

INTRODUCTION TO 1ST BIBLEBOOK GENESIS (1447 B.C.)

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A. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

1. The name of the book.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew Bible, the first five books in the Old Testament are called by the first words. So in Hebrew, this book is called 'in the beginning' (be-rishit). In the oldest translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, it is called 'origin' (Genesis). The book describes the *origin* or *beginning* of the universe and especially of the earth. It describes the origin or beginning of energy (light), matter, space and time. It describes the origin or beginning of everything on the earth: the atmosphere, the oceans and continents, the vegetation, birds, fish, animals and most important people. It describes the earliest history of the people on earth: of unbelievers and believers, the increase of wickedness, their destruction by a great flood, the origin of the various nations and the ancestors of God's people. It describes especially the origin or beginning of the Hebrew race, through whom God would bring the Saviour of the world.

2. The writer, the date and the place of writing.

In the book of Genesis we read about the existence of the following much earlier smaller written documents: the written account of the heavens and the earth in the day they were created (2:4), the written account of the history of the descendants of the first man: Adam (5:1), the written account of the man who survived the great flood: Noah (6:9), the written account of Noah's descendants (10:1), the written account of the ancestor of God's people: Terah and Abraham (2167-1992 B.C.)(11:27) and the written accounts of Ishmael (25:12), of Isaac (2067-1887 B.C.)(25:19), of Esau (36:1) and of Jacob (2007-1860 B.C.)(37:2). All these accounts were written from the beginning of time to about the time of Joseph (1910-1800 B.C.). Later, Moses (1527-1407 B.C.), under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit¹, used these written accounts to write the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis was written around 1447 B.C., when Moses was still in Egypt or in the desert of Sinai.

3. The character of the book.

The book itself clearly shows that it intends to relate history. The book of Genesis is *not a human tradition* about the origin of the earth mixed with mythological stories. It is also *not a philosophical, poetical or symbolical description* of human ideas about the origin of everything. The book itself clearly says that it relates *history*. In Genesis 2:4 we read, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth in the day they were created." The word 'account' means *the past history* or *the history of its origin*. In Genesis 5:1, 6:9 etc. the same word is translated as *the record or account of the later period in history* or *the record or account of the descendants* of Adam, of Noah, etc.

The book of Genesis is a historical book. But it is not simply a record of ancient human history which has been preserved by divine protection. *The history of Genesis is nothing less than a divine revelation!* No human being could have written a history of the origin of the world, because humans were only created at the end of creation. However, the God of the Bible, who created everything, also revealed to man how and why he created everything! It is God who gives to man the history of the beginning of the earth and the history of the beginning of mankind. It is also God who commanded, inspired and guided these ancient writers to record what he revealed to them. The ancient histories of the creation, the first people and their fall into sin, of Noah and the flood, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were recorded in short written histories and passed on from father to son throughout the generations until Moses finally under inspiration of God's Holy Spirit recorded these in the book of Genesis (the Book of Origins).

4. The purpose of the book.

It is God himself who determined what he would include in this book and what he would leave out. God's purpose was not to satisfy man's thirst for knowledge or even curiosity. God's purpose was *to reveal to fallen man his plan of salvation!* There are certain things which God has not revealed to man² and therefore there will always be certain questions that man can never answer. For example: questions about the divine nature of God, the origin of evil and the election of certain people. But the book of Genesis is *a revelation of God's history of salvation!* Everything described in this book serves to save man. This history can be known and should be made known.

This history is a revelation of God's purpose with the creation (that man should live in obedience to God's glory), the fall of mankind into sin (that man disobeyed God), the first promise of salvation (that man cannot save himself, but that God will save him), the salvation of people who believe and the judgement of people who refuse to repent.

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16

² Deuteronomy 29:29

Not only in Genesis, but in the whole Bible, *God's revelation came in the form of God's words and God's acts in human history*. The Bible does not record an abstract religion of philosophical ideas equivalent to any other attempt of man to figure out God. *The Bible is a historical record of God speaking and acting within human history! The Bible is the recorded revelation of God's history of salvation!*

B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

The theme of Genesis: "**God's acts and words are the origin of creation, of man and of God's covenant with man.**"

Genesis is divided into two main parts.

1. Genesis 1:1 to 11:26. The origin or beginning of the most important aspects of human life.

It answers the questions, "How did the universe originate?" "Where does man come from?" "Why does man exist?" "Why are there so many different nations and languages in the world?" "Why is there evil in this world?" "Why are there disasters like floods, droughts and death in the world?"

