

# 40 Days Through GENESIS

RON RHODES



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## 40 DAYS THROUGH GENESIS

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*To Kerri  
with love and appreciation*

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# Introduction

Thank you for joining me on this exciting journey through the book of Genesis. You are in for a spiritually uplifting time! My hope and prayer is that as you read *40 Days Through Genesis*, you will make many discoveries. For example...

- Genesis is a book of beginnings, including the beginnings of the universe and humankind.
- God is a personal being who personally interacts with His people.
- God is sovereign, and He providentially controls the universe and human history.
- God not only makes promises but also is a relentless promise keeper.
- God blesses righteous living.
- God's people need to maintain faith in Him regardless of what outward circumstances may look like.
- God can providentially bring good out of evil.
- The Bible in general and the book of Genesis in particular are completely trustworthy.

I want to let you know right up front that the book of Genesis is absolutely foundational to a proper understanding of the rest of the Bible. After all, Genesis not only tells us about the origins of the universe and humankind but also informs us where human sin, suffering, and death came from. God's work of redemption, as recorded throughout the rest of Scripture, would make little sense if we did not first understand these foundational truths in the book of Genesis. So

we might say that Genesis sets the stage for all that follows in the rest of Scripture.

As we begin our journey together, I wish to address a few things that will lay a foundation for better understanding the book of Genesis. Let's look at the big picture first, and then we will zero in on the details in subsequent chapters.

## Two Primary Streams of Thought in Genesis

The book of Genesis is based on two streams of thought:

- Genesis 1–11 documents the creation of the universe and humankind, and then it broadly traces the peoples and nations as they turn away from God.
- In Genesis 12–50, God zeroes in on one family—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. This family will become the nation of Israel, through which all the other nations of the earth are to be blessed.

I will provide a more detailed outline below, but these two broad concepts help us to easily conceptualize the book of Genesis in broad terms.

## The Author and Date of Genesis

Moses is the author of the book of Genesis. This is confirmed throughout the rest of the Old Testament (see Exodus 17:14; Numbers 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 31:9; Joshua 1:7-8; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Daniel 9:11-13; Malachi 4:4) as well as the New Testament (Matthew 19:8; Mark 12:26; John 5:46-47; Romans 10:5).

One might naturally wonder how Moses could know the universe was created if he wasn't there to witness it. The answer is simple. The book of Genesis is a book of divine revelation. God Himself gave special revelation to Moses regarding how He created the universe. The book was written between 1445 and 1405 BC.



## The Truth of Genesis

Liberal critics typically argue that the book of Genesis is mythological and does not contain real truth. They note that similar creation accounts have been discovered among the Babylonians, Sumerians, Greeks, Hindus, Chinese, and many others. Here are a few examples.

- The Ebla Tablets—a library of 16,000 cuneiform clay tablets discovered at Tell Mardikh, Syria—contain an account of the creation that is strikingly close to Genesis. It speaks of one being who created the heavens, earth, moon, and stars, all out of nothing.
- The Atrahasis Epic, a Babylonian document, contains many details that are similar to the biblical account of both the creation and the flood.
- The Enuma Elish presents a Mesopotamian account of the creation.

Such facts, however, do not mean that Genesis is mythological. The truth of the matter is that Genesis gives the original story, and the other versions—all dated later—contain elaborations, thereby introducing corruptions into the original account.

Later Bible writers confirmed that Genesis is not full of myths. They interpreted its contents literally, including...

- the creation of the universe (Exodus 20:10-11)
- the creation of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:6; 1 Timothy 2:13)
- the fall of Adam and his resulting death (Romans 5:12,14)
- Noah's flood (Matthew 24:38)

The verses in Matthew indicate that Jesus Himself took the events in Genesis as literally true. Therefore, Christians should not allow their faith to be shaken by the claims of liberal critics who seek to undermine a literal interpretation of Genesis.

