

Genesis - an Overview to the Book

This is a book of historical "beginnings"

- **The human author/compiler** - Moses
- **Two main sections**

The Introduction to Creation (1:1 - 2:3) - how we got here, who we are, etc.

[Most of the details in this introduction could only be known by God, for there were no humans to witness these events. We know these things only because God has revealed them to us.]

A compilation of 10 historical "accounts" (2:4 - 50:26) - various significant things that happened during the early years of earth's history. The word "account" includes concepts such as history, genealogy, and the beginnings (or birth) of something. (Different translations will use words such as: *account*, *generation*, *history*, *story*, or when it involves a list of descendents, *genealogy*.)

[For the most part, these 10 "accounts" could have been based on accurately transmitted eyewitness descriptions of those events.]

** See the NOTE at the end of this article, about the significance of these two different sections. **

Some interesting things about this book

- It is the **foundation** for everything else in the Bible.
- It has the **answers** for many of the most basic questions of life - who God is, who we are, the reason for living, etc.
- **Other creation accounts** have been found in early civilizations. They often have many similarities to what is found in Genesis; however, these other accounts tend to be quite fanciful and exaggerated.
- The book is noted for its **use of numbers** for symbolic or literary purposes - most significantly, 10, 7, 12 and 40. [Such a use does not imply that we are to hunt for "hidden meanings" in numbers. (The Bible never suggests such a thing!) Most of the numbers in Genesis are *not* used in a symbolic or literary way; and some of the other books in the Bible *never* use numbers that way.]
- There are **striking parallels** between the first 3 chapters of Genesis, and the last 3 chapters of Revelation.

Common themes in the book of Genesis

- **Contrasts between God and creation** - many contrasts can be found, especially as they relate to God's holiness and power, contrasted to the sinfulness and weakness of humanity.
- **God's gracious blessings** - their reception is based upon God's kindness, rather than on a person's heritage. [Normally, the greatest blessings and the greatest portion of a family's inheritance would go to the firstborn son. But when it came to God's special blessings, birth order and other "natural rights" had no effect.]

Something to do

- Briefly look through the book, and see if you can spot some of the common themes or interesting features.

*** NOTE - regarding the two main sections of the book of Genesis:**

The difference between Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the rest of the book should be emphasized. It should be remembered that the first chapter is *not* one of the ten "eyewitness" accounts (events observed by humans), but is something that God alone could witness. The Genesis 1 account of creation is *separate* from the creation account that is found in chapter 2:4-25, which focuses on the man and the woman.

This fact is important because many people try to use various statements mentioned in the *second* account, torn out of context, to discredit what is said in the *first* account. One such example is the use of the word "day," in chapter 2:4, which may be interpreted as figuratively representing the entire creation week of chapter 1. Some people try to superimpose this figurative use into chapter 1, in an attempt to do away with its natural meaning of "24-hour time period."

For more about this issue, see: "A Look at the Word "Day" in Genesis 1"