The first part of Genesis may be divided into smaller sections as follows:

- Genesis 1:1 to 2:3. The beginning of the creation of the universe and especially of planet earth.
- Genesis 2:4 to 3:24. The beginning of paradise and the fall of man into sin.
- Genesis 4:1-15. The beginning of destruction.
- Genesis 4:16 to 9:29. The beginning of human civilisation.
- Genesis chapters 10 and 11. The beginning of the many nations on earth.

2. Genesis 11:27 to 50:26. The origin or beginning of God's people.

God's people is a group of people whom God chose to use to bring salvation to this world. It answers the question, "How will God save man, who has fallen into sin?"

The second part of Genesis may be divided into smaller sections as follows:

- Genesis 11:28 - 25:11. The beginning of Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.
- Genesis 25:12 - 27:46. The beginning of Isaac and his two sons, Esau and Jacob.
- Genesis 28 - 36. The beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Genesis 37 - 50. The beginning of Joseph's dreams.

C. THE MAIN CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

Genesis relates **the origin or beginning of everything**.

1. The beginning of the material universe.

In the Bible the word 'create' is only used of God. In Genesis 1:1-2 God relates the beginning of creation. "In the beginning (which is beyond man's imagination) God created all visible things from what is invisible³. He created energy, matter, space and time. From these he created uncountable number of stars that developed into galaxies, then formed the solar system within the Milky Way galaxy, then the planet earth and its moon within the solar system and finally everything on earth. With respect to the earth, "there was only *emptiness, formlessness and darkness* over the flood." The earth was devoid of the numerous living creatures that now populate the earth; it had not yet attained its solid state consisting of dry continents amidst the oceans; and no light penetrated to the earth. "The Spirit of God was hovering over the water" (i.e. the flood, the formless earth). This describes the presence of God and not the movement of a wind over the water.

Genesis 1:3 - 2:4 relates the six days of creation, the orderly progressive stages in which God completed (2:1) his work of creating the planet earth as we know it today.

- The first day of creation: making light reach the earth.
- The second day of creation: forming the atmosphere around the earth with water (clouds) above and water (oceans) below it.
- The third day of creation: forming the continents with all its vegetation amidst the oceans.
- The fourth day of creation: causing the light bodies (sun, moon, stars) to become visible from the earth. This made the calculation of time, the calendar and the seasons possible.
- The fifth day of creation: creating birds in the sky and fish in the oceans.
- The sixth day of creation: creating wild and domestic animals, the other creatures on earth and the first man and the first woman.
- The seventh day of creation: God stopped creating and instituted the seventh day of every week as a day of rest commemorating the completion of creation.

2. The beginning of the human race.

In Genesis 1:26-27 relates that God created the first man and woman. Genesis 2:7 elaborates the creation of man and Genesis 2:20-23 elaborates the creation of woman. There must have been a considerable period of time between the

³ Hebrews 11:3

creation of the first man and the first woman. He created Adam and Eve through a process: first he created visible matter (dust, elements); then he formed the body of man; finally he blew breath (spirit) into man's nostrils and man became a living being (soul)(2:7), an image bearer of God (1:26-27). Later God created the woman from the side of Adam (2:21-22). Eve was different, yet was of equal value in God's eyes (1:26-27).

3. The beginning of God's appearances to man.

God revealed himself within his creation and within human history in different ways to man. These *appearances* of God are visible signs of his presence!

- God *revealed* himself to Adam and Eve as *a Spirit*⁴ whose movement in the garden and voice could be heard (3:8-10).
- God *appeared* to Abraham when he was 75 years old and still lived in Mesopotamia⁵.
- God *appeared* to Abraham *in a vision* (15:1) as a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch that passed between the halves of three animals and two birds when he made his covenant with Abraham (15:17-18).
- God *appeared* to Hagar as the Angel of the LORD (i.e. the LORD himself)(16:7-14).
- God *appeared* to Abraham as a human being (18:1-2).
- God *appeared* visibly and audibly to Jacob in a dream (28:12-13; 35:7,9-11).

4. The beginning of God's revelation of his will.

God entrusted man with some very meaningful and responsible tasks (1:28):

- Man must *be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth* with people in the image of God.
- Man must *subdue* the earth by means of practising agriculture, industry and science and by protecting God's creation.
- Man must *rule* over the other creatures on earth, but not over one another.
- Man must *cultivate* the reclaimed wilderness of Eden,
- And man must *guard/watch* the garden of Eden against an evil spirit (2:15)

The near perfect state in creation does not exclude responsible tasks and hard work.

Long before God gave the Law to Moses in Exodus 20, he gave certain definite laws to man in the book of Genesis.

