

# THE PENTATEUCH

GENESIS – EXODUS – LEVITICUS – NUMBERS – DEUTERONOMY

<b>GENESIS, <i>Earle E. Williams, Ph.D.</i></b>	Lecture 1	2
	Lecture 2	11
<b>EXODUS, <i>T. Leonard Lewis, Th.D.</i></b>	Lecture 3	22
	Lecture 4	29
<b>LEVITICUS, <i>Arnold C. Schultz, Th.D.</i></b>	Lecture 5	35
	Lecture 6	42
<b>NUMBERS, <i>Reverend L.E. Maxwell</i></b>	Lecture 7	49
<b>DEUTERONOMY, <i>Reverend L.E. Maxwell</i></b>	Lecture 8	54

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**GENESIS – Part 1****Earle E. Williams, Ph.D.****Chapters 1-11****INTRODUCTION**

Before we get into the fascinating details of Genesis, we will share in a brief overview. Genesis is a part of the Pentateuch—often referred to as the “*Five books of Moses*.” It gives us a printed record in which God’s message to mankind is set forth through narrative, poetry, law and genealogy. Civilization unfolds before us as we meet people; learn of their lives, their families, and how they responded to the opportunities and to the decisions they were called upon to make. What we learn of the past becomes a lesson for the future.

Let us pause to consider what this book means to us. In it, God brings man into communication with Himself. We learn that He is the creator. We are given the sequence of what is created which ends with the creation of man out of the dust of the ground. We learn what God requires of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the consequences of their actions.

We will meet renowned men and women whose lives have a bearing on world cultures today. Among the most notable would be Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

We discover that occasionally God intervenes in the affairs of mankind—at times to rescue or to save, other times to bring guidance or punishment. One thing is clear. God does not stand with indifference on the sideline—He participates in the lives of his people.

We will investigate significant events including the fall of Adam and Eve, the flood during Noah’s time, the building of the Tower of Babel that brought about the dispersion of people. God is not remote; He interacts.

One historic milestone is the call of Abraham and the special promises God made to him. God’s meetings with Abraham are told to us in such manner that we may feel we are part of Abraham’s family circle. We are present when the Lord tells Abraham that in his old age his wife Sarah will give birth to a son. We are there when he negotiates with his nephew Lot at the

division of the land, then later when he rescues Lot and his family from Sodom. Genesis covers a period of time that sees Abraham enter into the Promised Land then generations later whose great, great grandson, Joseph, at a young age is sold by his brothers to traders traveling to Egypt.

Upon being taken as a slave to Egypt, Joseph became a servant in the Pharaoh's court. When he refused to yield to the advances of Potiphar's wife, he is betrayed and put into prison. Two years later, he is remembered and released when the Pharaoh had two dreams no one could interpret. Joseph had the gift of interpreting dreams. He interprets the Pharaoh's dreams as a premonition of seven years of plentiful harvest to be followed with seven years of famine. The Pharaoh was impressed and put Joseph in charge of the nation's affairs. After seven years of harvest, Egypt and the surrounding countries then suffered from seven years of widespread famine.

In due course, Joseph discovers that even his brothers were forced to come to Egypt to buy grain. He recognizes them and puts them through a series of tests. Finally, he identifies himself and arranges for his father, Jacob, and all seventy family members to come and live in Egypt where they settle at Goshen.

As we read and ponder over the message of this book, let us proceed with a desire not only to know more of the text but of the author as well. Genesis falls naturally into two divisions. Chapters 1 to 11 cover four outstanding events: (1) Creation, (2) The Fall, (3) The Flood and (4) The Dispersion at Babel. Chapters 12 to 50 show how God is at work in the lives of (1) Abraham, (2) Isaac, (3) Jacob and (4) Joseph.

### THE BEGINNINGS

Genesis is a book of beginnings. It opens with the simple statement, "*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.*" God is identified as the creator of all that follows. There is no definition of God, no date, no method. All simply began with God. And with this declaration we have the beginning of measurable time. These ten words provide the foundation of all that follows in the Bible. This statement identifies the Creator, explains the origin of the world, the creation of mankind and it links the work of God in the past to his work today and to the future.

