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# GENESIS

PART II: Genesis 5-19

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# Setting the Scene

In our first look at the book of Genesis we discovered the origins of everything. There we first discovered God, and his extraordinarily powerful word. We found the origins of the universe, our world, and ourselves. We saw the reason for our identity, our role, and our relationships. We discovered why the world now is not the way it was first made—the origins of sin.

As Genesis draws all these together we start to see that nothing can possibly stand in the way of God's plans and purposes. If we want to understand the world we live in, if we want to understand what humanity is like and what our purpose in the world is, if we want to understand why the world is in the mess it is in and – most significantly – if we want to understand why God sent his son Jesus into this world, Genesis has the answers.

As we progress from the early chapters of Genesis toward chapter 11, we come to a turning point. Having laid out for us the origins of the cosmos, the author now turns to the origins of God's people. And all the ingredients of God's character are seen – his generosity, his promises, his mercy, his love, his attention, his holy and righteous justice – all paving the way for Jesus.

Genesis is the story of the star-maker, the promise-giver, the one who can turn darkness to light, can turn chaos to beauty, can turn barrenness to a great nation, and can turn rebellious sinners into those who are righteous in his sight.

Genesis **sets the scene**, for everything.

## The basic narrative structure of Genesis

Genesis 1-11: The Beginnings of the Cosmos

Genesis 12-50: The Beginnings of God's People

    Genesis 12-25: Abraham

    Genesis 25-36: Isaac

    Genesis 27-50: Jacob



## Genesis 5-9

Think of a time you were creating something and it all went wrong, and you gave up, threw it all out, and started over. Maybe you were doing something like baking a cake, or painting a picture, or working on a project for your job, or starting a vegetable garden. When it all went wrong, how did you react? How bad did it have to get before you started afresh?

It's been a while since we were last in Genesis, so let's recap.

- Genesis 1 told us everything that exists, exists because there is a powerful, creative, purposeful, awesome, speaking, generous, relational, creator God. And everything – including humans made in God's image – exists for the honour and glory of Jesus, who is the image of God.
- Genesis 2 told us that humanity is made to be the recipients of God's gracious love and generosity, and made to live for him.
- Genesis 3 told us sin and evil exists because humanity chose to reject life from God, and wanted to decide right and wrong for themselves.
- Genesis 4 told us that sin spreads like a disease, and as it does so does humanity's desperate need for the promised rescuer.

### Read Genesis 6.1-8.19

Genesis 1.31 said, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Compare this with Genesis 6.5-7. What has happened?

Compare the following verses and discuss how these help us see what is happening in the story of Noah and the flood.

	...compare with...	
Genesis 6.11		Genesis 2.15
Genesis 7.18		Genesis 1.2
Genesis 8.13		Genesis 1.9
Genesis 8.14-17		Genesis 1.27-28
Genesis 8.22		Genesis 1.31

What is God seeking to do in these chapters?

What do we learn about the seriousness of sin?

What do we learn about God's concern for the people he has made?

**Read Genesis 8.20-9.28**

How does Noah act as he leaves the ark? Has humankind's heart changed (Genesis 8.21)?

What is God's covenant with humanity? What is the sign of this covenant?

Check out Matthew 26.28. How does the covenant in Genesis 9 foreshadow the covenant of Matthew 26?

**Think it over**

How do judgement and mercy go hand-in-hand in these chapters?

"If God really cared about evil and suffering he would come and do something about it!" Ever heard someone say that before? How might you answer them?

Has your life been 'rebooted' and cleansed from sin by Jesus?

Check out Psalm 103.8-14. After reading Genesis 6-9, do you think this is a good description of God? Does the New Testament back this up?

We don't have to look far to see 'how great the wickedness of the human race has become' and we often see that 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart are only evil all the time'. We know often it is how our hearts are too! How do these chapters of Genesis give us hope?

**Prayer ideas**

Thank God for his concern for his people when they suffer in sin.

Thank God for his promise to have mercy on humanity.

Pray that we would live out our fresh start.

## Genesis 10-11

Would you ever compete on Australian Idol or MasterChef, or any other reality TV show that makes one lucky winner famous? Why do you think people want be on these shows?

### **Read Genesis 10**

How are the people God made going with their task of 'being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth' (remember Genesis 1.28, 9.1)?

### **Read Genesis 11.1-4**

How are the people God made going at their task of 'being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth'?

What reasons are given for their actions?

What do you think might motivate them to act this way?

### **Read Genesis 11.5-26**

How does God respond?

What does God achieve by this?

Here in Genesis chapter 11 people try to bring about peace, comfort, security, and success through great human achievement alone. But God forces them back to their original mission of filling the earth. How does this present to us a better way to contribute to the world we live in?

**Read Acts 2.1-21 & 36-39**

What are God's purposes here? How does this symbolic reversal of Babel achieve God's purposes?

In Genesis 11 the people all spoke the same language and wanted to make a name for themselves. In Acts 2 people of all different languages hear the gospel, and the name of Jesus is made great. How is this possible?

**Think it over**

God's plans are to fill the world with followers of Jesus, as his people spread the news of salvation. How does knowing this change your purpose in life?

Genesis 11 presents two different ways of thinking about our purpose in life. One way is to make a name for ourselves through our own great achievement. The other is to exalt the name of Jesus by living in partnership with God, as his servants, and according to his agenda. What will it look like for your life to be about making a name for God rather than making a name for yourself? Think about the ordinary events you have planned tomorrow, and discuss how the two purposes look different.

Are achievement, technology, and progress good? Or are they bad? Or just neutral? How does the story of Babel affect our attitude toward these things?