- In Genesis 2:1-3 God instituted *a rest day* (the sabbath) after six days of work. He commanded man to take one day of rest every week from his normal work. God gave that day for man⁶ to rest and get refreshed⁷, to gather with other believers in a sacred assembly⁸, to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord⁹ and to do good and save lives¹⁰.
- In Genesis 2:15, God gave man the command not only to work in the garden, but also to *guard* it. God revealed to man that after the completion of the creation there had been a fall in heaven¹¹ and that an evil power, Satan, existed that threatened God's creation. God commanded man that he should be on his guard against this evil power and guard God's garden against the damage it could inflict.
- In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave man a command in order to teach him the difference between *good and evil*. God said, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Through this command, God gave man a test, a choice to either obey God or disobey God. The ability to distinguish between good and evil was not gained by eating from this tree, but by NOT eating from this tree. God revealed to man that *good* is to obey God and *evil* is to disobey God! If man obeyed God he would consciously and clearly know the difference between good and evil.
- In Genesis 2:18-24, God instituted *marriage*. He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Marriage is God's idea and institution.

5. The beginning of evil and sin.

In Genesis 3:1-13, God describes how man fell into sin by disobeying God! God had commanded man very clearly to man what he was free to do. Also what he was forbidden to do. It is God himself who revealed to man what is *good* and what is *evil*. It is God who set borders/limits around man and determined the boundaries within which he should live.

But the evil power, called Satan, came and tempted man. Satan is an angel, who rebelled against God some time between the end of the creation and the fall of man into sin. Satan's methods to tempt man have always been the same. He lies. His purpose is to sow mistrust or doubt in the heart of man concerning the exact words and precise meaning of God's commandments. He wants man to think that God is unreasonable and arbitrary. He deliberately misled the

⁴ cf. John 4:24

⁵ Acts 7:2

⁶ Mark 2:27

⁷ Exodus 23:12

⁸ Leviticus 23:3

⁹ Mark 2:28

¹⁰ Mark 3:4

¹¹ Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17

woman by accusing God of being a liar and by withholding the truth from her. He said that God would not punish man with death if he sinned. Jesus rightly calls him a liar and the father of all lies¹².

Although the man and the woman had great freedom to eat from every tree in the garden, except one, Eve *considered* Satan's suggestion to eat from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She *looked* at the temptation, then *took hold of* the temptation, *succumbed* to the temptation and finally tempted her husband (3:6)! Although Satan tempted Adam through Eve, Adam knew God's commandment, but failed to act. Therefore he is responsible for his own sin.

What is *sin*? The word *sin* in the Bible has a different meaning than the word *sin* in the world. In the world it means that you are a very bad person or a criminal. But in the Bible it means that *you have no relationship with the God who revealed himself in the Bible and that you miss God's goal for your life*. Therefore even so-called *good* people in the world's eyes are *sinners* in God's eyes.

6. The beginning of human suffering.

Human suffering begins with sin, missing God's goal for your life or with disobeying God.

- The first consequence of sin is that *man's relationship to God changed*. When the man and the woman disobeyed God, *their relationship to the God of the Bible changed*. 'Sin' causes separation from God¹³. This found expression in the fact that Adam and Eve feared God's holy presence and tried to hide from God (3:8). This was the beginning of suffering in the spiritual realm.
- The second consequence of sin is that *man's relationship to himself changed*. He realised his nakedness (3:7). He felt that his original perfect condition and wholeness was shattered. He had no more inward peace. He felt very uncomfortable about being physically naked. He became acutely aware that he was no more the person God intended him to be. This was the beginning of suffering in the psychological realm.
- The third consequence of sin is that *man's relationships to other people changed*. The man accused the woman (3:12); their first child killed their second child (4:8); their descendants married more than one wife (4:19); and married unbelievers (6:2). From then onwards, mankind was evil (6:5). This was the beginning of suffering in the social realm.
- The fourth consequence of sin is that *man's relationship to the earth changed*. The earth became a broken earth, produced thorns and thistles and made it very difficult for man to live (3:17-19). Later God sent disasters like the flood as a punishment for sin (6:11-12). This was the beginning of suffering in the physical and material realm¹⁴.

7. The beginning of God's plan of salvation.

In Genesis 3:15 we read God's judgement of Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Jesus Christ teaches that the evil spirit that was hiding behind the snake was Satan. God was not speaking about a mere snake, but about this evil spiritual personality. In Genesis 3:15, God judged Satan.

The friendship of man with Satan resulted in a curse for man. God's first act of mercy was that he turned this friendship into enmity. This enmity would result in the greatest blessing for man. God said that throughout history there would be enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of Satan. The meaning is clear. Throughout history there would be enmity between the children of God and the children of the devil¹⁵. Throughout history the people of God would be engaged in a spiritual warfare against the evil spirits and the evil people¹⁶.

