

Learn to Read Genesis Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 1



All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The New King James Version*.
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SESSION 1

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Introduction

Welcome!

Welcome to the “Learn to Read Genesis Effectively” Distance Learning Course.

We trust you found the “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” course helpful and enjoyable. We shall be using the same study methods in this course.

This course has been designed to allow you to choose the depth of your study yourself depending on your current knowledge of the Bible and the time you have available for study.

As in the first course we shall be using *The New King James Version* of the Bible except where otherwise stated.

A basic assumption of this course

Before we describe the layout of the course let’s just repeat the underlying assumption of the course, which is that **the Bible is the wholly inspired Word of God**. This means that God caused the Bible to be written and EVERY word of it is important. This is the position taken by the Lord Jesus Christ:

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4 v 4

and we believe that it is only with this same attitude that we can learn to read the Bible effectively.

Course structure

This course has various features which you can use to help you study at the level you require:

- **Basic study notes** will lead you through a study of Genesis and help you to understand the book quickly, but you may miss out on some fascinating insights.
- **Question sheets** are included with sessions 6 and 12. These questions are intended to help you think about what you have learned.
- **Optional assignments** are included in the *basic study notes* at the end of each session to help you look a little more closely at a particular subject. Please feel free to send your conclusions to your tutor who will be willing to discuss them with you.
- **Additional Notes** and **Cross-references** are in separate booklets which you should have received with this session.

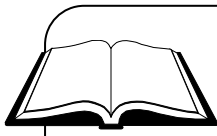
Additional Notes are further notes on issues arising from the *basic study notes*. They are referred to at the appropriate point in the *basic study notes*.

Cross-references are taken from *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge**. These references will allow you to do your own in-depth study of a particular verse or of a whole chapter if you so wish.

You can discuss your findings with your tutor by post or telephone.

*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
1982 published by Hendrickson
ISBN 0-917006-22-4

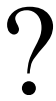
Throughout the course we shall use the following symbols:



Recommended readings to obtain the full benefit from the course and help you to become more familiar with the Bible



Major conclusions from the section under study



Questions to think about for a few minutes before moving on, or as starting points for further study

X-Refs -
Genesis
1 v 1



Cross-references which we suggest you look at. These are taken from *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. If you have a Bible with other cross-references, look up those references as well

Echoes -
Genesis
1 v 1



References where “Echoes” from the verse(s) mentioned may be found. Echoes are links between Bible verses not necessarily indicated by marginal cross-references. If you follow up these “echoes” it will help you understand what follows



Information from *Young’s* and *Strong’s Concordances*. Part of the entry for the particular word will be found at the end of the session, on the page number indicated

Preparation and study methods

Remember to allow yourself time. Use a good translation (see the first course, session 9) and ask yourself questions about what you read. When you don’t understand something, be patient, look up cross-references, use concordances, lexicons and other translations. Allow the Bible to interpret itself.

An overview of Genesis

The book of Genesis is about beginnings, the beginnings of life on earth as we know it. It tells us of people, of sin and death and suffering, of languages and nations, of faith, of God's promises to men and women, and particularly of the nation of Israel. One of the main themes is the beginning and development of two ways of life – God's way and mankind's way. Because of this it is essential reading for everyone today.

Genesis is an account (from God's point of view) of the important incidents of the first two thousand years of human history. It includes:

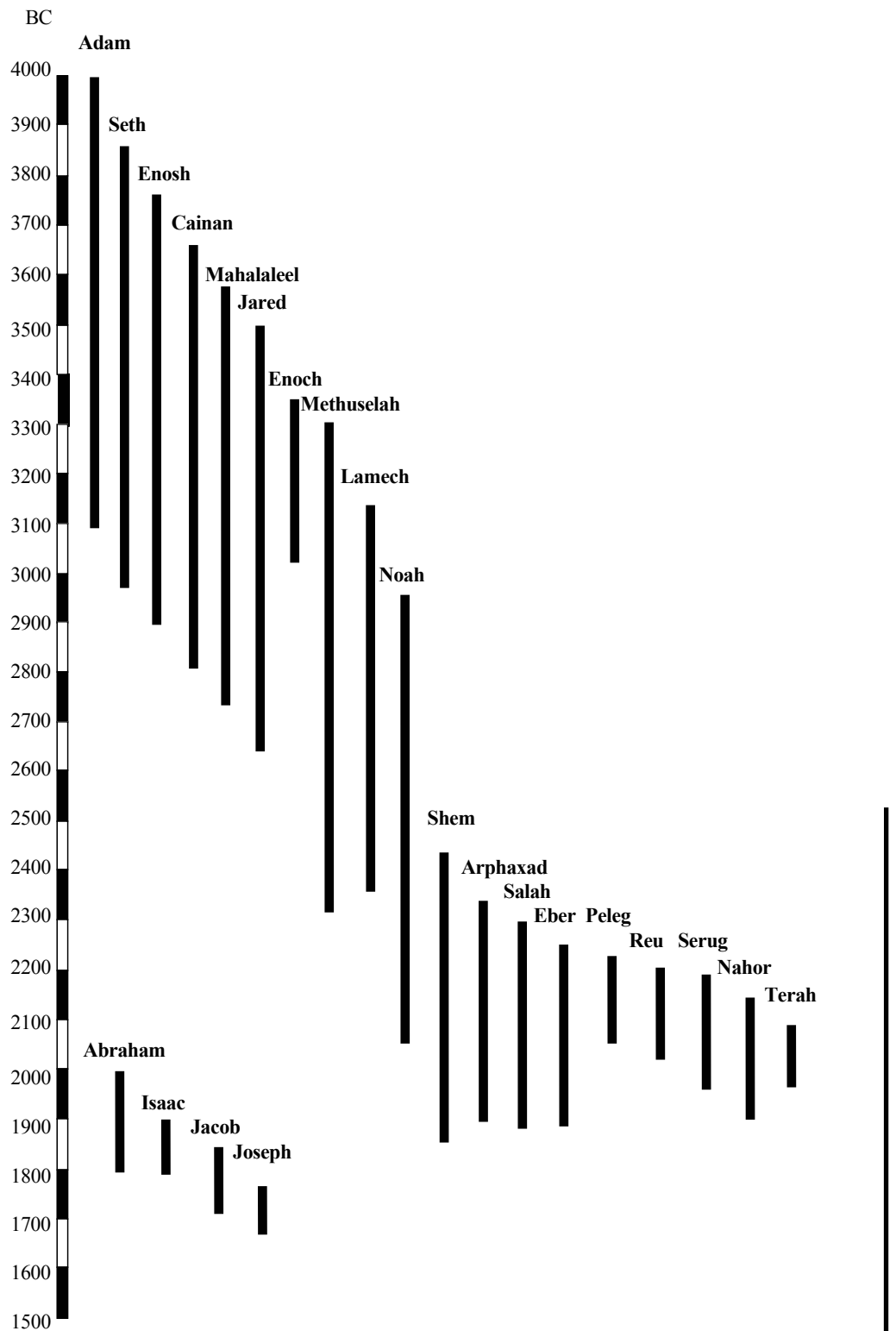
- the creation story
- the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the garden of Eden
- the subsequent decline of mankind into wickedness stopped only by the destruction of civilisation by the flood
- the call of Abram and how he went to the promised land
- the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness, and how Lot (Abram's nephew) and his daughters were saved
- the many difficulties Abram's grandson, Jacob experienced and the activities of his twelve sons
- the way in which Jacob and his whole family ended up in Egypt

In virtually every incident we can see a contrast between God's ways and those of men and women – then, and now!

The next book of the Bible, Exodus, explains how God rescued Jacob's descendants from Egypt.

Genesis time line

This time line will help you appreciate the time periods involved in the book of Genesis .



Note: Dates are approximate. Dates from different authorities vary.

Genesis 1 – Creation



Read all of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 v 1 to 3 before you start this section to get an overview, and then read ch 1 v 1 to 2 again if you like

Before the first day

1 v 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(1 v 1 indicates that the quote comes from Genesis chapter 1, verse 1)

The very first words of the Bible tell us that God was there at the beginning of things. In this He is unique and way beyond our experience and imagination. Other parts of the Bible tell us just how far superior to us God is. Does this mean that He is remote from us in every way?