## The Title of the Book

Genesis literally means “beginning.” This book contains an account of the beginning of the world, the universe, and humankind. It also contains an account of the beginning of human sin, suffering, death, and redemption.

## A Summary Outline of Genesis

### *1. The Creation and the Fall (1–3)*

God created the entire universe, including the earth and human beings (1:26-27). Even in a perfect living environment, Adam and Eve sinned against God and catapulted the entire human race into sin (3).

### *2. The Family of Adam and Eve (4–5)*

The name Adam derives from a Hebrew word meaning “humanity,” which is appropriate because he represents humanity (1:26-27; 2:7,22-23). Eve means “giver of life” (3:20; 4:1). Cain, their firstborn (4:1), murdered his righteous brother Abel out of resentment that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice but not his (4:1-16). Cain was consequently exiled from Eden (4:10-15). Adam and Eve had many other children (4:25; 5:3-4).

### *3. Noah and the Flood (6–9)*

The flood came because humankind became filled with violence and corruption (6). Noah was the only one who honored God (6:8-9). Noah’s ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. In this vessel, a remnant of humanity (Noah and his family) and two of each species of animals were preserved from the flood (6:14–9:18).

### *4. The Early Nations and the Tower of Babel (10–11)*

After the flood, some of the descendants of Noah through his son Ham developed a wicked kingdom centered at the tower of Babel. This tower was a pagan effort to observe and worship the heavens. God confounded the people, causing them to speak different languages. This gave rise to the name Babel, meaning “confusion.” This confusion caused them to scatter (11:1-9).

### ***5. Abram and Sarah (12–25)***

God commanded Abram to leave Ur and go to Canaan. He also gave Abram a promise—a great nation, as numberless as the stars, would emerge out of his offspring. God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude” (17:5). God also promised to give this nation the land of Canaan and promised that this nation would bring blessing to all the other nations of the world (12:3). The problem was, by now Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90. How would they bear a son? In unbelief, Sarah offered Abraham her younger handmaiden Hagar, through whom Ishmael was born. But this was not the child of promise. God’s promise was eventually fulfilled when Isaac was born to them.

### ***6. Isaac and Rebekah (26:1–27:45)***

Isaac married Rebekah. God reaffirmed His covenant with Isaac on two occasions (26:3–5, 24–25). God reiterated that Isaac’s descendants would be as numberless as the stars, inherit the land of Canaan, and bring blessing to the world.

### ***7. Jacob and Esau (27:46–36:43)***

Isaac had twin sons—Esau and Jacob. The blessing rightfully belonged to Esau, the firstborn (and hairier) son. When it came time to confer the blessing, a vision-impaired Isaac was deceived into conferring the blessing on a deceptively hair-enhanced Jacob instead. Jacob’s wives Leah and Rachel (and their concubines) bore him 12 sons and a daughter.

### ***8. Joseph (37–50)***

Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son, but his brothers hated him. They sold him to a group of Ishmaelite traders en route to Egypt. Joseph’s brothers soaked his robe in goat blood and took it to Jacob, implying Joseph was now dead. While in Egypt, a faithful Joseph was elevated to a prominent position in Potiphar’s house. When Joseph resisted the sexual advances of Potiphar’s lustful wife, she falsely accused him of improper actions, and he was imprisoned. Two years later, he was

released from prison after accurately interpreting Pharaoh's dreams regarding seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh elevated Joseph to great authority so he could prepare for the famine.

Canaan was also hit by the famine. Jacob's sons (except for Benjamin) came to Egypt for food and bowed before Joseph without recognizing him. Eventually, Joseph revealed his identity to them, and the family was reconciled (45:1-15). Joseph knew God had orchestrated his earlier painful circumstances to bring him to Egypt (50:20).

Genesis ends with Joseph's death and his family's promise to take his bones with them when they are restored to the Promised Land.

### The Centrality of Faith in Genesis

One of the most exciting aspects of the book of Genesis is that a number of the people it mentions are heroes of faith. Two examples come immediately to mind.