But God also determined the final outcome of this struggle. In the future, a descendant (literally: 'seed') of the woman would arise and he would crush the head of Satan. He would utterly overcome the power of Satan and finally destroy him forever! Genesis 3:15 is the first promise in the Bible concerning the coming Messiah, the Saviour of the world. In this struggle, Jesus would be hurt: he would die on the cross. But through the cross he would conquer Satan.

8. The beginning of human family life.

In Genesis 4:1-15 we read about the relationship between the two brothers, Cain and Abel. This happened after man had fallen into sin. In this chapter we see how *sin destroys the relationships within a family*. Outwardly, both brothers brought the best part of their possessions as an offering to God. However, God looked inwardly into their hearts and saw the difference. God did not accept Cain's sacrifice, because he brought his sacrifice without conversion from his evil heart and lack of faith¹⁷. God teaches that he is not pleased with the outward forms of religious worship, but only with the inward surrender of the heart¹⁸. The Bible says, "God does not delight in sacrifice. ...

¹² John 8:44

¹³ Isaiah 59:1-2

¹⁴ cf. Ezekiel 14:21

¹⁵ cf. Matthew 13:37-43

¹⁶ Ephesians 6:12

¹⁷ Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12

¹⁸ Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12,

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.”¹⁹ Cain was jealous and angry, because God had not accepted his sacrifice. God warned Cain to resist the temptation to do wrong. He said, “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it” (4:7). He warned Cain that *sin* is like a wild and dangerous animal, waiting to attack him and longing to destroy him. After man fell into sin, *sin* became a very dangerous reality, a destructive force with which all people must reckon. Cain could not master sin. Instead, sin mastered him and destroyed him.

9. The beginning of man-made civilisation.

In Genesis 4:16 to 9:29 we read how the first man-made civilisation began. We read that Cain was the first person to build a city (4:17). Jabal was the first to live in tents and raise livestock (4:19). Jubal was the first to play musical instruments like the harp and the flute (4:21). Tubal-Cain was the first to forge all kind of tools out of bronze and iron (4:22).

In Genesis 4:26 we read how in those days “men began to call on the name of the Lord”. This cannot refer to the first time people began to worship the Lord. It is clear that Eve already worshipped the Lord (4:1) and that her sons, Cain and Abel worshipped the Lord when they brought sacrifices to God (4:2-3). It is rather a reference to the first time people began to worship God together and publicly. However, not only man-made civilisation and culture developed, also sin and wickedness increased.

In Genesis 6:5 we read, “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” In Genesis 6:11-12 we read, “The earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. The people on earth had corrupted their ways.” Adam and Eve had yielded to outward temptation, but now human beings yielded to temptation that came from inside their own hearts. As a punishment for the wickedness of mankind, God sent the flood. It destroyed all people on earth except eight people (7:6-7), who became the ancestors of all modern people.

10. The beginning of the nations of the world.

In Genesis 9:1 after the flood, God again commanded Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth”. But instead of spreading out and repopulating the earth as God had commanded, they stuck together in a small area.

In Genesis 10 we read that they decided to build a city with a great tower to keep them together and to make a name for themselves. They thought that they could establish a world empire that would be independent from God. This was the first attempt to create unity apart from God (11:1-4)

However, God judged them. He confused the one language of the whole world, so that they could no longer understand each other. Thus, the people were forced to scatter over the whole earth (11:5-11). Each group of people had its own language. From the three sons of Noah came all the nations that spread out over the whole earth after the flood (10:32).

11. The beginning of God’s covenant of grace.

The second part of the book of Genesis, chapter 11:27 to the end, relates the beginning of God’s covenant people.

God called Abraham (2167 - 1992 B.C.) from Ur of the Chaldeans, modern Iraq, to go to an unknown land. God made a covenant with Abraham: “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God” (17:1,14)²⁰. God promised to him three things: to make him the father of many nations (17:5), including Jews and Arabs; to give the land of Canaan between the River Euphrates and the border of Egypt to his descendants (literally: seed) (15:18); and to bless all the families of the earth through his ‘seed’ (singular: Jesus Christ). In Genesis 12:3 and 22:17-18 God says, “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Through your ‘seed’ all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me.” God does not say that Abraham or his descendants, Israel, would bless all the families on earth. According to Galatians 3:16-18, it is God himself who would bless all the families of the earth through Abraham’s one descendant, namely Jesus Christ! God later reconfirmed this covenant with Isaac (26:3-4), Jacob (28:13-14), Moses²¹, David and the Levites²².

