

Introduction

Name of the Book

- Genesis comes from the Greek word meaning "origin" or "beginning"
- The Hebrew name for the book is תְּשַׁאֲבֵת (Berasheet) which means "In the beginning"
 - Pentateuch names come from the first word of the Book in Hebrew:
 - Exodus – Shemot – These are the names
 - Leviticus – Wayiqra – “And He called”
 - Numbers – Bemidbar – “In the desert”
 - Deuteronomy – Devarim – “These are the words”

Usage of the Book

Early Church

- Early Christians used to teach the catechumens starting with the Book of Genesis
 - They didn't have a New Testament that was written down yet. Some places may have had a copy of one or two epistles, maybe a gospel. But the Gospel came in the form of Good News.
 - Most of the converts were Jews so the Christians would start by explaining to them how Christ fits into what they already know
 - Many other catechumens came from pagan parents. Graeco-Roman pagan culture in those days dealt with gods as creators (Zeus, Poseidon, etc), origins of the universe, etc.
 - Genesis is all about fundamental truths:
 - Who is God?
 - What is He like?
 - God's love for man
 - Where did sin come from?
 - What is the problem that Christ came to solve?
 - etc.

Interpretation of Genesis

- Literally or Symbolically?
 - Pagan converts to Christianity formed the heresy that Genesis should be understood only symbolically in order to reconcile in their mind the Christian ideas that "God is good" and "God created the world and it was good" with their pagan ideas that "the world is evil" - so if God is good, how could He create a world that is evil? They concluded that Genesis describes God creating something - but it is not the physical world. Genesis is symbolic.
 - The Fathers of the Church combatted such heresy by reiterating that the world is not inherently evil and that Genesis' creation account should be understood literally. "God created x and it was good" is found in several places in Genesis 1. And God surveys all of His creation at the end and sees that it is "VERY" good.
 - Why did the Fathers combat this heresy so strongly?
 - Why would God make something if it is evil?
 - God made us. If we are inherently evil, then we cannot be saved. Repentance is futile. The Cross was futile.
 - Incarnation: God became man. If man (and matter) are inherently evil, then God would not be able to become man. No Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Salvation. And our faith is futile and we are still dead in our sins.
 - Literal does not mean to take every word literally:
 - God did not create the world in six 24-hour periods and then rest for 24-hours
 - Genesis is not a science textbook about HOW God created the world, but rather it is meant to convey THAT God created the world
 - Many of the challenges in the early days were by taking Genesis too symbolically. Many of the challenges today are by taking Genesis too literally.
 - It is a balanced understanding
- Science or Faith?
 - There is no conflict between scientific fact and Orthodox faith
 - Science and Religion being enemies is a Western ideology
 - The Roman Catholic Church fought against scientists for a very long time, and even until today. The Catholic Church actively opposed science and tried to suppress scientific discoveries
 - Article from 2008 where the Catholic Church "permitted believing in life on other planets"
 - The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, left science to itself and only interfered in matters of dogma
 - We encourage Science, the Scientific Method, Experimentation for Validation of Hypotheses, etc.
 - God's Revelation to Mankind happens in two ways:
 - Scripture and Tradition
 - Through human interpretation, we arrive at theology where the main goal is to understand the spiritual reality
 - Nature
 - Through human interpretation, we arrive at science where the main goal is to understand the physical reality

Structure of the Book

Four Events + Four People

- Four events
 - Creation
 - Fall
 - Flood
 - Nations
- Four people
 - Abraham
 - Isaac
 - Jacob
 - Joseph

Chapters

- Chapter 1-11: Prehistory
 - Creation
 - Adam & Eve
 - Noah
 - Babel
- Chapter 12-36: Patriarchs
 - Abraham
 - Isaac
 - Jacob
- Chapter 37-50: Joseph

Authorship of Genesis

Jewish Tradition - Moses Authorship

Old Testament References to Moses' Authorship

Flavius Josephus

Christian Tradition - Moses Authorship

Christ References to Moses' Authorship

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Logical Support for Moses' Authorship

- Christ attributed Moses' writings to Moses
- Moses is present in four of the five books of the Pentateuch
- Moses was educated and knew how to write (being raised in Pharaoh's court)
- There are places in the text where God instructs Moses to write things down
- Authorship does not necessarily mean that he wrote it by hand with a pen
- There is no reason to doubt Moses' authorship

Patristic References to Moses' Authorship

- **St. Irenaeus of Lyons:**
 - "The writings of Moses are the words of Christ. Christ, Himself, declares to the Jews 'For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?' (John 5:46-47) He thus indicates in the clearest manner that the writings of Moses are Christ's words." (Against Heresies Book IV, Chapter II)
- **St. Basil the Great:**
 - "Now, Moses is the author of this narrative, that Moses who while still a child at the breast was acknowledged to be 'acceptable to God; he, who, banished by those to whom he had been a benefactor, gladly left the uproar of the Egyptians and went to Ethiopia and, spending there all his time apart from others, devoted himself for forty entire years to the contemplation of creation. He, who, having already reached the age of eighty years, saw God as far as it is possible for man to see Him, or rather, as it has not been granted to anyone else according to the very testimony of God: 'if there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream. But it is not so with my servant Moses, who is the most faithful in all my house: For I speak to him mouth to mouth: and plainly, and not by riddles.'" (Homily 1 on the Hexaemeron)
- **St. John Chrysostom:**
 - "When Moses, remember, in the beginning took on the instruction of the human race, he taught his **listeners** the elements... that under the guidance of the Spirit he was **speaking** in a manner appropriate to his **hearers** as he outlined everything" (Homily 2 on Genesis)
 - "Since mankind was yet untutored and could not understand more elaborate matters, the Holy Spirit accordingly explained everything to us by **moving the author's tongue** in such a way to take account of the limitations of the **listeners**... this blessed author **spoke** this way out of consideration for the way human

beings speak... ..now we are in the position to learn from the Holy Spirit through the **tongue** of this blessed author what things were created on the first day..." (Homily 3 on Genesis)

Modern Scholarship

Documentary Hypothesis

- Four different authors to the Pentateuch
 - Yhwst author (who uses the name YHWH)
 - Elohist author (who uses the name Elohim)
 - Priestly author (who wrote sections of the Pentateuch concerned with worship and sacrifice)
 - Deuteronomist author (who wrote Deuteronomy)
- The four sources were written independently and eventually came together to form the Pentateuch
- Evidenced by:
 - Two different names are used for God (Elohim, YHWH)
 - Different styles of writing throughout the Pentateuch
 - Quotes like "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3) - doesn't seem like something Moses would write
 - Literary style and vocabulary changes throughout the text
 - Duplicated stories (e.g. Genesis 1 and 2)

Tablet Theory of Genesis

- Portions of Genesis were originally written on clay tablets by men who personally witnessed the events described.
- The tablets were compiled by Moses
- Separation based on "This is the account":
 - This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.... (Gen. 2:4a)
 - This is the written account of Adam's line.... (Gen. 5:1a)
 - This is the account of Noah. (Gen. 6:9a)
 - This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood. (Gen. 10:1)
 - This is the account of Shem. (Gen. 11:10a)
 - This is the account of Terah. (Gen. 11:27a)
 - This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. (Gen. 25:12)
 - This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. (Gen. 25:19a)
 - This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom). (Gen. 36:1)
 - This is the account of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. (Gen. 36:9)

- This is the account of Jacob. (Gen. 37:2a)
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