; 2) 2090–1897 B.C.; and 3) 1897–1804 B.C. Genesis covers more time than the remaining books of the Bible combined.

Historical and Theological Themes

In this book of beginnings, God revealed himself and a worldview to Israel that contrasted, at times sharply, with the worldview of Israel’s neighbors. The author made no attempt to defend the existence of God or to present a systematic discussion of his person and works. Rather, Israel’s God distinguished himself clearly from the alleged gods of her neighbors. Theological foundations are revealed that include God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, man, sin, redemption, covenant, promise, Satan and angels, kingdom, revelation, Israel, judgment, and blessing.

Genesis 1–11 (primeval history) reveals the origins of the universe, i.e., the beginnings of time and space and many of the firsts in human experience, such as marriage, family, the fall, sin, redemption, judgment, and nations. Genesis 12–50 (patriarchal history) explained to Israel how they came into existence as a family whose ancestry could be traced to Eber (hence the “Hebrews”; Gen. 10:24–25) and even more remotely to Shem, the son of Noah (hence the “Semites”; Gen. 10:21). God’s people came to understand not only their ancestry and family history, but also the origins of their institutions, customs, languages, and different cultures, especially basic human experiences such as sin and death.

Because they were preparing to enter Canaan and dispossess the Canaanite inhabitants of their homes and properties, God revealed their enemies' background. In addition, they needed to understand the actual basis of the war they were about to declare in light of the immorality of killing, consistent with the other four books that Moses was writing (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Ultimately, the Jewish nation would understand a selected portion of preceding world history and the inaugural background of Israel as a basis by which they would live in their new beginnings under Joshua's leadership in the land that had previously been promised to their original patriarchal forefather, Abraham.

Genesis 12:1–3 established a primary focus on God's promises to Abraham. This narrowed their view from the entire world of peoples in Gen. 1–11 to one small nation, Israel, through whom God would progressively accomplish his redemptive plan. This underscored Israel's mission to be "a light for the nations" (Isa. 42:6). God promised land, descendants (seed), and blessing. This threefold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–20). The rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises.

On a larger scale, Gen. 1–11 set forth a singular message about the character and works of God. In the sequence of accounts that make up these chapters of Scripture, a pattern emerges that reveals God's abundant grace as he responded to the willful disobedience of mankind. Without exception, in each account God increased the manifestation of his grace. But also without exception, man responded in greater sinful rebellion. In biblical words, the more sin abounded the more did God's grace abound (cf. Rom. 5:20).

One final theme of both theological and historical significance sets Genesis apart from other books of Scripture, in that the first book of Scripture corresponds closely with the final book. In the book of Revelation, the paradise that was lost in Genesis will be regained. The apostle John clearly presented the events recorded in his book as future resolutions to the problems which began as a result of the curse in Gen. 3. His focus is upon the effects of the fall in the undoing of creation and the manner in which God rids his creation of the curse effect. In John's own words, "No longer will there be anything accursed" (Rev. 22:3). Not surprisingly, in the final chapter of God's word, believers will find themselves back in the Garden of Eden, the eternal paradise of God, eating from the tree of life (Rev. 22:1–14). At that time, they will partake, wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14).

Interpretive Challenges

Grasping the individual messages of Genesis that make up the larger plan and purpose of the book presents no small challenge since both the individual accounts and the book's overall message offer important lessons to faith and works. Genesis presents creation by divine fiat, *ex nihilo*, i.e., "out of nothing." Three traumatic events of epic proportions, namely the fall, the universal flood, and the dispersion of nations are presented as historical backdrop in order to understand world history. From Abraham on, the pattern is to focus on God's redemption and blessing.

The customs of Genesis often differ considerably from those of our modern day. They must be explained against their ancient Near Eastern background. Each custom must be treated according to the immediate context of the passage before any attempt is made to explain it based on customs recorded in extrabiblical sources or even elsewhere in Scripture.

Outline

Genesis by content is comprised of two basic sections: 1) Primitive history (Gen. 1–11) and 2) Patriarchal history (Gen. 12–50). Primitive history records four major events: 1) Creation (Gen. 1–2); 2) the fall (Gen. 3–5); 3) the flood (Gen. 6–9); and 4) the dispersion (Gen. 10–11). Patriarchal history spotlights four great men: 1) Abraham (Gen. 12:1–25:8); 2) Isaac (Gen. 21:1–35:29); 3) Jacob (Gen. 25:21–50:14); and 4) Joseph (Gen. 30:22–50:26).