Genesis 15:6 says, “Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it to him as righteousness.” God imputed (ascribed) and imparted righteousness to Abraham apart from any good works or works of the law. God regarded Abraham as a complete righteous person and he treated him as a complete righteous person, not because of anything Abraham did, but because Abraham believed in God’s covenant promise. Abraham believed in the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, through whom God would bless all the nations on earth. He rejoiced at the thought of seeing the day of Jesus Christ²³! While Abraham and the other believers in the Old Testament looked forward to Jesus Christ and the work of salvation he would do, Christians today look back to Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation.

¹⁹ Psalm 51:16-17

²⁰ Exodus 6:7; cf. Leviticus 26:12

²¹ Exodus 6:2-8

²² Jeremiah 33:21-22

²³ John 8:56

12. The beginning of God's people.

In spite of the fact that the human race was wicked, God wanted to reveal his mercy and his grace to people. He did this by choosing a remnant of believers²⁴, through whom he planned to write the Bible, to witness to all the nations about himself and to bring forth the Saviour.

Abraham became *the physical father* of the Hebrew nation and *the spiritual father* of all believers. God used them to fulfil his plan of salvation for very many people in all the nations on the earth. They were later called "Israel", a name which God first gave to Jacob (32:28), the ancestor of the nation of Israel. The rest of the book of Genesis describes the beginning of God's people, the chosen and believing Israelites. They are God's 'Church' of the Old Testament²⁵.

God continued to speak his words to Israel and to act in their midst. He did that so that they might know him and worship him. He entrusted to them the written books of the Bible, which record the words he spoke to them, the acts he did in their midst and also how people responded to him²⁶.

God commanded Israel to be his witnesses to the other nations in the world²⁷. God is the God of Israel and the God of all the nations of the world! God's plan was to save people in Israel and many people in the other nations of the world. As we will see in later history, the majority of Israel failed to be and to do what God had commanded them to be and to do. Although Israel failed, God and God's plan of salvation did not fail! *At the first coming of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, the believers in Israel became the beginning of the Christian Church.*

This believing remnant of Israel was continued on a higher plane (the fulfilled work of salvation) and enlarged (extended) to include the believers from all other nations in the world. The Christians of the Christian Church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, became God's witnesses to every nation in the world²⁸.

God brought the Saviour of the world through the nation Israel²⁹. The promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, was according to his human nature born within the family line of king David in the city of Bethlehem.

D. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

1. The creation of the universe and planet earth.

Genesis chapter 1 and 2 says that God created the universe and the earth. He created everything that exists from what is not visible³⁰. He created energy, matter, space and time. From this he created uncountable stars that developed in the creation process into galaxies. Within the Milky Way galaxy he developed in the creation process the solar system. Within the solar system he developed in the creation process the planet earth with its moon. On the earth he developed in the creation process everything on the earth: flora, fauna and human beings.

2. The creation of man.

Genesis 2:7 says that God created man through a process: He first created matter; then from the dust/matter (elements) he formed a human being; and finally he blew the breath of life (human spirit) into him. So man became "a living being" (a soul), a being with a body and a spirit (2:7). Later God created the woman from the side of man. She was different, but had the same value as man.

The human body, just like the bodies of animals, consists of the elements that are found in the earth. However, in differentiation to animals, which were formed by God's creative command, man was formed by God's own hands. The human, just like animals, was given the breath of life (2:7; 7:22). However, in differentiation to animals, which were given life by God's creative command, man was given life directly by God's breathing into his nostrils. This means that God himself gave man respiration and thereby life.

Genesis 1:26-27 says that God gave man a spiritual nature. The creation of man is even more special than that of animals. Man's creation is specially introduced by a decision of the Triune God, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." And then God made man in his own image or likeness. Man was given a *spiritual nature* that corresponds to God's spiritual nature. He possessed the real and characteristic features of God. He was in another degree a copy of God's personality.

Before the fall into sin, man possessed the following:

- eternal life
- a human spirit that knew God, loved God and could communicate with God
- a value system and a conscience that could tell right from wrong

²⁴ Romans 9:6,27

²⁵ Psalm 107:32 Hebrew: qahal, Greek: ekklesia, English: assembly.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:6,11

²⁷ Isaiah 43:10,12; 44:8

²⁸ Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19

²⁹ John 4:22

³⁰ Hebrews 11:3

- intuition that could sense danger
- the ability to communicate in a language,
- the ability to devise and create things,
- a purpose in life and a plan to accomplish it
- completely sinless.

Man is unique in creation. Nothing in creation besides man bears the image of God! Man possesses a physical and a spiritual existence. In short, man has a body and a spirit.

