1. Title
The Title in the Hebrew Bible of Pentateuch came from the first word or words in the book. The Hebrew word "in the beginning" is bereset. English title 'Genesis,' came from Latin Vulgate which came from the Septuagint translation (Greek translation of OT 300 years B.C.). "Genesis" is a transliteration of Greek, geneos, that translates the Hebrew toledot. This Hebrew word is the key word in identifying the structure of Genesis, and translators have rendered it "account" or "generations" (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2).

2. Date
Many Christians from science believe the earth is millions of years old and human race hundreds of thousands years ago, and understand Scripture in the light of these scientific statements. Most evangelicals who interpret bible literally because of genealogies (Gen 5:10,11) which they understand to be open believe that the earth is not much older than 10,000 years. A smaller group of believers believe that the genealogies are either "closed" (i.e., complete) therefore the creation of the world and man was about 6,000 years ago. Liberal interpreters have placed the date of composition of Genesis much later than Moses' lifetime. If one accepts Mosaic authorship, the date of composition of Genesis must be within Moses' lifetime (ca 1525-1405 B.C.). This book was perhaps originally intended to encourage the Israelites to trust in their faithful, omnipotent God as they anticipated entrance into the Promised Land from Kadesh Barnea or from the Plains of Moab.

3. Writer
The Pentateuch is an anonymous work. However, the Books do give indications of Moses as its writer. He was ordered to write historical facts (Ex 17:14; Num 33:1-2), laws (Ex 24:4, 7; 34:27ff) and one poem (Deut 31:9,22) Further, Moses is affirmed as author in the rest of the OT (Joshua 1:7-8; 8:32, 34; 20:25; 1 Ki 2:5; 2 Ki 14:6;21:8; Ezra 6:18; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:1-2) and the NT referred to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Matt 19:18; Mark 12:26; Luke 2:22; 16:29; 24:17, John 5:46-47; 7:19, Acts 13:39; Rom 10:5). In Conclusion, Moses was testified to be the author of the whole Pentateuch in a unanimous way in the Talmud and the church Fathers. What about higher criticism? The aim of higher criticism is to determine the date, authorship, composition and/or unity of the literary works in the Old Testament. Philosophically higher criticism de veloped out of the Rationalism of Spinoza (1670) who rejected inspiration and special revelation. The "documentary hypothesis," which developed from his work, is that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, as most scholars in Judaism and the church until that day believed. Instead, it was the product of several writers who lived much later than Moses. A redactor (editor) or redactors combined several these documents into the form we have now. These documents (J, E, D, P, and others) represent a Yahwistic tradition, an Elohist tradition, a Deuteronomistic tradition, a Priestly tradition, etc. A major difficult with this approach is that it overlooks literary styles and techniques used in narration (e.g., the use of duplications to communicate sovereignty, the use of divine names to teach theology of cetera).

4. Scope
The events recorded in Genesis stretch historically from Creation to Joseph's death, a period of at least 2500 years. The first part of the book (ch. 1—11) is not as easy to date precisely as the second part (ch. 12—50). The history of the patriarchs recorded in this second main division of the text covers a period of about 300 years. The scope of the book progressively and consistently narrows. The selection of content included in Genesis points to the purpose of the divine author: to reveal the history of and basic principles involved in God's relationship with people.

5. Purpose
Genesis provides the historical basis for rest of the Bible and the Pentateuch, particularly the Abrahamic Covenant. Chapters 1—11 give historical background essential to understanding that covenant, and chapters 12—50 record the covenant and its initial outworking. The Abrahamic Covenant continues to be the basic arrangement by which God operates in dealing with humanity throughout the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible. Genesis provides an indispensable prologue to the drama that unfolds in Exodus and the rest of the Pentateuch. The first 11 chapters constitute a prologue to the prologue.

6. Theology
The subject matter of the theology in Genesis is certainly God's work in establishing Israel as the means of blessing the families of the earth. This book forms the introduction to the Pentateuch's main theme of the founding of the theocracy, that is, the rule of God over all Creation. It presents the origins behind the founding of the theocracy: the promised blessing that Abraham's descendants would be in the land. Genesis introduces the reader to the nature of God as the sovereign Lord over the universe that will move heaven and earth to establish His will. He seeks to bless mankind, but does not tolerate disobedience and unbelief. Throughout this revelation the reader learns that 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Heb. 11:6).

7. Message
The message of the Bible might be the best place to begin our study of the Old Testament. What is the Bible all about? We could state it as follows: God desires to glorify Himself by blessing humankind. The message of the Pentateuch (Torah) is that people can experience God's blessing by trusting Him (believing His word) and by obeying Him (following His initiative). Genesis is in the Bible primarily to teach us this lesson. People can enjoy a personal relationship with God and thereby realize their own fulfillment as human beings.

1. Genesis reveals that God originally intended people to have an immediate relationship with their Creator. Evidences for this are as follows. 1. God made man as a special creation (2:7). 2. He made man with special care (2:7). 3. He made man in His own image (1:26-27). 4. He regarded man as His son (1:28-30). 5. He consistently demonstrated concern for man's welfare (3:9). God's immediate relationship with Adam was broken by the Fall (ch. 3). In the Fall man did two things: 1. He failed to trust God's goodness with his mind. 2. He rebelled against God's government with his will (3:6).

