

Preliminary Lesson

Abraham, his Family and the Messiah

Welcome to our course on “Genesis”. In this Preliminary Lesson, we shall consider the book under these headings:

- A. The Title of the Book
- B. The Author
- C. The Central Character in the Book
- D. The Messianic Hope



A. The Title of the Book

1. The title “Genesis” is a Greek translation of the first Hebrew word “Bereshit” (in the **beginning**). True to this title, the book tells of the beginning of many things. Indeed, each of the references below records the **beginning** of something important in the universe or in human experience. After reading each reference, the group should **name** in their own words the thing whose origin is recorded. The answers can be checked with the model answers in the Group Leader’s Guide.

1:1 _____ . 1:11,12 _____ .
1:20-22 _____ . 1:24,25 _____ .
1:27 _____ . 2:2,3 _____ .
2:15 _____ . 2:19b _____ .
2:24 _____ . 3:4,5 _____ .
3:6 _____ . 3:15 _____ .
4:1 _____ . 4:2b _____ .
4:3,4 _____ . 4:8 _____ .
4:21 _____ . 4:22 _____ .
5:5 _____ . 6:18 _____ .
11:9b _____ . 15:6 _____ .

B. The Author

2. In a general way, Christ attributes the first 5 books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) to Moses (John 5:46; Luke 24:27 and 44). Obviously Moses could not have written his own obituary (as recorded in Deuteronomy 34.5). The Hebrew and Christian tradition is that Moses was responsible for the material in Genesis, under the direction of the Spirit of God, basing it on old documents existing in his day. These documents are identified as a series of “accounts” or “subsequent story of” (following whatever has gone immediately before). Here are a list of these “accounts”; check them, but without reading them all through.

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| Account of the heavens and the earth | 2:4 to 4:26 |
| Account of Adam | 5:1 to 6:8 |
| Account of Noah | 6:9 to 9:29 |
| Account of the children of Noah | 10:1 to 11:9 |
| Account of Shem | 11:10 to 11:26 |
| Account of Terah | 11:27 to 25:11 |
| Account of Ishmael | 25:12 to 25:18 |
| Account of Isaac | 25:19 to 35:29 |
| Account of Esau | 36:1 to 36:43 |
| Account of Jacob | 37:2 to 50:26 |

We should be aware of the existence of these documents, although in this course we have opted for a simplified analysis, as we shall soon see. These documents imply that the composition of Genesis was similar to that of the Gospel of Luke; see Luke 1:1-4. In what sense was it similar?

C. The Central Character in the Book

3. The whole book is related to the history of one person, Abraham, and of his ancestors and descendants, as you can see in the following simplified analysis.

Abraham’s Ancestors: Chapters 1 to 11 An Introduction to his life.

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|----------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| A. Adam: | The first of the original race | 1:1 to 6:8 |
| B. Noah: | The first of the new race | 6:9 to 11:9 |

Abraham’s Life & Descendants: Chapters 12 to 50

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| C. Abram (Abraham) | | 1:10 to 25:10 |
| D. Isaac | his son | 25:11 to 27:40 |
| E. Jacob (Israel) | his grandson | 27:41 to 36:43 |
| F. Joseph (& his brothers) | his great grandson | 37:1 to 50:26 |

4. According to the simplified analysis above, which are the six principal men whose lives stand out in the book of Genesis, and what relationship did each have to Abraham?

5. **Practical Work:** Write in your Bibles the six titles of the simplified analysis below (with their references). Do it at the top of each section, according to these indications and then underline each title in **red**.

Section in the NIV	Titles	(References in Genesis)
Gen. 1:1	A. Adam and his descendants	(1:1 to 6:8)
Gen. 6:9	B. Noah and his descendants	(6:9 to 11:9)
Gen.11:10	C. Abraham	(11:10 to 25:10)
Gen. 25:11	D. Isaac	(25:11 to 27:40)
Gen. 27:41	E. Jacob	(27:41 to 36:43)
Gen. 37:11	F. Joseph	(37:1 to 50:26)

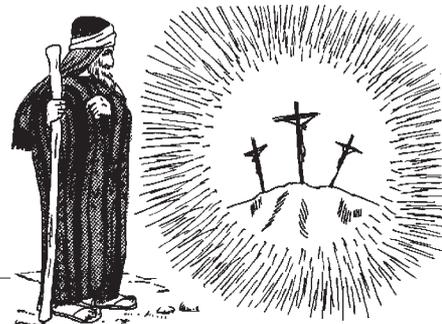
6. As already mentioned, the group should realise that this is a simplified analysis. It does not correspond exactly with the documents mentioned in Frame 2, but rather focuses on the six principal characters of the book.

Look at the “Contents” on pages 2 and 3. Observe how the names of these six principal men give us the main sections of the book and are in bold print. Now identify the subdivisions in each section, for example: 1A The Absence of Sin; 2A The Fall into Sin, etc.

D. The Messianic Hope

7. The central character, “Abraham”, had significance far beyond his own day. He also stands at the very foundation of Christian doctrine. For example, Paul teaches us in Romans 4 that Abraham was “the father” of two important groups of people in the New Testament. Which are they?

- a) One is in Romans 4:1 _____
 b) The other is in Romans 4:11b _____



8. See how important it is, therefore, in studying the New Testament to be able to interpret correctly the books of the Old Testament, like Genesis! The Christian, of course, will always be guided by what Jesus has to say on the subject. When the Lord speaks about “Moses”, he refers to the first 5 books of the Old Testament (“the Pentateuch”) of which Genesis is the first.

With this in mind, read Luke 24:27 and John 5:46.

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a) According to Jesus, of whom did Moses write?

b) If we take seriously what Jesus is teaching here, on whom should we focus our attention as we study the book of Genesis?

9. Read John 8:56-58. What two truths does Jesus teach here about the relationship between Abraham (the central character in Genesis) and the Messiah (i.e. Jesus himself)? What does each one mean?

10. **To Think About:**

These teachings of Jesus are fundamental to our understanding of Genesis. We shall see in our next Group Study that Jesus, the Messiah, not only existed before Abraham, but that he was the divine agent in the creation of the universe, the heavens and the earth (as is told in Genesis). Read the two following concepts of Christ. He is:

- A. only a wonderful teacher who lived in Palestine about 2000 years ago.
- B. also a Person of the eternal Trinity who existed before the beginning of the universe, took part in the creation of the world, rose from the dead and is seated in the glory of God for evermore.

Up to now, which of these concepts has dominated your thinking about Christ? How does the greater concept of Jesus affect you?

11. Now will someone please read about Abraham’s messianic hope in Romans 4:18-25, without comment, then we will have a time of prayer about it.

12. a) When you return home, complete the Test that corresponds to this Preliminary Lesson (you can find it on page 173 at the end of this book).

b) Then during the week do Lessons 1A and 1B.