Genesis

Catholic Scripture Study

The first Book of Moses, commonly called Genesis

History of the Early World	Patriarchs	Israel in Egypt	Conquest of Canaan	Judges	United Kingdom	Divided Kingdom Exile	Exile	Return	Maccabean Revolt	Jesus the Messiah	Church

Introduction

Genesis, with its famous opening line "In the beginning," its well-known stories of creation and the Garden of Eden, Noah and the flood, and the great patriarchs of Israel, has been often trivialized and isolated from the rest of the Bible by people who don't understand its purpose or who are convinced that modern science has relegated its stories to myth.

That is unfortunate. For the book of Genesis does not merely tell quaint stories about people who lived at the dawn of time. The roots of all that Christians believe are found here. Read properly, Genesis reveals the essence of the nature of God, of creation and of man. It shows how man fell from grace and God's friendship. It reveals the nature of sin. In it we see the first hints of God's plan of redemption, and the promises He makes that lay out the blueprint for the rest of salvation history. It is also the beginning of a very important family history: that of the family of God.

Genesis is first of five books that form the Pentateuch, otherwise known as the Law of Moses. The version we use dates from the time of Israel's return from Babylonian exile, around the 5th century BC. But Jewish and Christian tradition both attribute authorship or compilation of the original draft to Moses around 1500-1400 BC. Its first 11 chapters deal with the origins of the world and mankind; the rest of the book records the action of God to create the nation of Israel. It ends with the people of Israel living in Egypt, where they sought refuge from a famine in their homeland, Canaan, .   Thus Genesis covers the longest time span of any book in the Bible.

Our study of Genesis is divided into two parts. Part I will include chapters 1-23, beginning at the beginning of everything, of course, and continuing through the life of the patriarch, Abraham, the founding father of Israel. The dramatic story of God's creation of the universe, His design and purpose for everything in it, and His response to the work of an enemy will unfold in these chapters. We will see how God works through human beings-first Noah, then Abraham-to restore to Himself the family that was plunged into chaos as a result of disobedience in the Garden of Eden. In Part II, which covers chapters 24-50, we will follow the development of the human family (that of Abraham) through which God promises to eventually right all that has gone wrong in creation. We will learn about the men whose names we so often hear mentioned in lectionary readings-Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Yet it won't simply be history that we learn. Through the historical details, we will encounter the infinitely tender love of God for human creatures. Observing as we will His relentless initiative to do whatever it takes for men to know and love Him as He originally intended, our study of Genesis will convince us that nothing will impede God's plan for His creation.

 In addition, the Catholic Church has recognized that "God, the inspirer of both [Old and New] Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New." (Dei Verbum, 16). Therefore, our study of Genesis will introduce us to typology. "Types" in the Old Testament are real people, places, or events that prefigure in some way the coming of Christ and the redemption of the world. We will understand Jesus and the gospel better because of our study of Genesis. We will also see how the Church has taken seriously every word of truth in this book, and, by her teaching and her liturgical life, has enabled us to remain connected to the purposes of God for His creation. Get ready to be amazed.