- Abraham's faith was especially evident when he was being obedient to God's command to sacrifice his own son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). God stopped him just in the nick of time.
- Joseph, too, showed great faith, knowing that even though his brothers treated him cruelly, God was with him and was providentially working in his painful circumstances (50:20). In the end, God elevated Joseph to a supreme position in Egypt.

There are quite a number of other examples. I urge you to constantly be on the lookout for examples of faith in the book of Genesis.

### How to Use this Book

As you begin each chapter, pray something like this:

*Lord, I ask You to open my eyes and enhance my understanding so that I can grasp what You want me to learn today [Psalm 119:18]. I also ask You to enable me, by Your Spirit, to apply the*

*truths I learn to my everyday life and to be guided moment by moment by Your Word [Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:15-17]. I thank You in Jesus's name. Amen.*

Following this short prayer, you can read the assigned section of the book of Genesis using your favorite Bible. With your Bible still in hand, you can then go verse by verse through your Bible again, but this time, after reading each verse, also read the appropriate notes in the book.

You'll notice that some of the biblical phrases I comment on are in quote marks and some aren't. Quote marks are used only when someone is speaking, whether God, Abraham, or someone else.

After the insights on each verse in the passage, I provide four brief summaries:

- *Major Themes.* These topical summaries will help you learn how to think theologically as you study the Bible.
- *Digging Deeper with Cross-References.* These will help you discover relevant insights from other books of the Bible.
- *Life Lessons.* This is where you learn to apply what you have read to your everyday life. You will discover that the book of Genesis is rich in transforming truths!
- *Questions for Reflection and Discussion.* Use these for your personal journaling or for lively group interactions.

*Lord, by the power of Your Spirit, please enable my readers to understand and apply truth from the book of Genesis. Please excite them with Your Word and instill in them a sense of the majestic awesomeness of God. I thank You in Jesus's name. Amen.*

## DAY 1

# God's Creation of the Earth

## Genesis 1:1–2:3

### Scripture Reading and Insights

Begin by reading Genesis 1:1–2:3 in your favorite Bible. Read with the anticipation that the Holy Spirit has something important to teach you today (see Psalm 119:105).

In the introduction, we noted that the book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, including the beginnings of the universe and human-kind. In this chapter, we will begin to explore these beginnings. With your Bible still accessible, consider the following insights on the biblical text.

### *Genesis 1:1-2*

*In the beginning (1:1):* This refers not to the beginning of all eternity, but rather the beginning of the creation.

*God (1:1):* God's prior existence is presumed. The Hebrew term for God is *Elohim*. This name means “Strong One,” and it indicates fullness of power. It pictures God as the powerful and sovereign Governor of the universe. The form of the word is plural (the *-im* ending). Hebrew grammarians categorize it as a plural of majesty. This points to the majesty, dignity, and greatness of God.

*Created (1:1):* God created the universe instantaneously and *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Psalm 33:6 tells us, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” (see

also verse 9). Hebrews 11:3 likewise tells us, “The universe was created by the word of God.”

*The heavens and the earth (1:1):* The entire universe.

*Without form and void (1:2):* God first created the “stuff” (or matter) of creation, which at this point was yet unorganized and uninhabited. God would soon remedy this by molding this “stuff” into the earth and the universe.

*Spirit of God (1:2):* This is the Holy Spirit, who has the attributes of deity, including omnipresence (Psalm 139:7), omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10), omnipotence (Romans 15:19), holiness (Romans 1:4), and eternity (Hebrews 9:14). He played a significant role in the creation of the universe (see Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30).

### ***Genesis 1:3-31***

*God said (1:3):* God merely spoke, and things came into existence out of nothing (see Psalm 148:5).

*“Light” (1:3):* This light existed prior to the creation of the sun (which was on day four). There are a number of sources of light in the universe. Even God Himself is a source of light (Revelation 21:23; 22:5). This was apparently a temporary light until the permanent light of the sun was created.