Echoes -
Genesis
1 v 1 & 2

Read Psalm 104 and Isaiah 40 and note the common themes

If you have a Bible with cross-references, you can also look up the cross-references in these verses and see where they lead you.



What can we conclude from these chapters of Scripture?

We have listed two points below which we think you will agree with:



- God is infinitely superior to us
- God cannot be “defined” by beings with our limited understanding

We hope you agree that the implication of these points is that we should show considerable reverence for God and for His message to us. Hopefully you will also have noted that God is *not* far from mankind, despite all this.

That first verse of the Bible goes on to tell us about the creation of heaven and earth.



- Are we told **when** the beginning was?
- Are we told **how** God made everything?



- God in His wisdom tells us He created the earth but not *how*.
- He makes it an issue of faith, not intelligence!

1 v 2 The earth was without form, and void...



Look at the references to “without form”
and “void” in *Young’s Concordance*
(reproduced on page 16)

These words clearly indicate that the earth at that stage was totally barren and empty.

It does not give us any more details.

The Bible does not comment on:

1. How the earth came to be in this barren state
2. How long it was in this state
3. When all this happened

The Bible is tantalisingly silent on all of the issues which scientists talk about.

The second verse then tells us what happened to this barren earth:

1 v 2 And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.



What is meant by “spirit”?

There may be many words and phrases in the Bible which we do not fully understand. When we read them, we have only an indistinct idea of what they mean. However this is not just a problem when reading the Bible; it applies to other things we read as well. We usually get around this problem by skipping words we don't understand and hoping we'll get the "gist" of it from the rest of the sentence. It's generally not worth getting a dictionary out! When we are reading the Bible however it is **always** worth looking things up. It is part of our respect and reverence for God. So let's look up the word "spirit" in *Young's Concordance*:



Look at the references to "spirit" in the *Young's Concordance* entries on page 16

Echo -
Genesis
1 v 2

Seeing that spirit can be translated "wind", there may be an "echo" in John chapter 3, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus:



Read John 3 v 1 to 8

In John chapter 3, Jesus is comparing "the spirit" with the wind: it is what **motivates** and **moves** people who are "born of the spirit". You see the results, but you don't see what drives them, just as you can't see the wind. This is how it was at creation. We have a picture in Genesis of God's limitless power acting to achieve creation.

In summary it appears that:



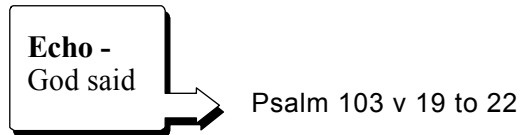
- The word "spirit" is used in Genesis 1 to indicate God's "power" or "motivating force"
- In other parts of the Bible the word is also used in this sense of "motivation" or "drive", causing people to do things or make things happen
- God's motivating power was "hovering" ready to start its work
- Creation did not happen by chance – God's power was in action

The days of creation

The first six days

1 v 3 Then God said ...

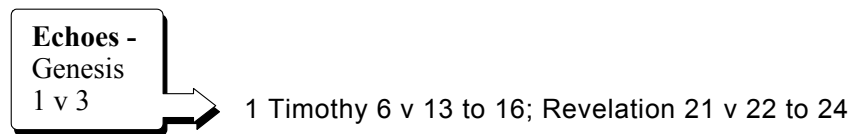
We could ask “who was God speaking to?”



It seems therefore that God used the angels to do His work of creation. If you wish to look more into the way the angels are involved in God’s work, have a look at “The angels as God’s agents” on page 4 of the *Additional Notes* booklet.

1 v 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

The Bible does not say that light was “made” at creation. In fact light has always been wherever God is:



The creation story seems to be written from the point of view of someone standing on the earth at the time. It would then appear that the thickness of the cloud cover was reduced. This would enable the sun’s light to be seen, resulting in the start of the day and night cycle, as verses 4 and 5 explain.

1 v 5 So the evening and the morning were the first day.

There has been much discussion about how long these days of creation were. We look at some of the arguments on page 8 of the *Additional Notes* booklet.