The literary structure of Genesis is built on the frequently recurring phrase "the book of the generations of" and is the basis for the following outline.

OUTLINE

I. The Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)

II. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)

A. Adam and Eve in Eden (2:4–25)

B. The Fall and Its Outcomes (ch. 3)

- C. Murder of a Brother (4:1–24)
- D. Hope in the Descendants of Seth (4:25–26)

III. The Generations of Adam (5:1–6:8)

- A. Genealogy—Seth to Noah (ch. 5)
- B. Rampant Sin Prior to the Flood (6:1–8)

IV. The Generations of Noah (6:9–9:29)

- A. Preparation for the Flood (6:9–7:9)
- B. The Flood and Deliverance (7:10–8:19)
- C. God’s Noahic Covenant (8:20–9:17)
- D. The History of Noah’s Descendants (9:18–29)

V. The Generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1–11:9)

- A. The Nations (ch. 10)
- B. Dispersion of the Nations (11:1–9)

VI. The Generations of Shem: Genealogy of Shem to Terah (11:10–26)

VII. The Generations of Terah (11:27–25:11)

- A. Genealogy (11:27–32)
- B. The Abrahamic Covenant: His Land and People (12:1–22:19)
 1. Journey to the Promised Land (12:1–9)
 2. Redemption from Egypt (12:10–20)
 3. Division of the land (ch. 13)
 4. Victory over the kings (ch. 14)
 5. The covenant ratified (ch. 15)
 6. Rejection of Hagar and Ishmael (ch. 16)
 7. The covenant confirmed (ch. 17)
 8. Birth of Isaac foretold (18:1–15)
 9. Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:38)
 10. Philistine encounter (ch. 20)
 11. Isaac’s birth (ch. 21)
 12. Abraham’s act of faith with Isaac (22:1–19)
- C. Abraham’s Promised Seed (22:20–25:11)
 1. Rebekah’s background (22:20–24)
 2. Death of Sarah (ch. 23)
 3. Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah (ch. 24)
 4. Isaac the only heir (25:1–6)
 5. Death of Abraham (25:7–11)

VIII. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12–18)

IX. The Generations of Isaac (25:19–35:29)

- A. Competition Between Esau and Jacob (25:19–34)
- B. Covenant Blessings to Isaac (ch. 26)
- C. Jacob’s Deception for the Blessing (27:1–40)
- D. Blessing on Jacob in a Foreign Land (27:41–32:32)
 1. Jacob sent to Laban (27:41–28:9)
 2. Angel at Bethel (28:10–22)
 3. Disagreements with Laban (29:1–30)
 4. Promised seed (29:31–30:24)
 5. Departure from Aram (30:25–31:55)
 6. Angels at Mahanaim and Peniel (ch. 32)
- E. Esau’s Reunion and Reconciliation with Jacob (33:1–17)
- F. Events and Deaths from Shechem to Mamre (33:18–35:29)

X. The Generations of Esau (36:1–37:1)

XI. The Generations of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

- A. Joseph's Dreams (37:2–11)
- B. Family Tragedy (37:12–38:30)
- C. Vice Regency over Egypt (chs. 39–41)
- D. Reunion with Family (chs. 42–45)
- E. Transition to Exodus (chs. 46–50)
 - 1. Journey to Egypt (46:1–27)
 - 2. Occupation in Goshen (46:28–47:31)
 - 3. Blessings on the twelve tribes (48:1–49:28)
 - 4. Death and burial of Jacob in Canaan (49:29–50:14)
 - 5. Death of Joseph in Egypt (50:15–26)

GENESIS

The Creation of the World

1 In the ^abeginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was ^bwithout form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³And God said, ^c“Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, ^d“Let there be an expanse¹ in the midst of the waters, and let it sepa-

Chapter 1

¹Job 38:4-7; Ps. 33:6; 136:5; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; John 1:1-3; Acts 14:15; 17:24; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:10; 11:3; Rev. 4:11

²Jer. 4:23

³2 Cor. 4:6

⁶Job 37:18; Ps. 136:5; Jer.

10:12; 51:15

⁷Prov. 8:27-29 ^fPs. 148:4

⁹Job 38:8-11; Ps. 33:7;

136:6; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5

¹¹Ps. 104:14

rate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made² the expanse and ^eseparated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were ^fabove the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven.³ And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, ^g“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.