2. God then took the initiative to re-establish the relationship with man that He had created man to enjoy. He provided a covering for man's sin until He would finally remove it. This temporary covering came through the sacrificial system. Throughout Genesis we see that people in general consistently failed to trust and obey God (e.g., in Noah's day, at Babel, in the patriarchal period). Genesis also records what God has done to encourage people to trust and obey Him. It is only by living by these two principles that people can enjoy a relationship with God and realize all that God created them to experience.

3. Genesis reveals much about the person and work of God. This revelation helps us trust and obey Him. It is through His personal revelations to the main characters in Genesis that God revealed Himself initially (e.g., Adam and Eve, Noah, the patriarchs). On the other hand, Genesis reveals much about the nature of man. Not only did God reveal the perversity of man, but He also identified positive examples of faith and obedience in the lives of the gods.

4. In Genesis we learn that faith in God is absolutely essential if we are to have fellowship with Him and realize our potential as human beings. Faith is the law of life. If one lives by faith he flourishes, but if he does not, he fails. The four patriarchs are primarily examples of what faith is and how it manifests itself:

1. Abraham's faith demonstrates unquestioning obedience. God revealed himself to Abraham and each time Abraham's response was unquestioning obedience.
2. Isaac's faith helps us see the quality of passive acceptance that characterizes true faith in God. This was his response to God's two revelations to him.
3. Jacob's story is one of conflict with God until he came to realize his own limitations. Then he trusted God. We can see his faith in his acknowledged dependence on God. God's seven revelations to him eventually led him to this position.
4. Joseph's life teaches us what God can do with a person who trusts Him consistently in the face of adversity. The outstanding characteristic of Joseph's life was his faithful loyalty to God. He believed God's two revelations to him eventually led him to this position. In the end his faith and its reward shone through the story of Joseph.

Faith, the key concept in Genesis, means trusting that what God has prescribed is indeed best for me and waiting for God to provide what He has promised. A person of faith is one who commits to acting on this basis even though he or she may not see how it is best. The Pentateuch is all about God, man, and our relationship. In our study of it, we will be building a model to show how each new book builds on what has preceded. The key concept in Genesis is Faith.
Genesis

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” Genesis 12:3

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Genesis contains the plot of the Bible in germinal form and holds the roots of every key biblical topic. It moves through a whole series of beginnings but has no finality. Genesis answers many of the basic questions of life: Where did everything come from? How did man get here? Why is there pain and evil in the world? Behind it all, God is assumed from the beginning. This book is not a history of man so much as the first chapter in the history of the redemption of man. As such, Genesis is a highly selective spiritual interpretation of history. The 10-fold appearance of the phrase “the book of the generations” divides it into 10 sections, but its division into four great events (1-11) and four great people (12-50) is even more basic.

Four Great Events: Genesis 1-11 lays the foundation upon which the whole Bible is built. Because they are so crucial, these 11 chapters have been attached more than any other section of Scripture. (1) Creation: God is the sovereign Creator of matter, energy, space and time. Man is the pinnacle of the creation in Genesis 1-2. (2) Fall: Creation is followed by corruption. In the first sin man was separated from God, and in the second sin (Cain and Abel) man was separated from man. In spite of the devastating curse of the fall, God promised hope of redemption through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). (3) Flood: As man multiplied, sin also multiplied until God was compelled to destroy humanity with the exception of Noah and his family. (4) Nations: Genesis teaches the unity of the human race – we are all children of Adam through Noah. Because of the rebellion at the Tower of Babel, God fragmented the single culture and language of the post-flood world and scattered people over the face of the earth. These chapters portray darkness and spiritual hopelessness.

Four Great People: Now that the nations are scattered, God focuses on one man and his descendants through whom He would bless all nations (Genesis 12-50). (1) Abraham: The calling of Abraham in Genesis 12 is the pivotal point of the book. The three covenant promises God made to Abraham (land, descendants, and blessing) are foundational to His program of bringing salvation upon the earth. Abraham’s greatest test of faith was the offering of Isaac, his divinely given heir. (2) Isaac: God established His covenant with Isaac as the spiritual link with Abraham. (3) Jacob: God transformed this mind from selfishness to servant hood and changed his name to Israel, the father of the 12 tribes. (4) Joseph: Jacob’s favorite son suffered at the hands of his brother and became a slave in Egypt. After his meteoric rise to the ruler ship of Egypt, Joseph delivered his family from famine and brought them out of Canaan to Goshen. Genesis ends on a dismal note of impending bondage with the death of Joseph. There is a great need for the redemption that is to follow in the book of Exodus.
Genesis Summary Ideas

Summary Statement

Genesis reveals God’s faithfulness to his chosen people, in spite of their sinfulness and that a relationship with him is conditioned on faithful obedience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of Genesis was to provide the Israelites entering the Promised Land encouragement and hope as they realized the faithfulness of God, the character of the Creator, their origin as a Nation and the promises that God had made, while serving as a prologue to the rest of the Pentateuch.