Genesis 2:15-17 and Genesis 1:28-29 says that God spoke directly to man. This was the very first revelation of God to man! This means that man has the ability to know God, to communicate with God and relate to God. Moreover, God gave man the task to subdue the earth, to rule over all living creatures and to utilise all plants and trees. God thus revealed that he created the earth *for man* and made man the steward of his creation.

3. The origin of sin.

Genesis chapter 3 describes how sin entered into the world. In Genesis 1:31 we read, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” The fall of Satan and all his evil angels/evil spirits into sin must therefore have taken place after the end of the creation and before the fall of man into sin. Although Satan lied to Eve and Adam, and tempted them to disobey God, Adam remained responsible for his disobedience, because God had given the commandment to him!

Remember, the word ‘sin’ means *to miss God’s goal, to fall short of God’s intended purpose*. After man fell into sin, all his descendants are born in sin. Job says, “Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!”³¹ David says, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”³² And the apostle Paul says “Sin entered the world through one man”.³³ This man was Adam. Therefore the Bible says, “There is no one righteous, not even one. ... There is no one who does good, not even one. ... All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”³⁴. From birth every human being falls short of God’s intended purpose for him. Every human being needs a Saviour!

4. The failure of man under every condition.

It was necessary for man to know his own weakness and failure, before he would be willing to be saved. Man failed under all circumstances.

Adam and Eve failed to obey God (3:16-19). Cain failed to overcome sin crouching at his door (4:7-8). Lamech failed to forgive someone who injured him (4:23-24). Believers in God failed to refrain from marrying unbelievers (6:2). Most people failed to live a righteous and blameless life (6:5,9). Noah failed to resist drunkenness (9:21). Ham failed to respect his father (9:22). The people of the world failed to obey God (11:4). They failed to refrain from war against each other (chapter 14).

Hagar failed to respect her employer (16:4). Sarai mistreated Hagar (16:6). Ishmael lived in hostility towards everyone (16:12). Sarah laughed at God’s promise (18:12). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah through homosexuality were degenerate (18:20; 19:4-5). Lot was heartless towards his own daughters (19:8). People failed to listen to God’s warning (19:14). Lot’s daughters seduced their father (19:31-32).

Abraham lied to king Abimelech (20:2). Abraham had more than one wife and concubines (25:1,5). The descendants of Ishmael lived in hostility toward all their brothers (25:18). Jacob extorted the birth right of the oldest son from Esau and Esau sold his birth right (25:31,34). Isaac lied to the Philistines (26:7). Esau failed to honour God’s institution of marriage (26:34; cf. 2:24)³⁵. Jacob deceitfully stole Esau’s blessing (27:35-36). Esau failed to forgive his brother and threatened to kill him (27:41). Laban deceived Jacob by giving him Leah instead of Rachel as wife (29:23-25). Jacob deceived Laban by selecting all the strong animals (30:42). Rachel stole her father’s household gods (31:19). Jacob deceived Laban by secretly running away (31:20). Judah committed incest with his son’s wife (38:18). Shechem raped Dinah (34:2,5). Simeon and Levi, forced all the men of that city to be circumcised, killed them with the sword and then plundered all their possessions, including their wives and children (34:24-29). Jacob’s household worshipped foreign gods (35:2-4).

Jacob was partial and loved Joseph more than any of his other sons (37:3). Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to their father (37:2). Joseph’s brothers hated him and could not speak a kind word to him (37:4-5). They were jealous of him (37:11). They stripped him of his robe and threw him into a cistern (37:23-24). They sold him as a slave to Egypt (37:28). Finally they lied to their father (37:31-32). Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph (39:12) and then lied to her husband (39:17-18). The chief cupbearer forgot to keep his promise to Joseph (40:23).

In the perfect conditions of paradise, man failed to obey God. How much more would man fail now that he is born in sin! Jesus says, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have NOT come to call the righteous, but sinners

³¹ Job 14:4

³² Psalm 51:5

³³ Romans 5:12

³⁴ Romans 3:10,12,23

³⁵ Deuteronomy 7:3-4. Marriage was limited to one woman and she had to be a believer.

to repentance.”³⁶ Jesus Christ did not come to save religious people, who think that they are righteous, but he came to save people who realise that they miss God’s goal and who fall short of God’s intended purpose for their lives. Only when people realise that they are sick, they call a doctor. In the same way, only when people realise that they are not righteous, but sinners, they will call to God to save them!