Verse 2 describes the earth as being without form and dark. The "Spirit of God moved over the waters." God Speaks and this formless mass takes shape. Then, nine creative acts follow

that are preceded by the words, “*And God Said.*” The voice of God had a telling role in the process of creation.

Note the sequence of bringing order into what we know as the earth, the planets and the galaxy surrounding us. First God said, “*Let there be light.*” The *light* is called day and the darkness, *night*.

On the second day God said, “*Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water.*” He separates the waters. Scientists tell us that more than 70 percent of the earth’s surface is water and that the average depth of the oceans is 2 miles.

On the third day God said, “*Let the waters be gathered together in one place, and let the land appear.*” We now have the words, “*Earth and Seas.*” God speaks again, “*Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth and it was so.*”

On the fourth day, God said, “*Let there be lights in the firmament.*” And God made two great lights, one to rule the day and one the night.

On day five, God said, “*Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life and fowl that may fly above the earth.*”

On the sixth day, God said “*Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things and beast of the earth after his kind.*”

Beginning with verse 26 we have one more, “*And God Said.*” “*Let us make man in our image, (notice the plural form, “our”) after our likeness; and let them have dominion.*” Also notice this change. In the previous acts, the impersonal expression is used, “Let there be, Let the earth.” But here it is “Let us.” So God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Each previous creature is made “after his kind, or after its kind.” With the creation of man it is more personal, “in our image.”

God created Adam after first preparing all that the earth should have as a suitable abode. He stated, “*It is not good that man should be alone,*” God caused a deep sleep to come over Adam and formed Eve from a rib He took from Adam’s side. God said, “*They shall be one flesh.*”

The Bible then closes out the description of creation. Adam and Eve are placed in a garden in a place named Eden. In the Hebrew Bible Eden means “delight.”

### THE TEMPATATION

Chapter three begins with the temptation and its process. The crafty serpent appears and approaches Eve. First, what God had said is questioned, “Yea hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”(verse 1). In verse 4, his word is denied, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” Then in verse 5, his word is misrepresented. By questioning God’s directions, the serpent leads Eve into a quest for wisdom—having the knowledge of good and evil on her own, not needing to look to God for this. The serpent implies that God was keeping this from her. It spoke only twice but that was enough to offset the trust between her and her creator.

Notice the pathway Satan used to cause Eve and Adam to fall. First, Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, “the lust of the flesh;” that it was pleasant to the eyes, “the lust of the eyes,” that it “would make one wise,” the pride of life. First the serpent misquoted God, then challenged the truth of what God had said, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” Eve is unable to restrain herself. She steps across the line. She will have a new level of understanding even though it violates her relationship with her creator. Eve was aware that eating the restricted fruit would bring an understanding of good and evil. She knew also that it carried the penalty of death. She ate and so did Adam. Their relationship with God was forever changed.

When God came for his walk in the garden, they were ashamed and hid from him. Their eyes had been opened. They saw they were different from each other and made aprons to cover themselves. Mankind has been running from God ever since. The serpent was cursed. Sorrow and pain was brought into the life of the woman, and man was destined to a life of labor. Adam and Eve were driven from the garden. Man did not begin as a heavenly creature. His origin was the dust of the ground. Through the fall, man returns to dust.

Yet almost immediately at verse 15, in chapter 3, God makes a promise that the seed (the offspring) of the woman will one day crush the head of the serpent. This is the first prophecy with promise in the Scripture. Jesus Christ came and has crushed the head of the serpent. It is the first promise in Scripture of a coming redeemer.

### THE LENGTH OF THE DAYS OF CREATON

Before we proceed further into Genesis, let us touch briefly on the issue that exists over the length of the creation days. For many years, public education has proclaimed that the age of the earth is billions of years and life has evolved over millions of years from a single-cell

organism formed by chance in a primeval ocean. The Genesis account is considered by many educators to be outdated and allegorical. Some sincere Christians trying to reconcile this have embraced the “day-age” concept, meaning that each of the 6 days represents long periods of time. Psalm 90:4, is referred to as justification: “*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*”

In the book, titled, “In Six Days,” edited by John Ashton, published by New Leaf Press, 50 scientists, from a variety of disciplines, explain their reasons for believing the biblical, six-day creation and that these were 24 hour days, not great periods of time.