¹⁰God called the dry land Earth,⁴ and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹And God said, ^h“Let the earth sprout

¹Or a canopy; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 ²Or fashioned; also verse 16 ³Or Sky; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 ⁴Or Land; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1

1:1–2:3 This description of God creating heaven and earth is understood to be: 1) recent, i.e., thousands not millions of years ago; 2) *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing; and 3) special, i.e., in six consecutive 24-hour periods called “days” and further distinguished as such by this phrase, “there was evening and there was morning.” Scripture does not support a creation date earlier than about 10,000 years ago. **In the beginning.** While God exists eternally (Ps. 90:2), this marked the beginning of the universe in time and space. In explaining Israel’s identity and purpose to her on the plains of Moab, God wanted his people to know about the origin of the world in which they found themselves. **God.** Elohim is a general term for deity and a name for the True God, though used also at times for pagan gods (Gen. 31:30), angels (Ps. 8:5), men (Ps. 82:6), and judges (Ex. 21:6). Moses made no attempt to defend the existence of God, which is assumed, or explain what he was like in person and works, which is treated elsewhere (cf. Isa. 43:10, 13). Both are to be believed by faith (cf. Heb. 11:3, 6). **created.** This word is used here of God’s creative activity alone, although it occasionally is used elsewhere of matter that already existed (Isa. 65:18). Context demands in no uncertain terms that this was a creation without preexisting material (as does other Scripture: cf. Isa. 40:28; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; Jer. 10:16; Acts 17:24). **the heavens and the earth.** All of God’s creation is incorporated into this summary statement that includes all six, consecutive days of creation.

1:2 without form and void. This means “not finished in its shape and as yet uninhabited by creatures” (cf. Isa. 45:18, 19; Jer. 4:23). God would quickly (in six days) decorate his initial creation (Gen. 1:2–2:3). **deep.** Sometimes referred to as primordial waters, this is the term used to describe the earth’s water-covered surface before the dry land emerged (1:9–10). Jonah used this word to describe the watery abyss in which he found himself submerged (Jonah 2:5). **Spirit of God.** Not only did God the Holy Spirit participate in creation, but so did God the Son (cf. John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

1:3 God said. God effortlessly spoke light into existence (cf. Ps. 33:6; 148:5). This dispelled the darkness of Gen. 1:2. **light.** The greater and lesser lights (the sun and moon) were created later (1:14–19) on the fourth day. Here, God was the provider of light (2 Cor. 4:6) and will in eternity future be the source of light (cf. Rev. 21:23).

1:4 good. Good for the purposes it was intended to serve (cf. v. 31).

1:4–5 separated . . . called. After the initial creation, God continued to complete his universe. Once God separated certain things, he then named them. Separating and naming were acts of dominion and served as a pattern for man, who would also name a portion of God’s creation over which God gave him dominion (2:19–20).

1:5 first day. God established the pattern of creation in seven days, which constituted a complete week. “Day” can refer to: 1) the light portion of a 24-hour period (1:5, 14); 2) an extended period of time (2:4); or 3) the 24-hour period which basically refers to a full rotation of the earth on its axis, called evening and morning. This cannot mean an age, but only a day, reckoned by the Jews from sunset to sunset (1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). “Day” with numerical adjectives in Hebrew always refers to a 24-hour period. Comparing the order of the week in Ex. 20:8–11 with the creation week confirms this understanding of the time element. Such a cycle of light and dark means that the earth was rotating on its axis, so that there was a source of light on one side of the earth, though the sun was not yet created (Gen. 1:16).

1:6 expanse. The portion of God’s creation named “heavens,” that which man saw when he looked up, i.e., the atmospheric and stellar heaven.

1:7 under the expanse. Refers to subterranean reservoirs (cf. 7:11). **above the expanse.** This could possibly have been a canopy of water vapor that acted to make the earth like a hothouse, provided uniform temperature, inhibited mass air movements, caused mist to fall, and filtered out ultraviolet rays, thus extending life.

1:9–10 dry land. This was caused by a tremendous, cataclysmic upheaval of the earth’s surface, and the rising and sinking of the land, which caused the waters to plunge into the low places, forming the seas, the continents and islands, the rivers and lakes (cf. Job 38:4–11; Ps. 104:6–9).

1:11–12 according to its kind. God set in motion a providential process whereby the vegetable kingdom could reproduce through seeds which would maintain each one’s unique characteristics. The same phrase is used to describe the perpetuating reproduction of animals within their created species (vv. 21, 24, 25), and indicates that evolution, which proposes reproduction across species lines, is a false explanation of origins.