Content Statement

After God’s Word irrupts with the Blessing of creation, mankind fell under the deception of the serpent and God initiated necessary judgment but promised to reestablish his rule on earth over evil through Man and Began to accomplish that through the line of Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Major Plots in Genesis

The major Plot of Genesis has to do with God’s intervening in the history of human falleness by choosing a man and his family. For even though the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the major players, you are never allowed to forget that God is the ultimate protagonist – as is true in all the Biblical narratives. Above all else, it is his story. God speaks and thereby creates the world and a people. It becomes their story only as God has brought this family into being and made promises to them and covenanted with them to be their God. So you have to keep looking for the way the major plot unfolds and for how the primary players become part of God’s ultimate narrative.

There are six other subplots - The first of these – crucial to the whole Biblical story – is the occurrence of the first two covenants between God and his people. The first covenant is with all of humankind through Noah and his sons, promising that god will never again cut off life from the earth (9:8-17). The second covenant is with Abraham, promising two things especially – the gift of seed who will become a great nation to bless the nations, and the gift of land (12:2-7, 15:1-21, cf. 17:3-8, where the covenant is ratified, or further extended by the identifying mark of circumcision). The second covenant is repeated to Isaac (26:3-5) and Jacob (28:13-15) and in turn serves as the basis for the next two Old Testament covenants: the gift of law (Exod 20:24) and the gift of kingship (2 Sam 7).

The second subplot is a bit subtle in Genesis itself, but is important to the later unfolding of the theme of holy war in the Biblical story. It begins with God’s curse on the serpent, that God “will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and hers” (3:14-15). The crucial term here is “offspring” (seed), picked up again in 12:7 with regard to the chosen people. This curse anticipates the holy-war motif that is accentuated in Exodus in particular (between Moses and Pharaoh, thus between God and the gods of Egypt; see Exod 15:1-8), is carried on further in the conquest of Canaan and its gods (which explains the curse of Canaan in Gen 9:25-27) and climaxes in the New Testament (in the story of Jesus Christ, and especially in the Revelation). Although in Genesis this motif does not take the form of holy war as such, you can nonetheless see it especially in the strife between brothers, between the ungodly and godly see (Cain/Abel; Ishmael/Isaac; Esau/Jacob), where the elder persecutes the younger through whom God has chosen to work (see Gal 4:29).

Godly, the interest of the younger (or weaker, or most unlikely) to bear the righteousness seed is a third subplot that begins in Genesis. Here it takes two forms in particular that are then repeated throughout the Biblical story. First, God regularly bypasses the firstborn son in carrying out his purposes (a considerable breach of the cultural rules on the part of God): not Cain but Seth, not Ishmael but Isaac, not Esau but Jacob, not Reuben but Judah. Second, the godly seed is frequently born of an otherwise barren woman (Sarah, 18:11-12; Rebecca, 25:21; Rachel, 29:31). As you read through the whole Biblical story, you will want to be on the lookout for this motif (1 Sam 1:1-2:11, Lk 1). Related to this theme in the fact that the chosen ones are not chosen because of their own goodness; indeed, their flaws are faithfully narrated (Abraham in Gen 12:10-20; Isaac in 26:1-11; Jacob throughout [his dysfunctional family in ch 37]; Judah in 38:1-30). God does not choose them because of their inherent character; what makes them the godly seed is that in the end they trusted God and his promise that they would be his people – an exceedingly numerous people – and that they would inherit the land to which they first came as aliens.

A fourth subplot emerges later in the story, where Judah takes the leading role among the brother in the long Joseph narrative (chs. 37-50). He emerges first in chapter 38, where his weaknesses and sinfulness are exposed. But his primary role begins in 43:9-9, where he guarantees the safety of his brother Benjamin, and it climaxes in his willingness to take the place of Benjamin in 44:18-34. All of this anticipates Jacob’s blessing in 49:8-12, that the “scepter will not depart from Judah.” (Pointing to the Davidic kingdom and, beyond that, to Jesus Christ).

A fifth subplot is found in the anticipation of the next in the story – slavery in Egypt. Interest in Egypt begins with the genealogy of Ham (10:13-14; Mizraim is Hebrew for Egypt). The basic family narrative (Abraham to Joseph) begins with a famine that sends Abraham to Egypt (12:10-20) also a prophecy of the Egyptian captivity, and concludes with another famine that causes Jacob and the entire family to settle in Egypt, whereas Isaac, while on his way toward Egypt during another famine, is expressly told not to go there (28:1-5). Besides the major players, Egypt and Canaan (10:13-19), note, in turn, Moab and Ammon (19:30-38) and Edom (25:23; 27:39-40; 36:1-43), as well as the lesser role of Ishmael (39:1; cf. Ps 83:6).

Contribution to the Bible

Genesis provides a historical perspective for the rest of the Bible by covering more time than all the other biblical books combined. Its sweeping scope from Eden to Ur to Haran to Canaan to Egypt makes it the introduction not only to the Pentateuch but to the Scriptures as a whole. Genesis gives the foundation for all the great doctrines of the Bible. It shows how God overcomes man’s failure under different conditions. Genesis is especially crucial to an understanding of Revelation, because the first and last three chapters of the Bible are so intimately related.