*God separated (1:4):* This is the first of three separations God engaged in. Here God separated the light from the darkness. In verse 7 God separates the waters below the sky (on earth) from the waters above the sky (around the earth). In verse 9 God separates the land from the seas. By so doing, God gave form to the previously formless creation. Likewise, by creating sea, air, and land creatures to fill the earth (see below), the earth was no longer void (or, more literally, empty).

*Day...Night (1:5):* This would seem to be a literal 24-hour day, not an age and not a day separated by an age. See Major Themes below.

*“Expanse” (1:6):* This is the atmosphere, or sky, appearing to be a shiny dome or canopy from the perspective of earth.

*Waters that were under the expanse (1:7):* The oceans.

*Waters that were above the expanse (1:7):* A vast layer of water vapor surrounding the earth that created a greenhouse effect on the earth.

This may account for the great longevity among the patriarchs (see Genesis 5). It may also relate to the deluge of water in Noah's flood (Genesis 6–9).

*“Waters... dry land” (1:9-10):* God separated the land from the waters. When God looked out over the earth and seas, He saw that the arrangement was good—ideal for life on earth.

*God called (1:10):* In ancient Semitic thought, whoever names something has authority over it (see Genesis 17:5,15; 41:45).

*“According to its kind” (1:11-12):* God created the initial kinds of vegetation, plants, and fruit trees, and then each species reproduced “according to its kind.” This implies there are fixed reproductive boundaries among each of the kinds. (An apple tree does not produce oranges.)

*“Lights” (1:14):* God created the stars, planets, and moons in their solar systems and galaxies.

*“For signs and for seasons, and for days and years” (1:14):* Some suggest that interstellar lights are signs in the sense of helping people navigate and get their bearings (north, south, east, and west). Others suggest that the interstellar lights are signs in the sense of pointing to God's power and majesty (see Psalm 19:1). In any event, the rotation of the earth (in relation to the sun and moon) helps people keep track of days, seasons, and years.

*Two great lights (1:16):* The sun and the moon now replace the temporary light source that emerged on day one.

*To rule (1:17-18):* The sun rules the day, and the moon rules the night. In ancient times, pagans believed the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies were deities, and they worshipped them. But our text indicates that in reality the sun and moon serve the one true God.

*“Living creatures” (1:20):* This includes small sea creatures and giant sea creatures, apparently including marine dinosaurs (see Job 40:15–41:1).

*According to their kinds (1:21):* Each kind of creature reproduces after its kind. The genetic pool of DNA in each kind of sea creature and bird sets developmental parameters beyond which the kind cannot go. For example, the DNA in a goldfish prohibits it from evolving into a shark.



*“Be fruitful and multiply” (1:22):* God earlier created a “good” earth suitable for habitation. Now God creates a variety of creatures to inhabit this good earth.

*“Living creatures” (1:24):* Just as God created a variety of living creatures to inhabit the sea, so now He creates a variety of living creatures to inhabit the land. The whole earth is being populated with life. It is no longer empty.

*“According to their kinds” (1:24-25):* The genetic pool of DNA in each kind of land creature sets developmental parameters beyond which the kind cannot go. The DNA includes developmental possibilities within that kind, such as the various colors of fur, colors of eyes, and body sizes. But each respective kind never evolves into a different kind.

*“In our image, after our likeness” (1:26):* “Image” and “likeness” are synonymous in Scripture (see 1 Corinthians 11:7; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9). Notice the plural pronouns (“us,” “our”). Hebrew grammarians tell us that the plural pronouns are a grammatical necessity. The plural pronouns “us” and “our” are required by the plural ending of *Elohim*: “Then God [*Elohim*, plural] said, ‘Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image.’”

*“Dominion” (1:26):* We find an interesting nuance of the term “image” in biblical times. Whenever a king conquered a new territory, he set up an image of himself in that territory to represent his sovereignty over it. Interestingly, when God created human beings, He created them in His image and then commanded them, “Fill the earth and subdue it, and *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.”

