

# Finer Grounds

## Genesis

### Lesson 1: In the Beginning

We are about to embark on a study into the most ancient text in the world. Genesis is the first book of the Bible and is not only a revealing of “the beginning”, but a tremendous reference for better understanding the nature of God and His ultimate plan of redemption. Before we look into the actual text, let’s spend a little time learning about some background information and other helpful facts surrounding this pivotal book.

Like the majority of the Old Testament, Genesis was originally written in Hebrew. Its Hebrew title is BERESHIT, which means “in the beginning”. It was not uncommon for ancient writings’ titles to bear the first word or two of the actual text. Our English Bibles however, bear the title given by the Greeks. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (about 250 years prior to Christ’s time on the earth), it was titled “Genesis” stemming from the Greek root word GENESEOS which means “origin, birth, genealogy, or beginning”. Either way, these are very fitting titles for the account of creation, or “the beginning”.

Most scholars agree that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible. Pentateuch is a term which means the “five-volumed book” or “the five scrolls” and came into use around 200 A.D. It is also known as the Torah, which is a Jewish term that simply refers to “the teaching” or “the law”. Jewish tradition and Scripture refer to the Pentateuch as “the Law of Moses”, “the book of Moses”, and “the book of the Law of Moses”. Although Moses is never directly named as the author, we

know that God commanded him to record certain information (Ex. 17:14, 24:4, 34:27; Num. 33:1-2; Deut. 31:9, 22, 24-26) and, most convincingly, the inspired writers of the Scriptures and Jesus Himself referred to Moses as the author of the Law (Mk. 12:26; Lk. 16:29-31; Jn. 5:46; Acts 3:22, 26:22; Rom. 10:9; and 2 Cor. 3:15, just to name a few).

Genesis moves very quickly covering more time in history than all the other 65 books of the Bible combined. It begins with creation (roughly estimated by Creationists around 4000 B.C.) and ends with the death of Joseph (somewhere around 1800 B.C.). Several key characters are covered through the fifty chapters which provide us with the lineage of the Messiah and some wonderful lessons concerning God and how those faithful to Him should and should not conduct themselves. It will take us from how it all began and follow the line of Christ through the patriarchal period. It is important to note that Jesus and what He accomplished is the theme of the whole Bible and the first book is no exception to that fact. The Genesis text follows these key characters of the patriarchal period in order to trace the lineage of Christ through God’s people.

Genesis is basically written as prose narrative which simply means it is written in a non-poetical, story-telling format. It is, by language style and grammar, undoubtedly written as an historical account. It contains many references to the “account of” or the “records of”, perhaps to emphasize that this is a book written to preserve a vitally important account. However, many

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people, including some who bear the name of our Lord, have rejected the first few chapters of Genesis as literal and factual. As we delve in to study this essential text, I pray you will be unafraid and full of faith to wholly believe God's account of "the beginning".

## Think About It

**Can you identify potential problems of disregarding the authenticity of the Biblical creation account?**

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**Look up the following verses: 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, and 37:2**  
**Based on these verses, what do you think is one of the main purposes of Genesis?**

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## Read Genesis 1

"In the beginning" has to be one of the most quoted phrases to ever be uttered. The very first sentence of the God breathed Scriptures was recorded to answer the very question that every generation and every individual that lives long enough will seek an answer to: How did we get here? Of course, the obvious subject of that infamous first sentence is God, or ELOHIYM in the Hebrew text, and He states right off the bat that He "created the heavens and the earth".