1:11 yielding seed. The principle of reproduction that marks all life (cf. vv. 22, 24, 28).

vegetation, plants¹ yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for ¹signs and for ²seasons,² and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God ⁴made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to ¹rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds³ fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹So ^mGod created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves,

¹⁴Jer. 10:2; Ezek. 32:7,8; Joel 2:30, 31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25; Ps. 104:19
¹⁶Deut. 4:19; Ps. 136:7-9
¹⁸Jer. 31:35
²¹Ps. 104:25, 26

²²ch. 8:17; 9:1
²⁶ch. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8
²ch. 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; James 3:9
³ch. 9:2; Ps. 8:6-8; James 3:7
⁴ch. 2:18, 21-23; 5:2; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6
²⁸ch. 9:1, 7

with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man⁴ in our image,² after our likeness. And ⁹let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; ¹male and female he created them.

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill

¹Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29 ²Or *appointed times* ³Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19-20 ⁴The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

1:14 lights. Cf. v. 16. For three days there had been light (v. 4) in the day as though there were a sun, and lesser light at night as though there were the moon and stars. God could have left it that way, but did not. He created the “lights, sun, moon, and stars,” not for light, but to serve as markers for signs, seasons, days, and years. **signs.** Certainly to include: 1) weather (Matt. 16:2-3); 2) testimony to God (Ps. 8; 19; Rom. 1:14-20; 3) divine judgment (Joel 2:30-31; Matt. 24:29); and 4) navigation (Matt. 2:1-2). **seasons.** It is the earth’s movement in relation to the sun and moon that determines the seasons and the calendar.

1:15-18 two great lights . . . to separate the light from the darkness. It was God (not some other deity) who created the lights. Israel had originally come from Mesopotamia, where the celestial bodies were worshiped, and more recently from Egypt, where the sun was worshiped as a primary deity. God was revealing to them that the very stars, moons, and planets that Israel’s neighbors had worshiped were the products of his creation. Later, they became worshipers of the “host of heaven” (see note on 2 Kings 17:16), which led to their being taken captive out of the Promised Land.

1:20 living creatures. These creatures, including the extraordinarily large ones, included all sorts of fish and mammals, even dinosaurs (see notes on Job 40:15-41:1).

1:22 blessed. This is the first occurrence of the word “bless” in Scripture. God’s admonition to “be fruitful and multiply” was the substance of the blessing.

1:24-25 livestock . . . beasts. This probably represents all kinds of large, four-legged animals.

1:24 beasts of the earth. Different from and larger than the clan of cattle, this would include dinosaurs like Behemoth (Job 40:15ff).

1:26 us . . . our. The first clear indication of the trinity of God (cf. 3:22; 11:7). The very name of God, Elohim (1:1), is a plural form of El. **man.** The crowning point of creation, a living human, was made in God’s image to rule creation. **our image.** This defined man’s unique relation to God. Man is a living being capable of embodying God’s communicable attributes (cf. 9:6; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; James 3:9). In his rational life, he was like God in that he could reason and had intellect, will, and emotion. In the moral sense, he was like God because he was good and sinless.

1:26-28 dominion over. This defined man’s unique relation to creation. Man was God’s representative in ruling over the creation. The command to rule separated him from the rest of living creation and defined his relationship as above the rest of creation (cf. Ps. 8:6-8).

1:27 male and female. Cf. Matt. 19:4 and Mark 10:6. While these two persons equally shared God’s image and together exercised dominion over creation, they were by divine design physically diverse in order to accomplish God’s mandate to multiply, i.e., neither one could reproduce offspring without the other.

1:28 blessed. This second blessing (cf. v. 22) involved reproduction and dominion. **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.** God, having just created the universe, created his representative (dominion over) and representation (cf. image and likeness). Man would fill the earth and oversee its operation. “Subdue” does not suggest a wild and unruly condition for the creation because God himself pronounced it “good.” Rather, it speaks of a productive ordering of the earth and its inhabitants to yield its riches and accomplish God’s purposes.

the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. ⁴ You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And ^u to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ ^v And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The Seventh Day, God Rests

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and ^w all the host of them. ² And ^x on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

¹ Or open country ² Or earth; also verse 6 ³ Or spring

²⁹ ch. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15;

145:15, 16

³⁰ ^u Ps. 147:9

³¹ ^v Eccles. 7:29; 1 Tim. 4:4

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¹ ^w Deut. 4:19; Ps. 33:6

² ^x Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17; Deut.

