

STUDY GUIDE: WEEK ONE

In the Beginning: Exploring the Origin Stories of Genesis

Fall 2024 - Pastor Lose

Introduction to Genesis

The word “Genesis” means “beginning” and captures the heart and intent of the first book of the Bible. Through legend and myth (chs 1-11), ancestral history (chs 12-36), and extended narrative (chs 37-50), Genesis tells the origin story of the nation of Israel. Its primary themes revolve around God’s providential care for Israel and, indeed, all the world. Reading Genesis as history can be confusing, at best, but reading Genesis as confession of faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob can give insight into the dynamic relationship between God and God’s chosen people, Israel, a relationship that is extended to all of us through Jesus.

Origin Stories – Key Bible Passages

Notice how often Genesis seems to tell about the beginning of something. What is similar in the way these origin stories start? What is different? As you read these stories, what do you think the author was trying to accomplish through these “beginnings” and the larger confessions of faith they initiate?

Genesis 1:1-5 (continued in Genesis 1:6-2:4a)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Genesis 12:1-4

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

Genesis 37:1-4

Jacob settled in the land of Canaan where his father had lived as an alien. This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Questions to Ponder

- 1) What purpose do "origin stories" serve?
- 2) What are some of the other "origin stories" – in film, television, literature, or theater – that have stayed with you?
- 3) If you were to write a brief "origin story" for your life or about your family or career, how would you start that? What would you hope to accomplish?
- 4) What do these stories suggest to you about Israel's relationship to God? How might they inform your relationship with God?