ELOHIYM is not found in any ancient Semitic language other than Hebrew. The -im ending on ELOHIYM denotes the plural form of ELOWAHH, the masculine noun referring to God, and is used some 2,602 times in the Old

Testament. Although it is translated into several different words including "gods", "judges", "angels", and a few other words, it is predominantly used and translated in reference to the one, true God. We know that its plural usage can and does actually denote a singular "God" based on the fact that it is mainly used in conjunction with singular, masculine verbs, which is contrary to the rules of Hebrew grammar when dealing with a plural noun. There may be more than one reason for ELOHIYM, or God, being referred to as plural, yet singular. The one we are most familiar with is probably the doctrine concerning the Trinity, and this grammatical structure certainly could lend support to that belief, which we see more clearly in the English text from verse 26 ("...Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."). However, there is another possible reason for this plurality of God's name coupled with singular verbs in Hebrew. Pluralizing certain nouns in Hebrew was not unusual and indicated a greater honor, perhaps as we would capitalize a whole word. Some older Hebrew grammars termed this pluralizing a "plural of majesty". The idea being He is the "GOD of all gods" or "the greatest God of all".

## Think About It

**How many times do you find the word Elohiym in chapter one alone? (Hint: every use of "God" in chapter one is the Hebrew word Elohiym)**

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**What does God create on each of the 6 days of creation?**

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**What words or phrases are found at the end of each creation day?**

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In Genesis 1:2, the Hebrew word for “formless” means “empty, unreal, nothingness” and the word for “void” basically means “uninhabited”. So, God was hovering or moving, over water located in a dark, uninhabited nothingness and decides to create by speaking in verse 3. What kind of power must a being possess to be able to create everything in known existence by simply uttering words?

Verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25 all have God calling His creations “good” and then, after He’s finished creating everything including mankind, he says it is “very good”. This word “good” in the Hebrew has the meaning of “pleasant, agreeable, or valuable in estimation”. We often marvel at this incredible creation today, but imagine it before there was any corruption in it. What a “pleasant” and “agreeable” environment that must have been!

As mentioned earlier, there are some who would seek to alter or discredit the Biblical account of creation by attempting to justify a really old earth belief. If they claim to hold to Christianity, but shrink back at the Genesis account, they may argue that God’s “days” in Genesis represent millions of years. However, that cannot bear truth when you look at the

context, language, and grammar of the text. The word “evening” means “sunset” and the word “morning” means “break of day”. Each and every day of creation God says at the end, “and there was evening and there was morning” and then He goes even further by stating the number of that day. My question to anyone who would try to alter the six-day creation account in this manner would be, how could God possibly have made this concept clearer through the use of language? It’s almost like He spelled it out, “there was evening and there was morning” “one day” (vs 5), “a second day” (vs 8), “a third day” (vs13), “a fourth day” (vs19), “a fifth day” (vs23), and “a sixth day” (vs 31). When we see figurative or apocalyptic numbers in the Bible, they are not used in this systematic, logical sequence with a clarification of exactly what they mean as the numbers here in Genesis provide. On top of all that, there is no other figurative use of numbers in the entire book of Genesis. In fact, the whole book is a narrative through and through. One would have to completely ignore all context and grammar in the book of Genesis to call the creation account anything other than literal. We must be intentional and fervent in drawing near to God through His word so that we will not be led astray by false teaching nor find ourselves ashamed of His word.

## Think About It

**If we could but begin to grasp the power of the One we not only serve, but have the unspeakable privilege of calling Father, what would our faith look like?**

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**What arguments have you heard to discredit God's word in the Genesis account?**

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**Have you ever had to defend the creation account found in Genesis and, if so, did you feel equipped and capable to do so?**

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**What are some specific things you could do to be more prepared to defend God's word on this topic?**

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**What can you personally do to strengthen and solidify your children's and/or the church's faith in the Biblical creation account?**

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Over the next thirteen weeks, we will be endeavoring to look closely at the first twenty-five chapters of Genesis. I am so glad you are joining me in this study to better equip ourselves against the schemes of the devil and to glorify God. Because of the fact that we have a tremendous amount of material to cover, I hope you will forgive me in advance for how quickly we will have to move through the text. My prayer, however, is that it will be a spring board for you to dive deeper into this incredible ancient text. Please spend time reading as much of Genesis as you can this week, especially chapters 1-3. Nothing can replace your time alone meditating

on the word of God. Please let that, not this, be your primary focus and goal now and forever.