In the beginning

Start here for God’s big explanation

Studies in Genesis

2011

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
In the Beginning
Studies in Genesis

These studies are meant to help us read and understand better the book of Genesis.

It is difficult to hear Genesis speak to us in its own right because there are many other voices shouting at us or at Genesis, demanding to be heard, demanding to answer questions that are not the concern of Genesis, and wanting to set their own agendas for our reading of the book.

Some of these voices are our own of course. Genesis has been caught up in debates about the origins of the universe and we want to have a clear idea what views we should have in the debate. However the debates about science and origins can hijack our reading of Genesis so that the book only becomes a source of ammunition in the debate.

Genesis was written in a different world to ours, in a different language and in a context where there were different views about origins—different to ours and different to Genesis. It will help to have some idea of the world, culture and language of Genesis if we are to understand it.

Before we come to our own questions and debates we should first try to understand Genesis in its own terms. Only then can we see what conflicts, questions and challenges it poses to us.

We read Genesis as the Word of God. That is why, as we understand it better, we first listen to how it challenges us. Genesis is not in the dock under our cross-examination. We are always under the searching gaze of God's word. This book of Genesis will certainly challenge us who live in a society that has systematically continued to break own the distinctions and boundaries we see in Genesis.

This is not to say that we will not have questions of our own. Nor that we will not want to pose questions of the text that we have been asked .

The aim of these studies is to understand what Genesis says. And to allow God's Spirit to speak to us as we take time to read and listen to his word.

Readings and Studies each week

Each week we suggest a passage from Genesis, a passage from Hebrews (which we will read in parallel to Genesis) and some Supplementary Readings which are connected to the Genesis text. You are urged to read them all!

Each week there are also questions for thought and talk.
13. God Intended it for Good  Genesis 45  
Week ending 7 August

Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:
- Genesis 37.2—50.26  
- Hebrews 13

Connected Readings this week:
- Acts 7.1-16  
- Psalm 91  

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. “God meant it for good” (Gen 50.20). How does the Joseph story encourage you (see also Rom 8.26-30).
3. Compare the end of Genesis to the beginning. How much progress has God made in his purposes for his creation, and what are the forces for and against his purposes?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

1. In the Beginning: Genesis 1.1 - 2.3  
Week ending 8 May

Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:
- Genesis 1.1 — 2.3  
- Hebrews 1

Connected Readings this week:
- Psalm 136.1-9  
- Hebrews 1.1-14  
- John 1.1-18

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What are the characteristics and roles of the humans? How does the scripture develop these ideas?
3. What is the Big Idea of chapter 1? What Psalms repeat this theme?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

2. God’s Day Off Genesis 1.26 - 2.3  
Week ending 15 May

Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:
- Genesis 1.26 — 2.3  
- Hebrews 2

Connected Readings this week:
- Psalm 95  
- Hebrews 4.1-13  
- Mark 2.23-27

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What is God doing now he is resting?
3. In what ways are humans able to share in God’s rest?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?
The Eleven Headings of Genesis
(Toledot - generations, descendants, stories of…)

2.4: The heavens and the earth **
- 5.1: Adam
- 6.9: Noah **
- 10.1: Noah’s sons
- 11.10: Shem

11.27: Terah (ie the story of Abraham) **
- 25.12: Abraham’s son Ishmael

25.19: Abraham’s son Isaac (ie the story of Jacob)
- 36.1: Esau
- 36.9: Esau

37.2: Jacob (ie the story of Joseph and his brothers)

** Three beginnings

Following the Stories in Genesis 1-11

1. The Introduction/Overview: about the Heavens and the Earth 1.1 - 2.3
2. The First Story: About Humans 2.4 - 4.26
   Act 1 God’s Garden 2.4 - 3.24
   Scene 1. The Two Trees 2.4-17
   Scene 2. The Two People 2.18-25
   Scene 3. The Three Voices 3.1-7 (The first theological discussion group)
   Scene 4. The Voice of the Lord 3.8-24
   Act 2. The Human’s Soil 4.1-26
   Scene 1. Cain and Abel 4.1-26