Christ in Genesis

Genesis moves from the general to the specific in its Messianic predictions: Christ is the seed of the woman (5:15), from the line of Seth (4:25), the son of Shem (9:27), the descendant of Abraham (12:3), of Isaac (21:12), of Jacob (25:23), and of the tribe of Judah (49:10). Christ is also seen in people and events that serve as types (a type is a historical fact which illustrates a spiritual truth). Both entered the world through a special act of God as sinless men. Adam was the head of the old creation: Christ is the Head of the new Creation. Abel’s acceptable offering of a blood sacrifice points to Christ, and there is a parallel in his murder by Cain. Melchizedek (“righteous king”) was “made like the Son of God” (Heb 7:3). He was the king of Salem (“peace”) who brought forth bread and wine and was the priest of the Most High God. Isaac and Joseph were also types of Christ. Joseph and Christ were both objects of special love by their fathers, both hated by their brethren, both rejected as rulers over their brethren, both conspired against and sold for silver, both condemned though innocent, and both raised from humiliation to glory by the power of God.
A Walk through Genesis

Human History
1:1-2:3 Prologue

Although written as prose, there is also a clearly poetic dimension to this creational prologue. Part of the poetry is the careful structure of this first “week,” where day 1 corresponds to day 4, day 2 to day 5, and day 3 to day 6. Notice how the two sets of days respond to the earth’s being “formless and empty” (1:2): Days 1-3 give “form” to earth (light, sky, dry land), while days 4-6 fill the form with content. Also notice how for the exiles that were entering the land God promised it would have been a great comfort knowing that God created a land for people to live; if he did it then he can do it now. In the ancient oriental view the act of giving a name meant the exercise of a sovereign right, and God creates everything by his word naming it as he goes. (Ps 33:6, John 1:1-3)

Day 1 (1:3-5) Light
Day 2 (1:6-8) Sky and seas
Day 3 (1:9-13) Dry land/plant life
Day 7 (2:2-3) God rests from this work

Day 4 (1:14-19) Sun, moon, stars
Day 5 (1:20-23) Sky and sea animals
Day 6 (1:24-31) Land animals eat plant life

God blesses what he created, including the material world, calling it all good. Human beings, male and female, are created in God’s own image and are given regency over the rest of creation. That God rested on the seventh day and set it aside as holy (thus setting the pattern of six days of work and one for rest; cf. Exod 20:8-11, God’s great gift of rest to former slaves, looking forward to the Messiah who would bring ultimate rest). The original Israelite readers of Genesis would have found encouragement in this revelation to trust God. They would have hoped in Him to transform their national life from chaos in a pagan chaotic environment (Egypt) to order and blessing in an environment He would create for them (Canaan). God’s superiority over forces their pagan neighbors worshipped out of fear (gods of the darkness, the sun, moon, planets, and stars, the watery deep, etc.) would have strengthened their faith. Their God had also created them as a nation, and they could look forward to the future with confidence.

2:4 – 4:26 The Account of Human Beginnings

This is the first of the six accounts that make up the prehistory of Genesis 1-11. It falls into three clearly discernible parts, following three present chapter divisions. It begins (2:4-25) with human beings created and placed in Eden. The names of God show the contrast between the first two chapters. In ch.1 we meet Elohim, the strong one and are given the universe facts of creation, in Ch 2 we meet Yahweh, the covenant keeping God and are given the facts of human creation highlighted is his relationship with them. Man is placed in Eden with its centerpiece of the two trees (of life; of the knowledge of good and evil) goes. (Ps 33:6, John 1:1-3)

2:4 – 4:26 The Account of Human Beginnings

Eve is tempted by the snake (3:1-13); she is tempted to doubt God’s intentions, misquotes God’s word 3 times, and then tempted to disregard God’s word, “God did not say”, then lures after the fruit and falls. (1 John 2:16 – lust of eyes, lust of flesh, pride of life) Eve and Adam hid from God, and Adam tries to get away without the blame, however God curses the serpent, land and judges the man and the women (3:14-19). It means one who supports us in our task of doing the will of God (cf. Deut. 33:7; Ps. 33:20; 115:9-11;146:5; Hos. 13:9). It is not a demeaning term since Scripture often uses it to describe God Himself (e.g., Ps. 33:20; 70:5; 115:9, “Suitable to him” or “corresponding to him” means what was true of Adam (cf. v. 7) was also true of Eve. They both had the same nature. Marriage should mirror God’s image, multiply a godly heritage, manage God’s realm, mutually complete one another, and model Christ’s relationship to the church. However, the story descends rapidly from there.

5:1 – 6:8 The Account of Adam’s Family Line

This genealogy stands in contrast to Cain’s line (compare the difference between the two Lamechs at the end of each). Note two important things about this genealogy: First, it begins (5:3) and ends (5:29) with echo’s from the prologue (Seth is in Adam’s likeness; Noah will bring comfort from the curse). Second, one man in this lineage, Enoch (5:21-24), continues to experience God’s presence. Despite some puzzling details (the Nephilim who were they? A. Fallen Angels who married women – Response - Matt 20:30 Angels do not reproduce, B. Godly Sehites who married ungodly women, for scripture says godly are God’s son Ex 4:22 – Response – but Moses had already established the Godly line in the context. C. Strong Dynastic rulers who were control by demons and married women, for scripture sometimes identifies rulers as gods – Response – Scripture never however regards them as descendants of deities as pagan ancient Near Eastern literature does, conclusion in context probably B) don’t miss the point of 6:1-8: The utter degeneration of the human race leads God to act in judgment (6:6-7); mercifully, however, “Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (6:8). Noah’s name is a play on words, he find favor but he name backwards means favor.