The *New International Version* makes verses 6 to 8 clearer for us by saying that on the second day, God separated the water into that below and that above the “sky”.

On the third day (verses 9 to 13) the sea and land were separated and plant life appeared.

If we read verses 11 and 12 carefully we can see something else. We are told that each plant and tree produced seed for the next generation “according to its kind”. So an apple tree will always produce apples to make more apple trees. This is a universal law that applies to animals as well as plants. God has built this stability into His creation.

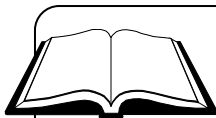
On the fourth day (verses 14 to 19) the sun, moon and stars appeared. If the idea about the clouds mentioned above is correct, then it seems probable that the cloud cover now broke for the first time revealing the sun and moon. The origin of the light which appeared on the first day could now be clearly seen.

1 v 16 He made the stars also.

The mind boggles at this understatement. It is as though someone is describing how he made a bicycle, and then in passing says “Oh, I made a Jumbo Jet aeroplane as well!!” This type of understatement occurs quite often in the Bible and is evidence that the Bible was not written by man. In the Bible, highly dramatic events are often only mentioned in passing. On the other hand, we have the characters of individuals described in much more detail – their bad points as well as their good (see later in the course!). The Bible does this, we believe, because its purpose is to bring the message of the gospel to men and women, not to be a history book or thriller. Thus, we have many examples in the Bible of a different sort of “echo”, the “echo” of God’s inspiration. It is as if the Bible bears the fingerprints of God.

On the fifth day (verses 20 to 23) the flying and aquatic animals were created and commanded to multiply and fill their respective elements. Again there is a mention of the stability in creation – this time in the animals. They all reproduce “according to their kind”.

On the sixth day (verses 24 to 31), the land animals were created, again each one reproducing according to its kind, and then we come to the creation of man:



Read Genesis 1 v 26 to 31

1 v 26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ... ”

At first reading this verse may seem a little odd. You might ask “Why is God referred to as singular all through the chapter except here where God seems to be plural ‘Let **us** make man’”? A discussion of this is beyond the scope of these basic study notes – have a look at page 6 of the *Additional Notes* for more details. A simple explanation is that it is the angels who are speaking.

1 v 26 “ ... let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Men and women were given ascendancy over the rest of creation. But this involves responsibility and we have not proved to be very responsible rulers of the planet we have been given. Most of us are well aware of what we are doing to our world.

We see in v 28 that God repeated to mankind the command that He had already given to multiply and fill the earth.

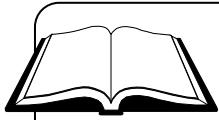
1 v 29 And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.”

Mankind's food was to be fruit and vegetables. A similar statement is repeated for the animals in verse 30.

1 v 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The creation was complete and God was satisfied with the work.

The seventh day



Read Genesis 2 v 1 to 3

2 v 3 *Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ...*



What does “sanctify” mean?



Look at the references to “sanctify”
in the *Young’s Concordance* entries
on page 16

- “Sanctify” means “to separate” or “to set apart”
- God intended the seventh day to be different from other days

X-Ref -
Genesis
2 v 3



Isaiah 58 v 13



Read Isaiah 58



- The children of Israel were to use their day of rest as an opportunity to think about God as opposed to working or enjoying themselves selfishly

There are, of course, a number of different ideas about our responsibility towards sabbath observance today. No-one will deny, however, that at least one day of rest from work per week is a good thing, and believers will want to spend that time to the glory of God. One of the ways we can do this of course, is to read the Bible!

Summary of the days of creation

Before the first day	In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. (Genesis 1 v 1 and 2)	The earth was barren and empty. We are not told how it became like that. We are not told how long it continued in that state.
First day	And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light ... and God divided the light from the darkness. (v 2 to 4)	The thick cloud cover probably reduced to enable the sun’s light to be seen on the earth resulting in the start of the day and night cycle.
Second day	So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.” (v 7 and 8 NIV)	The water in the clouds separated from the water in the sea with the sky between them.
Third day	Then God said, “Let the waters ... be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear” ... “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed ... and the fruit tree ... according to its kind ... ” (v 9 to 11)	Sea and land were separated, then the plants and trees appeared.
Fourth day	Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;” (v 14)	It seems probable that the cloud cover broke for the first time revealing the sun and moon. The origin of the light which appeared the first day could now be clearly seen.
Fifth day	Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth ... ” (v 20)	Birds and aquatic life were created.