In the opening article, Jeremy Walter says, “ Many intelligent people are thoroughly convinced that science has proven the earth to be billions of years old. How can they be wrong? The misconception builds on a neglect of the basic nature of “science, ” and a natural desire for moral autonomy. Actually, the age of the earth can be neither proved nor disproved by science. Scientific evidence can be compiled to support one model of earth history as compared to another, but such work amounts to a feasibility study, not proof. <sup>1</sup>

In the first chapter of Genesis, God is telling us that each of the six days of creation were calendar days, that had an evening and a morning. “We should be thankful for these details God has revealed to us that He created everything in six, 24-hour days.” <sup>2</sup>

There is another point regarding the creation/evolution controversy. Science claims that evolution over billions of years has brought life gradually from a single cell to the complexities of the present state. “If so, in the fossil record we would expect to have examples of in between forms, and there are none,” said Dr. John Morris, a geological engineer and president of the Institute for Creation Research. Further in his article, “In Six Days,” Morris stated, “the real key, however for resolving the creation/evolution controversy is in a study of the age of the earth. Evolution demands long periods of time, but if the earth is much younger, as the Bible teaches, then evolution is even more foolish.”

He adds, “As a geologist, I am convinced that the surface of the earth appears to have been shaped and remolded in the past by an incredibly dynamic water cataclysm. The biblical

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<sup>1</sup> In Six Days, Jeremy I walter: pp11, *New Leaf Press*,©2001, Green Forest, Arkansas

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, Werner Gitt, pp 366

flood provides the key.” He goes on, “It would have eroded material from one location and deposited it in another, and in those muddy sediments would be animals and plants which had died in that flood. Over time, those sediments would have hardened into sedimentary rock and the dead things would have hardened into fossils. Thus, from a flood geology perspective, the rocks and fossils are the results of the flood of Noah’s day.”<sup>3</sup>

For a full discussion and support of the biblical position of the origin and age of the earth and for reasons why evolution is only an unsupported theory, I suggest you read these 50 scientific scholars in the book entitled, “In Six days.”

### **GOD AT WORK THROUGH PEOPLE AND EVENTS**

By looking further into Genesis, we see that the content of the Bible has to do with the people and events that deal with God’s provision of redemption, and how his directions are lived out in the lives of men and women from generation to generation.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 deal with the downward course of human civilization during the years before the flood. Cain and Abel are born and this begins the interaction of people and events. Abel, who is a keeper of sheep, prepared an offering before the Lord. Although Scripture does not offer many details, it is obvious that Abel was responding to the revealed will of God.

Cain also brought his offering of the fruit of the ground and was upset when he saw that his offering was inappropriate. He became jealous and killed Abel when they were in the field together. Later God asked Cain, “*Where is thy brother?*” Cain replied with the famous, “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*”

There are several “firsts” in chapter four. The first murder, (verse 18). We learn of Enoch who became the first city builder. The marriage to two wives by Lamech is the first time polygamy is mentioned; Jabal, (the first cowboy); Jubal, (the first musician, the handler of the harp). Tubal-Cain is the first metal smith, (an instructor of brass and iron).

Also in chapter 4, Seth is born, the third son of Adam and Eve. Chapter four closes with the statement, “*Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.*”

Chapter 5 tells us that after the birth of Seth, Adam lived 800 years and begat sons and daughters. The chapter continues with the list of 10 patriarchs who span the time from Adam

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, John Morris, pp 311

down to Noah. Each lived more than 900 years, except Enoch, who at age 356 was translated. He is singled out as one *“who walked with God.”* This characterization is quite significant considering the time in which Enoch lived. For it was a time when the Lord looked down and saw that the wickedness of man was great, yet Enoch walked with God.