6:9-9:29 The Account of Noah

This narrative is so well known that you could easily miss its significant features. Note at the beginning how Noah’s righteousness echoes Enoch’s “walking with God” (6:9). The Flood mirrors the redemption of Israel from Egypt. Observe also how the story echoes the original creation story, so that in effect it becomes a second creation narrative: The flood returns the world to its state of being “Formless and empty” (1:2), but Noah and the animals provide a link with the old while yet starting something new. Noah’s “altar” is the first mentioned in the Bible. The covenant with Noah is full of echoes from Genesis 1:1-2 – the reestablishment of the seasonal cycles (8:22; cf 1:14; the command to multiply (9:1,7 cf. 1:28; humankind in God’s image (9:6; cf. 1:27). Two new things are added permission to eat animals for apparently people had only eaten plants (1:29), and a mandate for capital punishment, which laid the foundation for human government. Human government that existed before hand had only human authority, however now divine authority was conferred on human

1 These Hebrew words, very similar in other Semitic languages, are the names of pagan gods. He wanted the Israelites to appreciate the fact that their God had created the entities their pagan neighbors worshipped as gods.
government to execute justice for those under their jurisdiction. The story ends on a sour note (9:20-23) – a fall again, leading to the curse of Ham’s seed Canaan – but it concludes with the blessing of Shem (redemption seed).

10:1-11:9 The Account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Table of Nations)

Here you find the development of human civilization into the three basic people groups known to the Israelites. Some see in the sons of Noah the three main branches of all humanity based upon there Hebrew names – Shem – Olive skin, Ham – Dark Skin, Japheth – white skin. However, singled out in particular are Mizraim (Hebrew for Egypt) and Canaan (10:13-20). The section reveals that it was God's plan to bless the human race by dividing the family of man by languages, locations, and leaders. Remember that God formerly blessed the earth by dividing the light from the darkness, the earth from the heavens, and the land from the seas (ch. 1). Capping these accounts is the story of the origin of nations, language, shows the sinfulness of man, it demonstrates that sin against God results in broken relationship among men and leads directly to the Abraham narrative, as the story returns from the scattered nations to one man who will find a new nation through whom all the nations will be blessed.

11:10-26 The Account of Shem

This list of names isn't riveting reading, but it gets you from Noah's son Shem to Abram (Abraham), and thus to the father of the chosen people. Notice how each of the son's lives compared to Adam's son's who died.

11:27-25:11 The Account of Terah

You can hardly miss seeing that Terah's son, Abraham, dominates this family story. Here you can watch how skillfully the narrative is presented. It introduces Abraham's family, who have moved partway to Canaan (11:27-32), with a special note about Sarah's barrenness (11:30). The key moments are in 12:1-9, where God calls Abraham to leave Haran and "go to the land I will show you" (12:1) and promises to make him "into a great nation" and to bless "all peoples on earth" through him (vv.2-3). After obediently traveling to the land inhabited by Canaanites (vv. 4-5), Abraham traverses the whole land and then is promised, "To your offspring (seed) I will give this land" (vv. 6-7), whereupon "he built an altar there to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD" (vv. 8-9). In the rest of the narrative, you see these several themes played out in one form or another: The promised land will be given to the promised seed, who will become a great nation and thus a blessing to the nations – even though the Canaanites now possess the land and Sarah is barren and so Abraham trusts and worships the God who has promised this.  

The first narrative is about Abram's failure in Egypt (12:10-20), has to do with God's protecting the promised seed. Basically Abram was following a practice in his day to call his wife his sister apparently in Egypt they did not know the custom, instead of trusting God he followed the custom of his day. The Lot cycle (chs 13-14) focuses on great nation and promised land while introducing Sodom and Gomorrah, and indicating Abraham's considerable significance in the land. (Lot is stolen and Abraham pursues) The back to back narratives of chapters 15-16 (Hagar is given to Abraham by Sarai) come back to the promised seed from a barren woman (fifteen is important for it highlights the unconditional nature of the covenant with the ceremony and Abram justification), while the centerpiece narrative of chapter 17 focuses on all themes together as God renews covenant and gives circumcision. The next narrative focuses again on the promised seed from a barren woman (Angelic visitors – have a meal a sign of fellowship – Sarah laughs 18:1-15), which is picked up again in the series of three narratives in chapters 20 and 21 (Abimelech, the birth of Isaac the promised heir, the expulsion of Ishmael). These narratives bookend the second Lot cycle (18:16-19:38), which begins with God talking about Abraham becoming a great nation that will be a blessing to the nations (18:18). Here the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the incestuous conception of Moab and Ammon stand in contrast to Abraham's trust in God for the promised land, a theme picked up again in 21:22-34. From 2 Peter 2:6-9 we know that Lot was a righteous man. Yet he chose to live as, what the New Testament calls, a "carnal" believer (1 Cor. 3:3). First, he lifted up his eyes and saw Sodom (13:10). Then he chose for himself (13:11). Then he moved his tent as far as Sodom (13:12). Then he sat in the gate of Sodom as one of its judges (19:1, 9). Then he hesitated as Sodom's destruction loomed (19:16). Finally he ended up committing incest with his daughters in a cave (19:30-38). How far it is possible for a believer to depart from God's will when we keep making carnal decisions.