5. The value of an intimate relationship with God.

In Genesis 5:22-24 we read, “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” Enoch was not an ascetic, who withdrew from normal life. He had sons and daughters. Therefore he committed himself to his family while he walked with God. *Walking with God* means he had close spiritual fellowship with God and pleased God by his faith and obedience.

The Hebrew words “He was not; for God took him” is rendered in the Greek translation: “He was not found, because God ‘translated’ him” (5:24b). The New Testament (11:5) follows the Greek Old Testament translation.

*The word ‘translated’ denotes a turning, changing or transformation for the better, a transfer or move to a new home. Here it is a reference to the ‘transfer’ or ‘translation’ of Enoch (his soul/human spirit) to heaven.*³⁷ The Bible does not imply that he did not die and that his body was translated into heaven. However, the emphasis is not on the word ‘transfer’, but on the fact that Enoch was righteous and therefore had faith (cf. 10:38).

Also Noah walked with God (6:9). Many in the Old Testament and in the New Testament experienced the joy of having an intimate relationship with God.

6. The importance of obedience.

In Genesis 6 we read how God told Noah that he was going to destroy the wicked world with a flood. God commanded Noah to build an ark, which is a large ship, in which he and his family and all the animals in it could escape. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah believed God’s warning and obeyed God’s command. He built the ark *in holy fear* of God. By believing and obeying God, Noah saved himself and his family. And God regarded his faith as righteousness. The whole Bible teaches that God imputes (reckons, ascribes) a man’s faith as righteousness³⁸.

We show that we have genuine faith by our obedience. For example, Noah, Abraham and Joseph showed that they had genuine faith in God by their obedience.

7. The importance of faith in coming back to God.

In Genesis 15:6 we read, “Abraham believed the Lord, and he imputed (ascribed, reckoned, credited)³⁹ it to him as righteousness.” Genesis shows that the way to be saved in the Old Testament period is *by faith only*. Hebrews 11:3-10 teaches very clearly that the only way that pleases God is faith. It is not the outward religious activities we do, but it is the inward faith we exercise in God and his Word that pleases God.

God does not simply commend religion, the bringing of correct sacrifices or the following of the correct religious rituals and festivals. But God commended Abel for living in the right relationship to him⁴⁰. God does not regard an ascetic who withdraws from this world as a righteous person. But God commended Enoch for walking with God by faith (5:20)⁴¹. He regards as righteous every person, who by faith walks with God in the ordinary duties of life. By faith Noah and Abraham obeyed God. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him!”⁴² The book of Genesis clearly shows that the only way sinful man can go back to God is by faith in the God, who revealed himself in the Bible! Hebrews 11:7-8 teaches that faith comes by hearing God’s Word, by believing that God’s Word is true for you and by obeying God’s Word.

8. The importance of persevering spiritual struggle.

In Genesis 32 we read how Jacob (2007-1860 B.C.) wrestled all night with a man. In the early morning Jacob realised with whom he had been wrestling. Hosea 12:4 says that Jacob “wept and begged the angel of the Lord for his favour”. During the night-long struggle, Jacob must have felt that he was wrestling with the God whom he had deeply offended by his sin and whom he now met as his just Judge. If God had destroyed him in this struggle instead of just injuring his hip, it would have been a just punishment.

Jacob had misused his brother’s fatigue and hunger and he had misled his old and blind father to cheat his brother out of his inheritance. He had also cheated his father-in-law. He did not deserve God’s blessing at all. Jacob must have come to the realisation that unless God blessed him, either God or his brother Esau would destroy him!

³⁶ Luke 5:31-32

³⁷ Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:46. It is not making a statement about Enoch’s body.

³⁸ Romans 4:3

³⁹ Best translation: imputed and imparted God’s/Christ’s righteousness to the believer

⁴⁰ 1 John 3:12

⁴¹ Hebrews 11:5

⁴² Hebrews 11:6

The struggle of Jacob with the angel of the Lord served to bring Jacob to repentance of his sin and to cause him to plead for God's mercy and favour. Jacob did not want to let the angel of the Lord go unless he blessed him, that is, granted him undeserved grace. He wrestled, wept and begged. It was a *real spiritual struggle* for Jacob. But he persevered and conquered. God changed Jacob's name, which means 'deceiver', to 'Israel', which means 'he struggles with God' (32:28). God blessed Jacob and protected him against his enemies.

9. God is in control of all the people and events on earth.

In Genesis 37-45 and 50 we read about how Joseph (1910-1800 B.C.) was sold as a slave to Egypt by his own brothers. After spending 13 years in prison as a slave he finally became the governor of Egypt directly under the great Pharaoh. Although it was his own brothers that had sold him as a slave, *Joseph looked at the difficulties that happened to him from God's point of view and not from man's point of view*. In Genesis 45:5-9 he said to his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here, but God. ... It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."

