

The Story

Chapter 1 – Creation

Genesis: 1-4, 6-9

Major Events:

- **Creation** – God creates the world in six days and establishes the Sabbath by resting on the 7th day.
- **The Fall** – Adam and Eve disobey God’s command not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Several consequences follow including expulsion from the garden.
- **Cain and Abel** – The sons of Adam and Eve. Cain kills his brother Abel out of jealousy.
- **Noah and the Flood** – God wipes out the Earth with a flood and recreates it, but not before instructing Noah to save two of every living thing in the ark.

What is missing?

- Chapter 5: Genealogy from Adam to Noah

Major Themes:

- All creation is good, including humanity who is created in God’s own image.
- God’s response to humanity’s disobedience in these stories is balanced by acts of judgment and grace.
- Creation is renewed after the flood and God makes an everlasting covenant with humanity through Noah.

Date & Authorship:

Tradition holds that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch. However, Moses lived long after these events and scholars resoundingly disagree with this view. Rather, a prominent theory says these chapters were compiled over centuries (probably by 600BC) from several different sources known as:

J – Yahwist, 10th century BC (this text uses Yahweh or “Lord” to name God; found prominently in Genesis)

E – Elohist, 9th century BC (because it refers to God with the generic Hebrew term, Elohim; primarily in Genesis and Exodus)

D – Deuteronomist, 7th century BC (mostly Deuteronomy)

P – Priestly, 6th century BC (Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers and some Deuteronomy)

Details to be aware of:

- There are two distinct stories of creation and the flood (repetition was common in telling stories aloud and even favored in ancient Near Eastern literature). What details belong to each story?
- Numeric symbols – 40 days of rain in the Noah story, 7 days of creation. Where do these numbers recur in the rest of the Bible? What is their significance?
- What is Adam and Eve’s forbidden action and its consequences for the rest of humanity? The word “sin” is never used in the story of the Garden of Eden. What then have we come to refer to as “sin” based on this story?
- Notice the balance of God’s judgment and salvation/grace in these stories. Identify moments of each in the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel and Noah and the flood.
- Is it important to you that these stories literally happened? Are you interested in scientific evidence for the Flood? Can they be *true* even if they didn’t “happen” exactly as told in Genesis? How so?

What do these chapters tell us about God? About humanity? About the relationship between God and humanity?