Four crucial narratives then conclude the family story of Terah. First comes the testing of Abraham as to whether he would be willing to give up to God his firstborn son (ch. 22). In this crucial and climaxing narrative, be sure to note the renewal of the promises (15:18), Abraham's obedience and implicit trust in God throughout and God's provision of a sacrifice in place of Isaac. Taken together, the deaths of Sarah (ch. 23) and of Abraham (25:7-11) complete the promised land motif – a piece of the future promised land is purchased so that their bodies can rest there, waiting for the future to be fulfilled! These enclose the story of Isaac's marriage, which is included in the Abraham series because it continues the promised seed motif, as does the introduction to the narrative of Abraham's death (25:1-6). Note that unwise choices made in moments of shaky faith do not thwart God's purposes (the Pharaoh and Abimelech stories in chs 12 and 20, and Hagar in ch. 16), while Abraham in his turn believed the Lord and the Lord credited it to him as righteousness (15:6). Thus Abraham's regular response to God is worship and obedience (12:7-8, 13:4, 18, 14:17-20; 22:1-19) Twelve crises arise as the story of Abram's life unfolds. Each of these must be overcome and is overcome by God who eventually does provide Abram's descendants. Each of these problems constituted a challenge to Abram's faith. Is God faithful and powerful enough to provide what He has promised? In the end we can see that He is. The problems Abram's faith encountered were these; Sarah was barren (11:30), Abram had to leave the Promised Land (12:10), Abram's life was in danger in Egypt (12:11-20), Abram's nephew, Lot, strove with him over the land (ch. 13), Abram entered a war (14:1-16), Abraham's life was in danger in the Promised Land (15:1), God ruled Eliezer out as Abram's heir (15:2-3), Hagar, pregnant with Abram's son (heir?), departed (16:6), Abimelech threatened Sarah's reputation and child (heir?) in Gerar (ch. 20), Abram had two heirs (21:8-11), God commanded Abram to slay his heir (ch. 22) and Abram could not find a proper wife for his heir (24:5).
character (cf. Heb 12:16) and by implication that of his descendents, the Edomites – perennial enemies of Israel (see the book of Obadiah). In chapter 26 Isaac repeats Abraham’s failure (chs 12, 20) and, as before, God intervenes to protect the promised seed (saying wife sister). In chapters 27-28, despite Jacob’s cheating Esau out of his father’s blessing (and thus living up to his name, “he deceives”), note that god renews the Abrahamic covenant with him (28:10-22). This event also marks the beginning of a change in Jacob’s character, evidenced in the events surrounding his reconciliation with Esau (chs 32-22; note especially the narrative where his name is changed from Jacob to Israel).

In chapters 29-31 you begin to follow the expansion of the nation of Israel. Note in 29 that the deceiver become deceived by Laban and his character comes out in his dysfunctional family and the fighting between his wives (sin has its consequences) in 30. In chapters 29-31 you begin to follow the expansion of the nation of Israel. The chosen family now numbers twelve sons whose offspring will form the twelve tribes, a concept reflected later in the tribal districts of the land and later still in Jesus’ choosing twelve disciples, and even in the final architecture of the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven (rev 21:12, 14, 21). Unfortunately, Jacob’s sons (ch. 34) reflect the character of the younger Jacob (because Dinah is raped they trick into circumcision Shechem and kill its men), a factor that plays a huge role at the beginning (37:12-36) of the final family story in Genesis (chs 37-50). Jacob is turned around in chapters 32-33 why is this? He returns to the land and is so afraid of Esau and tries everything in his own strength to secure his own safety. It was when Jacob was alone, having done everything he could to secure his own safety that God came to him (v. 24). An unidentified man assaulted Jacob, and he had to fight for his life. The “man” was the Angel of the Lord (vv. 28-30). Note that God took the initiative in wrestling with Jacob, not vice versa. God was bringing Jacob to the end of himself. He was leading him to a settled conviction that God was superior to him and that he must submit to God’s leadership in his life (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). By his wrestling with God Jacob began a new stage in his life (v. 28); he was a new man because he now began to relate to God in a way new for him. As a sign of this, God gave him a new name that indicated his new relationship to God. Israel means “God’s warrior.” The result of this spiritual crisis in Jacob’s life was obvious to all who observed him from then on (v. 32: 31). It literally resulted in a change in his walk. It teaches us that in order for God to work in our lives we must abandon all self-sufficient ways, Jacob was a self made man who deceived and cheated in order to get ahead, God had to bring him to the end of himself.