*Man (1:27):* The word is used generically here, including both males and females. God provides the specifics of humankind’s creation in Genesis 2.

*“Be fruitful and multiply” (1:28):* Just as the sea creatures were to multiply to fill the sea and the birds were to multiply to fill the sky, so God now instructs that human beings are to multiply to fill the earth.

*“Subdue it, and have dominion” (1:28):* This relates to human beings as created in the image of God (see “*Dominion*” [1:26] above).

*“Food” (1:29):* Humans were apparently vegetarians at first. After Noah’s flood, God gives humans permission to eat meat (Genesis 9:3).

*It was very good (1:31):* Individual items in the creation have previously been called good (see Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25). But now the entire creation as a whole is called “very good.”

### ***Genesis 2:1-3***

*Host (2:1):* This term is used in different ways in different contexts. The word can refer to stars in outer space (Nehemiah 9:6) or to angels (1 Kings 22:19). In the present context, the term seems to refer to all the various things God just created.

*God...rested (2:2):* The Hebrew word translated “rest” communicates the idea of ceasing from activity. God completed His work of creation and then stopped. There was nothing further to do.

*Blessed the seventh day (2:3):* The Hebrew term translated Sabbath is the noun form of the word translated “rest.” Later, Moses’s instructions on the Sabbath were based on the creation week (see Exodus 20:8-11).

## **Major Themes**

1. *The Trinity and creation.* Many Old Testament references to the creation attribute it simply to God (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 96:5; Isaiah 37:16; 44:24; 45:12; Jeremiah 10:11-12). Other verses relate the creation specifically to the Father (Psalm 102:25), the Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2), or the Holy Spirit (Job 26:13; 33:4; Isaiah 40:12-13). First Corinthians 8:6 reveals that the Father is the Creator in a broad, general sense, and the Son is the actual agent or mediating Cause of creation. The Holy Spirit’s role was apparently to give life to the creation (Psalm 104:30).
2. *The days of creation.* There are four primary views on the days of creation.
  - The days were simply revelatory days—that is, they were days during which God revealed the creation

scene to Moses. (Exodus 20:11, however, seems to contradict this view.)

- Each day represents an age. Some Bible verses portray a day as a long period of time (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8).
- The days are literal solar days, but each day was separated by a huge time gap. This allegedly accounts for the apparent long geological ages that science has discovered.
- The days are literal solar days with no time gap between them. This is my view. In support of this view, the Genesis account refers to evening and morning (Genesis 1:5). God created the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night (verse 16). Further, Exodus 20:11 plainly states that “in six days the LORD made heaven and earth.” Moreover, whenever a number (such as six) is used with the Hebrew word for day (*yom*), it always refers to a literal solar day.

### Digging Deeper with Cross-References

*The Holy Spirit's role in creation*—Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:30; compare with Luke 1:35

*The power of God's spoken word*—Psalms 33:6; 148:5; Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 11:3

### Life Lessons

1. *Human sexuality in the marriage relationship.* A sexual relationship is restricted to the confines of marriage (between a man and woman) (1 Corinthians 7:2). Sex within marriage is good (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31). Sexual intercourse was actually one of God's first commands to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). So important is sex in the marriage relationship, the apostle Paul said,

that husbands and wives should always be available to each other (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). The apostles urged all Christians to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 6:13,18).

2. *The importance of rest.* The principle of rest is first laid out early in the Genesis account: “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” (Genesis 2:2). In Exodus 20:9-10, God instructs His people, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work.” Even though we do not have a Sabbath-day requirement today, as did the ancient Jews, the principle of rest is still important (see Hebrews 4:9-11). Jesus urged His followers to take time to rest (Mark 6:31-32; see also Psalm 23:2; Matthew 11:26-30; Philippians 4:6-7).

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. God is the Strong One (*Elohim*). What does that mean to you personally?
2. You are created in the image of God. What does that mean to you? What difference might that make in how you live your life?
3. Do you make an effort to honor God’s principle of rest each week? Why or why not? How do you do that?