3. The Story of Adam’s Line 5.1 - 6.8
4. Noah’s Story 6.9 - 9.29
5. The City and the Tower 11.1-9

The Seven Days of Genesis 1.1- 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Formless, empty, darkness, water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Light (day &amp; night)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Water and sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Land and vegetation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>God rests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. The Laughing Believers Genesis 16-21
   Week ending 10 July

GENESIS and HEBREWS Readings this week:
   ☐ Genesis 16.1 — 21.34 ☐ Hebrews 9

CONNECTED Readings this week:
   ☐ Romans 4.1-25 ☐ Psalm 32 ☐ Luke 1.57-66

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What was at stake in Abraham having a child by Hagar? What things do we do that are like this?
3. Why was the birth of Isaac so delayed and strung out? What lessons for us are in this?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

10. Trusting the Provider: Genesis 22
    Week ending 17 July

GENESIS and HEBREWS Readings this week:
   ☐ Genesis 22.1 — 25.18 ☐ Hebrews 10

CONNECTED Readings this week:
   ☐ 1 Corinthians 10.1-13 ☐ Psalm 127 ☐ John 19.16b-22

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. How does this story help us understand how God fulfils the promises to Abraham?
3. In what ways is this story an example to us? In what ways is it not?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

3. The Helper Gen 2.4-25
   Week ending 22 May

GENESIS and HEBREWS Readings this week:
   ☐ Genesis 2.4-25 ☐ Hebrews 3

CONNECTED Readings this week:
   ☐ Psalm 8 ☐ Revelation 22.1-5 ☐ Matthew 19.1-12

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. Notice what is made “from the ground”. What difference would it have made if the woman was made “from the ground” too? What is she meant to help with?
3. Why is the joining of the man and woman in one flesh important?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

4. Voices in the Garden Genesis 3
   Week ending 29 May

GENESIS and HEBREWS Readings this week:
   ☐ Genesis 3.1-24 ☐ Hebrews 4

CONNECTED Readings this week:

For Thought and Talk
1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. Awareness of being naked is the immediate effect of eating the fruit, but death was promised. What is the relationship between these three, and why was death connected with that tree?
3. Why did God protect the tree of life?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?
5. Two Brothers Genesis 4

**Week ending 5 June**

**Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:**

- Genesis 4.1-26
- Hebrews 5

**Connected Readings this week:**

- 1 John 3.1-18
- Psalm 116
- Matthew 5.21-26

**For Thought and Talk**

1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What is the meaning of verse 7?
3. What are the different aspects of Cain’s punishment? Why was he not put to death?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

6. A New Beginning? After the Flood

**Genesis 6.1 - 9.29**

**Week ending 19 June**

**Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:**

- Genesis 5.1—10.32
- Hebrews 6

**Connected Readings this week:**

- Hebrews 11.1-7
- Psalm 124
- Matthew 24.36-41

**For Thought and Talk**

1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. The flood looks like a return to the time before Day 3 of creation. Why did God resort to this, and why did he decide not to do it again?
3. How is the new beginning different from Gen 1 & 2? How do later covenants resemble this one?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

7. Babel Genesis 11

**Week ending 26 June**

**Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:**

- Genesis 11.1-26
- Hebrews 7

**Connected Readings this week:**

- Acts 2.5-12
- Psalm 2
- John 10.14-18

**For Thought and Talk**

1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What was objectionable to what the people did? To what extent does the modern city succeed where they failed?
3. Was the confusion of languages a blessing or a punishment? To what extent has the internet overcome some of this confusion?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?

8. A Third Beginning Genesis 12-15

**Week ending 3 July**

**Genesis and Hebrews Readings this week:**

- Genesis 11.27—15.21
- Hebrews 8

**Connected Readings this week:**

- Galatians 3.1-14
- Psalm 105.1-15
- John 8.31-59

**For Thought and Talk**

1. What in the New Testament could be a sequel, fulfilment or allusion to this passage?
2. What are the terms of the promises to Abraham? What were the main stages in their fulfilment? How does Galatians apply them to us?
3. In what ways is Abraham a model believer? How does his example help us?
4. What modern idea, belief, practice, or value is challenged by this passage?