In chapter 35 Jacob settles in Bethel. About 10 years had passed since Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, and he had not yet returned to Bethel to fulfill his vow there (28:20-22). His negligence evidently was due in part to the continuing presence of the idols that Rachel and probably others had brought from Haran. Perhaps their allegiance to these gods restrained Jacob’s total commitment to Yahweh. God appeared to Jacob (the fourth time) and commanded him to fulfill his vow (v. 1). This revelation encouraged Jacob to stop procrastinating. This is the first time God commanded a patriarch to build an altar. The command constituted a test of Jacob’s obedience similar to Abraham’s test when God instructed him to offer up “a burnt offering” on Mt. Moriah (22:2). In preparation for his trip to Bethel he purged his household of idolatry by literally burying Rachel’s idols along with other objects associated with the worship of these gods. He also purified himself from the defilement of the blood his family had shed in Shechem (ch. 34). God then reaffirms his covenant with Jacob and this is the first time we see the mentions of Kings eventually there will be Messiah. We can enjoy the fellowship with God that He created us to experience only when we commit ourselves wholeheartedly to Him and obey His Word, when we fulfill our vows.

36:1-37:1 The Account of Esau

Esau’s lineage, the Edomites, became a great nation as promised but are also another of the neighbors who continually threaten the chosen people and their security in the promised land.

37:2-50:26 The Account of Jacob

The final family story is primarily about Joseph, whom God uses to rescue Israel (an the nations, thus blessing them, 12:2-3) from famine so that the promised seed can be preserved. You will find reading this story to be a different experience from what has gone before, since it is a single cohesive narrative (the longest of its kind in the Bible), with just three interruptions (the story of Judah in ch 38 – Judah and Tamar – she tricks him by pretending to be a harlot so he will perform his duty, the genealogy in 46:8-27, and Jacob’s blessing in ch. 49). Note how it begins and ends on the same note – his brothers bowing to him (37:7, 50:18; cf. 42:6). Look for the various themes that hold the story together: God overturns the brothers evil against Joseph; he allows Joseph to languish in prison (which came about because of Joseph’s refusal to sin) but finally rescues him and evaluates him through his divinely given ability to interpret dreams (note the repeated “the LORD was with Joseph,” 39:2,3,21,23) – again, god works through a younger, despised son. Note also at the end (ch 48), Jacob's blessing of Joseph's two sons continues the pattern of God’s choosing the younger (the unfavorable one).

Finally you will want to observe the role Judah plays in the narrative. Although his beginnings are anything but salutary (ch. 38), Judah later shows a repentant heart for his past role in the story (44:18-34). And eventually is blessed as the lion through whose lineage will come the Davidic King (49:8-12) and eventually the messianic king himself, Christ Jesus. The picture of Joseph, then, looks back to Adam; but more, it looks forward to one who was yet to come. It anticipates the coming of the one from the house of Judah to whom the kingdom belongs (cf. 49:10). Thus in the final shape of the narrative, the tension between the house of Joseph and the house of Judah, which lies within many of these texts, is resolved by making the life of Joseph into a picture of the one who is to reign from the house of Judah.

Although the narrative ends with Joseph in a coffin in Egypt (50:26), this too anticipates the next part of the narrative, the book of Exodus, where special note is made that he Israelites took the bones of Joseph with them because he had made them swear an oath, “God will surely come to aid” (Exod 13:19). Why did God take them to Egypt? God promised to make Jacob's family a great nation in Egypt. Because of the Egyptians' disdain for Hebrew shepherds Jacob's family was not in danger of suffering amalgamation into Egyptian life as they had been in danger of being absorbed into Canaanite life. The Israelites' removal to Egypt was also a divine discipline. Jacob's sons had failed to stay separate from the Canaanites so God temporarily removed them from the land He had promised them.
Appendix 1

The Flood proper 7:11-24

There are two views among evangelicals as to the extent of the Flood.

1. A universal flood. Evidence:
   a. The purpose of the Flood (6:5-7, 11-13).
   b. The need for an ark (6:14).
   c. The size of the ark (6:15-16).
   d. The universal terms used in the story (6:17-21; 7:19, 21-23). Context must determine whether universal terms are truly universal or limited (cf. Luke 2:1; Matt. 28:19-20).
   e. The amount of water involved (7:11, 20; 8:2).
   f. The duration of the Flood: 371 days (7:11; 8:14).
   g. The testimony of Peter (2 Pet. 3:3-7).
   h. The faithfulness of God (8:21).

   This view has been the most popular with conservative interpreters throughout history.

   "By and large, the tradition of the Christian church is that the context requires a universal flood, and many Christian scholars have maintained this position knowing well the geological difficulties it raises."

2. A local flood. Evidence:
   a. The main arguments rest on modern geology and the improbability of a universal flood in view of consequent global changes.
   b. Advocates take the universal statements in the text as limited to the area where Moses said the Flood took place.

   This view has gained wide acceptance since the modern science of geology has called in question the credibility of the text.

   "The principle concern of those advocating a local flood is to escape the geological implications of a universal flood."