Sixth day	Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature ... cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth ...” So God created man in His own image ... male and female He created them. (v 24 and 27)	Land animals were created. Man and woman were created
Seventh day	God ... rested on the seventh day ... (Genesis 2 v 2)	God intended the seventh day to be different from other days

Optional assignment 1

Human beings: a special creation

Have another look at Genesis 1 v 26 and 27. There is a cross-reference from v 26 to Psalm 8 v 6 to 8. Read Psalm 8 and if you have references, you will possibly see a reference to Hebrews 2 v 8. See what you can learn from Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 in relation to Genesis 1 v 26 and 27.

Genesis 1 in the rest of the Bible

If you have a Bible with marginal references, look at some of the references in Genesis 1 and see where they lead you. Write down what you learn from these references.

If you don't have a reference Bible, look at some of these references:

Genesis 1

v 1 Psalm 33 v 6; 136 v 5
 Isaiah 42 v 5; 45 v 18
 John 1 v 1 to 3
 Acts 14 v 15; 17 v 24
 Hebrews 11 v 3

v 3 2 Corinthians 4 v 6

v 6 Psalm 136 v 5
 Jeremiah 10 v 12; 51 v 15

v 7 Proverbs 8 v 27 to 29

v 9 Psalm 136 v 6
 Jeremiah 5 v 22

v 14 Ezekiel 32 v 7 and 8
 Matthew 24 v 29
 Luke 21 v 25
 Psalm 104 v 19

v 16 Deuteronomy 4 v 19
 Psalm 136 v 7 to 9

v 18 Jeremiah 31 v 35

v 21 Psalm 104 v 25 and 26

v 22 Genesis 8 v 17; 9 v 1

v 26 1 Corinthians 11 v 7
 James 3 v 7
 Psalm 8 v 6 to 8

Genesis 1

v 27 Genesis 2 v 18, 21 to 23; 5 v 2
 Matthew 19 v 4
 Mark 10 v 6

v 28 Genesis 9 v 1 and 7

v 29 Genesis 9 v 3
 Psalm 104 v 14 and 15
 145 v 15 and 16

v 30 Psalm 147 v 9

v 31 Ecclesiastes 7 v 29
 1 Timothy 4 v 4

Young's Concordance entries

Part entries are given to help in your study.

FORM, without –

A ruin, vacancy, tohu

- Gen. 1. 2 And the earth was without form, and
Jer. 4. 23 And, lo, (it was) without form and void

TOHU

confusion 3
empty place 1
nothing 1
nought 1
thing of nought 1
vanity 4
waste 1
wilderness 2
vain 4
without form 2.

VOID, (place, to be or make) –

2. Emptiness, bohu

- Gen. 1. 2 And the earth was without form, and void
Jer. 4. 23 I beheld the earth ... without form and vo.

BOHU

emptiness 1
void 2.

SPIRIT –

2. Spirit, wind, ruach

- Gen. 1. 2 the spirit of God moved upon the face of
6. 3 My spirit shall not always strive with m.
41. 8 his spirit was troubled; and he sent and
41. 38 Can we find .. a man in whom the spirit of
45. 27 the spirit of Jacob their father revived
Exod. 6. 9 they hearkened not .. for anguish of spirit
28. 3 whom I have filled with the spirit of wis.
31. 3 I have filled him with the spirit of God
35. 21 every one whom his spirit made willing
35. 31 he hath filled him with the spirit of God
Num. 5. 14 the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and

(+ many more references)

SANCTIFY (self) – to

1. To separate, set apart, qadesh

- Gen. 2. 3 God blessed the seventh day, and sancti
Exod 13. 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, what
19. 10 sanctify them today and tomorrow, and
19. 14 sanctified the people; and they washed th.
19. 23 saying, Set bounds .. and sanctify it

(+ many more references)