Chapter 6 opens with statements that serve as a prelude to the flood. The span of life is shortened to 120 years. An expression now appears in verses, 1 to 4 that calls for an explanation. *“The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. Verse 4, “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.”* The question is asked. Who are these “sons of God”? Scholars have debated this. Three possible answers are often given. 1) They are angels. 2) The godly seed of Seth. 3) A royal line of kings. It is doubtful that they are angels, for Matthew 22:30 states, *“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”* The reference to “daughters of men” is in keeping with the statement at the time of creation when God breathed life into man then created woman from man, chapter 2, verse 22.

During this time God saw that the wickedness of man was great and that the thoughts and imagination of the heart was evil continuously. This brings us to the time of the flood.

### NOAH AND THE FLOOD

God repented over what had become of his own creation. He decided to destroy mankind, the beasts of the field, creeping things and fowls of the air, except that *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* Noah is described as *“a just man; upright; one who walked with God.”*

God views Noah as “righteous” and instructs him to build an ark. He is told that in it he and his family would be saved along with a pair of all the animals. God gives instructions as to the dimension of the Ark; its shape and size and the wood Noah was to use.

Noah gathered materials and began building the Ark—a task that took 120 years. Noah had no precedent for what he was to do. Never before had there been rain. Noah acted upon his faith that what God said—He would do. A good lesson for us is it not?

When the ark was completed, God said, “*Come thou and all thy house into the ark for thee have I seen righteousness before me in this generation.*” Noah is instructed to bring in his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives and 2 each of the animals (plus 7 each of clean animals). God gave Noah seven days to get this done before the rains would begin. All this is a reversal of God’s good work at creation.

At the outset of this story, the reader is privileged to view the matter as God sees it. God speaks of his pain and tells why He will destroy all flesh. The writer shows that the main point of the story is not why God sent the flood but rather why God saved Noah. The point is that God delivers those “who walk with Him and do not corrupt his ways.” “*And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.*”

For 40 days and nights, the rains came and the springs of the deep opened up. After Noah and his family entered the ark and the door was shut, there is no mention of Noah’s hearing from God for the next 150 days—just silence!

After sending out a raven and three doves in succession, Noah is able to leave the ark. His first act is to build an altar and prepare a sacrifice. God establishes a covenant that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood.

Many changes took place at this time. The fear of man was put on animals. Meat was approved as food. The death penalty was stated. God blessed Noah and his sons. They were instructed to be fruitful, multiply and to replenish the earth. He then sets the rainbow in the sky as a reminder of this covenant.

There is a parallel here to the creation account where man and woman had a clean start. Everything was perfect, though by yielding to the serpent there was a great loss. Now after the flood, there is another new beginning. God restates his blessing and covenants never to destroy mankind again with a flood. Yet this story closes on a sad note when Noah planted a vineyard, got drunk and was found naked in his tent by Ham.

Earlier in chapter 5, we are given the names of the ten key sons from Adam to Noah. Now in chapter 10, we have a continuation of the genealogy that includes the generations of Noah’s three sons; Shem, Ham and Japheth down to Abraham. Only a brief mention of the descendents of Japheth is given. Of Japheth’s descendents, Javan and Tarshish are mentioned. His descendents are considered to be seafaring tribes that spoke in their own tongue (or language).

They are on the horizon or outer fringe of Scripture in contrast to the descendents of Ham and Shem

The descendents of Ham included the Canaanites who felt the burden of Noah's curse. Also listed is Cush, the father of Nimrod, quoted as being a "*mighty warrior and a mighty hunter on the earth.*" Nimrod built the foundation of his empire in Babylonia (verses 8-12 in chapter 10) where it is stated that he also went to Assyria and there he built Nineveh.

### **THE TOWER OF BABEL AND CONFUSION OF LANGUAGES**

Chapter 11 tells of the builders of a city and the Tower of Babel. In verse 4, the builders express two desires: 1) to make a name for themselves, 2) to avoid being scattered. The Lord came down to see the city and tower and said, "*Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Let us go down and confound their language.*" This caused these people to scatter abroad over the face of the earth—just the opposite of what they had intended. This chapter also continues the genealogy that began with Adam and includes the additional 20 generations of descendants from Shem to Abraham.