Basically, this controversy, like that involving the creation account, involves presuppositions about the credibility of Scripture or science and the possibility of supernatural occurrences. The scientific community is more open to catastrophist of some kind than it used to be.
## APPENDIX 2: FIVE VIEWS OF CREATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of View</th>
<th>Positive aspects</th>
<th>Problems of the view</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Atheistic Evolution</strong> – Natural possesses apart from God</td>
<td>1. It appears to explain the origin of everything. 2. It offers a single explanation for everything that exists: it evolved. 3. It offers the only real alternative to creation by God. 4. It eliminates God and exalts man.</td>
<td>1. It cannot explain the origin of matter. Answer: Matter is eternal. 2. It cannot explain the complexity of matter. Answer: Billions of years of evolution are responsible for the complexity of matter. 3. It cannot explain the emergence of life. Answer: Primordial life evolved from bio-polymers that evolved from inorganic compounds. 4. It cannot explain the appearance of God-consciousness in man. Answer: This too was the product of evolution.</td>
<td>1. It rests on a hypothesis that cannot be proven to be true; it is essentially a faith position. 2. Its support rests on little historical evidence (only the fossil record) which has many gaps in it and is open to different interpretations. 3. It relies on mutations as a mechanism for change. However mutations have not produced new species. 4. It is extremely improbable statistically. 5. It repudiates special revelation concerning creation.</td>
<td>All non-Christian Scientists and some Christian Scientists</td>
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<td><strong>Theistic Evolution</strong> – Natural possesses Directed by God</td>
<td>1. It unites truth known by special revelation with truth known by general revelation in nature and truth discovered by science. 2. God seems to work according to this pattern in history interrupting and intervening in the course of events only rarely.</td>
<td>1. It presupposes the truth of evolution, which scientists have not been able to validate beyond doubt. Answer: Evolution is a fact or at least an accepted theory. 2. God has intervened in history many more times than the theistic evolutionist posits. Answer: In the early history of the universe He intervened less frequently. 3. Divine intervention in the evolutionary process is contradictory to the basic theory of evolutionary progress. Answer: The evolutionary process does not rule out divine intervention. 4. This method of creation does not do justice to the biblical record of creation. Answer: We should interpret the biblical record nonliterally when it conflicts with evolution.</td>
<td>1. It cannot do justice to both the tenets of evolution and the teaching of Scripture. 2. It is ultimately destructive of biblical religion.</td>
<td>Some theologians and scientists who have a weak view of Scripture.</td>
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<td><strong>Progressive Creationism</strong> God created the world through large amounts of time.</td>
<td>1. It provides a reasonable harmony between the Genesis record and the facts of science. 2. The translation of &quot;day&quot; as &quot;age&quot; is an exegetically legitimate one. 3. It is a tentative conclusion and acknowledges that not all the scientific evidence is in and our understanding of the text may change as biblical scholarship progresses.</td>
<td>1. There are discrepancies between the fossil record and the order in which Genesis records that God created plants, fish, and animals. Answer: Science may be wrong at this point, or Genesis may have omitted the earliest forms of life. 2. Taking the six days of creation as ages is unusual exegetically. Answer: This interpretation is possible and best here. 3. &quot;Evenings&quot; and &quot;mornings&quot; suggest 24-hour periods. Answer: The sun did not appear until the fourth day. 4. Death entered the world before the Fall. Answer: It took on its horror at the Fall but existed before that event.</td>
<td>This view takes the biblical text quite seriously but adopts some unusual interpretations of that text to harmonize it with scientific data.</td>
<td>Many evangelicals who have been strongly influenced by science hold this view including Davis A. Young, Creation and the Flood (1977). James Boice, Bernard Ramm, Robert Newman, Herman Eckelmann, and Hugh Ross also hold this view.</td>
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<td><strong>Six Day Creationism</strong> God created the world in six days</td>
<td>1. It regards biblical teaching as determinative. 2. It rests on a strong exegetical base. 3. It is the most literal (normal) meaning of the text.</td>
<td>1. Data from various scientific disciplines (i.e., astronomy, radioactive dating, carbon deposits, etc.) indicate that the earth is about 5 billion years old and the universe is about 15-20 billion years old. Answer: God created the cosmos with the appearance of age. 2. A universal flood cannot explain the geologic strata fully. Answer: It can explain most if not all of it, and the remainder may have been a result of creation. 3. Creation with the appearance of age casts doubt on the credibility of God. Answer: Since God evidently created Adam, plants, and animals with the appearance of age He may have created other things with the appearance of age too. 4. There is no reason why God would have created things with the appearance of age. Answer: He did so for His own glory, though we may not fully understand why yet.</td>
<td>This view rests on the best exegesis of the text, though it contradicts the conclusions of several branches of science.</td>
<td>Many conservative evangelicals hold this view. See also Robert E. Kofahl and Kelly L. Seagraves, The Creation Explanation (1975).</td>
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<td><strong>The Gap Theory:</strong> Between gen 1:1-2 there is a gap where there was a pre-Adamic race who were judged and geological ages.</td>
<td>1. It rests on an exegetical, biblical base. 2. It is consistent with the structure of the creation account itself. 3. It is possible to translate the Hebrew verb translated &quot;to be&quot; in verse 2 &quot;became.&quot; 4. &quot;Formless and void&quot; in verse 2 may be a clue to God's pre-Adamic judgment on the earth. 5. It provides a setting for the fall of Satan.</td>
<td>1. It is an unnatural explanation since the text implies only an original creation in Genesis 1:2 and following (cf. Exod. 20:11). Answer: This interpretation is a superficial conclusion. 2. The exegetical data that supports this view is far from certain. Answer: These interpretations are possible. 3. This theory does not really settle the problems posed by geology. Answer: The universal flood may have produced some to the geological phenomena.</td>
<td>While this view grows out of a high view of Scripture, several of the interpretations required for it rely on improbable exegesis.</td>
<td>C.I. Scofield, and Chafer</td>
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