5:12-14; Heb. 4:4

⁴ ^y ch. 1:1

⁵ ^z [ch. 1:11, 12] ^a ch. 3:23

⁷ ^b ch. 3:19, 23; 18:27; Ps.

103:14; Eccles. 12:7; 1 Cor.

15:47 ^c ch. 7:22; Job 33:4;

Isa. 2:22 ^d Job 27:3 ^e Cited

1 Cor. 15:45

⁸ ^f ver. 15; ch. 13:10; Isa. 51:3;

Ezek. 28:13; 31:8; Joel 2:3

⁹ ^g ch. 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14

^h ver. 17

The Creation of Man and Woman

⁴ ^y These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ When no ^z bush of the field¹ was yet in the land² and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man ^a to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist³ was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of ^b dust from the ground and ^c breathed into his ^d nostrils the breath of life, and ^e the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a ^f garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. ⁸ The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, ^h and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four

1:29–30 for food . . . for food. Prior to the curse (3:14–19), both mankind and beasts were vegetarians.

1:31 very good. What had been pronounced good individually (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) was now called “very good” collectively. The words anticipated God’s conclusion that it was “not good” for a man to be alone (2:18), which occurred on the sixth day.

2:1–3 These words affirm that God had completed his work. Four times it is said that he finished his work, and three times it is said that this included all his work. Present processes in the universe reflect God sustaining that completed creation, not more creation (cf. Heb. 1:3).

2:2 finished . . . rested. God certainly did not rest due to weariness; rather, establishing the pattern for man’s work cycle, he only modeled the need for rest. Later, the Sabbath ordinance of Moses found its basis in the creation week (cf. Ex. 20:8–11). The Sabbath was God’s sacred ordained day in the weekly cycle. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27) and Gen. 2:3 stated that God “made it holy” or set apart the Sabbath day because he rested in it. Later, it was set aside for a day of worship in the Mosaic law (see note on Ex. 20:8). Hebrews 4:4 distinguishes between physical rest and the redemptive rest to which it pointed. Colossians 2:16 makes it clear that the Mosaic “Sabbath” has no symbolic or ritual place in the New Covenant. The church began worshiping on the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Christ (Acts 20:7).

2:4–4:26 The history of the heavens and the earth (v. 4).

2:4–25 This section fills in the details of man’s creation on day six. How did Moses obtain this account, so different from the absurd fictions of the pagans? Not from any human source, for man was not in existence to witness it. Not from the light of reason, for though intellect can know the eternal power of the Godhead (Rom. 1:18–20) and that God made all things, it cannot know how. None but the Creator himself could give this data and, therefore, it is through faith that one understands that the worlds were formed by the word of God (Heb. 11:3).

2:6 mist . . . going up from the land. “Mist” should be translated “flow.” It indicates that water came up from beneath the ground as springs and spread over the whole earth in an uninterrupted cycle of water. After the fall, rain became the primary means of watering the earth and allowed for floods and droughts that did not exist originally. Rains also allowed for God to judge through floods and droughts.

2:7 formed. Many of the words used in this account of the creation of man picture a master craftsman at work shaping a work of art to which he gives life (1 Cor. 15:45). This adds detail to the statement of fact in Gen. 1:27 (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13). Cf. Ps. 139:14. Made from dirt, a man’s value is not in the physical components that form his body, but in the quality of life that forms his soul (see Job 33:4).

2:8 garden . . . Eden. The Babylonians called the lush green land from which water flowed *edenu*; today, the term “oasis” describes such a place. This was a magnificent garden paradise, unlike any the world has seen since, where God fellowshiped with those he created in his image. The exact location of Eden is unknown; if “in the east” was used in relationship to where Moses was when he wrote, then it could have been in the area of Babylon, the Mesopotamian Valley.

2:9 tree of life. A real tree, with special properties to sustain eternal life. It was placed in the center of the garden, where it must have been observed by Adam, and its fruit perhaps eaten by him, thus sustaining his life (2:16). Such a tree, symbolic of eternal life, will be in the new heavens and new earth (see note on Rev. 22:2). **tree . . . knowledge.** Cf. Gen. 2:16; 3:1–6, 11, 22. It was perhaps given that title because it was a test of obedience by which our first parents were tried, whether they would be good or bad—obey God or disobey his command.

2:10 out of. That is to say “the source,” and likely refers to some great spring gushing up inside the garden from some subterranean reservoir. There was no rain at that time.