God was in complete control of what Joseph's enemies did to him. God was in complete control of the mighty king of Egypt and of the difficulties that Egypt faced. God was in complete control of all the difficult circumstances that Joseph experienced in his life. God was in control when he was enslaved, when he was falsely accused, when he sat in prison and even when his friends had forgotten him. The book of Genesis shows how God is in control of all people and all the circumstances on earth. It is God who controls all the people and events in history with just one purpose, namely, to fulfil his eternal plan. God's plan is to save his people from sin and to save this earth from all evil people.

E. THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

1. The seed of the woman points to the Messiah.

In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the *offspring* or *seed* of the woman would in the future crush Satan. In Genesis 12:3 God promised that in this *seed* of Abraham, God would bless all the nations on earth. According to Galatians 3:16, this *seed* refers to one person, namely, Jesus Christ!⁴³ It is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who through his death on the cross would destroy the power of Satan and save very many people from all the nations of the world.

2. The offering up of Isaac points to the Messiah.

In Genesis 22, we read how Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, the heir of God's covenant promise. By faith Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from the dead⁴⁴. God tested Abraham and stopped him before he could carry out this sacrifice.

But in Romans 8:32 we read, "God did not spare his own Son, Jesus Christ, but gave him up for us all." And in John 3:16 we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." God gave the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of his people.

3. The lifting of Joseph from the pit to the throne points to the Messiah.

In Genesis 37-50 there are many parallels between the life of Joseph and Jesus while he was on earth.

- Joseph was loved more than anybody else (37:3). God the Father said about Jesus, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."⁴⁵
- Joseph began his public service when he was thirty years old (41:46). Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry⁴⁶.
- God was with Joseph and he prospered (39:2). Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil.⁴⁷
- Joseph excelled above his contemporaries (39:3-6). People were overwhelmed with amazement about Jesus and said, "He has done everything well."⁴⁸
- Joseph resisted temptation and refused to be seduced by an immoral woman (39:6-12). Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil and refused to worship and serve anyone but God only.⁴⁹
- God granted Joseph favour in the eyes of people (39:21). Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.⁵⁰
- Joseph prophesied the truth, particularly with regard to God's judgement of the baker and restoration of the cupbearer (40:13,19). Jesus prophesied the truth that those who hear his voice now, will rise spiritually from the dead and all people will hear his voice at his second coming and rise physically from the dead.⁵¹

⁴³ And not to the nation of Israel.

⁴⁴ Hebrews 11:17-19

⁴⁵ Matthew 3:17

⁴⁶ Luke 3:23

⁴⁷ Acts 10:38

⁴⁸ Mark 7:37

⁴⁹ Matthew 4:1-11

⁵⁰ Luke 2:52.

⁵¹ John 5:24-25,28-29

- Joseph was discerning and wise (41:39). Everyone who heard Jesus was amazed at his understanding and his answers.⁵²
- Joseph was humble and acknowledged that God was the Source of his wisdom (41:16). Jesus acknowledged that he is doing the work that God the Father has given him to finish.⁵³
- People from all countries came to Joseph (41:57). Jesus said, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.”⁵⁴
- Joseph wept (42:24). Jesus also wept.⁵⁵
- Joseph acknowledged the sovereignty of God in all events on earth (45:5-9; 50:19-20). Jesus acknowledged the sovereignty of God the Father. He said, “Not as I will, but as you will.”⁵⁶
- Joseph forgave those who had wronged him (45:15). Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”⁵⁷

All these things *point forward* to the human life of Jesus on earth. Joseph was rejected by his own people, but God lifted him up to become the ruler over his people. Likewise, the Messiah, Jesus Christ was rejected by his own people on earth⁵⁸, but according to Philippians 2:9-11, God exalted him to the highest place. Every knee will one day bow before Jesus Christ. Every tongue will one day confess that Jesus Christ is truly the king of kings!

F. GENESIS IS A BOOK HATED AND DISCREDITED BY ENEMIES.

The first book in the Bible, Genesis, and the last book in the Bible, Revelation, are especially attacked by the enemies of God, because both books prophesy the downfall of Satan! The book of Genesis exposes Satan as the enemy of God and the deceiver of people. It foretells how he will be crushed by Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation reveals how this is finally fulfilled.

⁵² Luke 2:47; John 7:15

⁵³ John 5:36

⁵⁴ John 12:32

⁵⁵ John 11:35

⁵⁶ Matthew 26:39; cf. 1 Peter 2:23

⁵⁷ Luke 23:34

⁵⁸ John 1:11