**Prayer ideas**

Confess the times when you have lived to make a name for yourself.

Thank God for the Lord Jesus, who dwells in us by his Spirit.

Ask God to help you live to make his name great.

## Genesis 12-14

When is it hard to trust someone?

### **Read Genesis 11.27-32**

Who are Abram and Sarai? What do we learn about them?

### **Read Genesis 12.1-3**

Genesis tells us God loves to make and create. In these verses what does God say he is going to make?

These verses tell the story of the origin of God's people. These verses will shape the rest of the book of Genesis, and indeed the whole history of God's people. The promises of land, people, and blessing trace their way through the entire Old Testament story, ultimately finding fulfilment in Jesus.

Check out Ephesians 2.8-10. How are we 'created' as God's people?

### **Read Genesis 12.4-20**

What does Abram do in response to God's promises?

Why does Abram leave the Promised Land (Genesis 12.10)?

Why does Abram lie about Sarai (Genesis 12.11-13)?

Abram's ancestors (remember Adam and Eve, Cain, the builders of Babel) tended to do things their own way and not trust God to have their best interests at heart. Is Abram different?

### **Read Genesis 13**

What might be significant about the places where Abram and Lot choose to settle (note Genesis 13.12)?

### **Read Genesis 14**

Can you summarise the politics and battles of Genesis 14.1-16?

What makes Melchizedek such an enigmatic character?

Check out Hebrews 7.1-3, 15-17 and 23-28. How does the author of Hebrews use Melchizedek so as to highlight for us the greatness of Jesus?

### **Think it over**

If you are one of God's people, what is your 'origin story'?

Check out Galatians 3.7-9. Where do we fit in God's plans to bless all nations? What does this mean for our actions this week?

What does it look like for us to trust God's promises?

In what areas do you find it hard to trust God's promises?

### **Prayer ideas**

Thank God for sending Jesus to fulfil his promise to rescue his people from sin, death, and judgement. Thank God for the way he keeps his promises.

Pray for each other in your Small Group, as you seek to trust God by living in obedience to him.



## Genesis 15-17

If you were looking for one part of Genesis that perfectly captured the relationship between God and his people, this would be it. At this point in the story of the origins of God's people they are just one family. As you work through this study, take note of how God acts – his generosity, his kindness, his patience, his mercy – and take note of how Abram and his family respond – both the good and the bad.

### Read Genesis 15.1-6

What promise does God reaffirm, and what is Abram's response? Is this similar or different to the way Abram has responded in previous chapters?

What does it mean that Abram "believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness"?

### Read Genesis 15.7-21

There is a lot of ritual here that seems very strange to us. In all this, what does God tell Abram, and what is the main point he is making?

What part does Abram play in this covenant? What part does God play?

### Read Genesis 16

Given what we just read in Genesis 15.4, does this episode come as a surprise?

Way back in Genesis chapter 3 we read about a wife who doubted God's generosity, took matters into her own hands, and gave something to her husband who ignored God's words and went along with it. Given what happened in Genesis 3, does this episode come as a surprise?

How would you evaluate Abram and Sarai here? How would you evaluate Hagar?

What actions does God take in this chapter? What does this show us about his character?

**Read Genesis 17**

What promises does God reaffirm?

God gives Abram and Sarai three ongoing reminders of his promises—what are they?

**Think it over: Read Romans 4.1-5.2**

What is the blessing of being counted by God as righteous?

How was Abraham justified and made righteous?

What does Romans mean when it says that the phrase “counted to him as righteousness” was written also for us? How are we justified and made righteous?

Abraham did plenty of good things, and plenty of bad, but none of them were the basis of his right standing with God. Just like Abraham, we can only be counted righteous by faith. How does this change and shape your relationship with God?

God showed extraordinary kindness and help to Hagar, though she was an outcast who was unloved by everyone. Just like Hagar, God ‘sees us’ in our need (cf. Genesis 16.13). How does this change and shape your view of God?

**Prayer ideas**

Thank God for saving us through faith in Jesus.

Thank God for the way he lovingly invites us to be part of his promises.

Pray for growing joy and trust in God’s gracious promises.

## Genesis 18-19

If God turned up in person at your house, how do you think you would treat him?

### **Read Genesis 18.1-15**

How does Abraham treat his visitors?

What clues are there in these verses about the identity of the visitors?

What do we learn about God from this story?

### **Read Genesis 18.16-33**

What is God's perspective on his relationship with Abraham?

What do you think of Abraham's requests?

What does Abraham learn about God's justice, righteousness, and mercy?

### **Read Genesis 19**

How does Lot treat his visitors?

How do the people of Sodom treat their visitors? How would you evaluate their hospitality? Their treatment of strangers? The use of their power and strength? Their willingness to tolerate abuse?

How does God treat Lot (cf. Genesis 19.19)? Does Lot deserve this treatment?

Check out Luke 17.28-35. What does Jesus want us to learn from what happened to Lot's wife?

### **Think it over**

Make a list of the 4 or 5 main aspects of God's character that shine out in these chapters of Genesis. Which of them do you find most comforting?

Our God is a God of relationships. Here we see God listen, love, make promises, respond, react, relent, offer mercy, and rescue. How does knowing this shape the way you relate to him?

Do you feel you can talk to God openly, being secure in his love? Why, or why not?

Check out 2nd Peter 2.6-9. What does the account of Lot's rescue teach us about Jesus?

### **Prayer ideas**

Thank God for being both just and kind.

Thank God that when he came to visit us he came to die to save sinners.

Pray that we would welcome Jesus into our lives, honouring him as he deserves.