

**From Promise to Glory**  
An Overview of the Bible

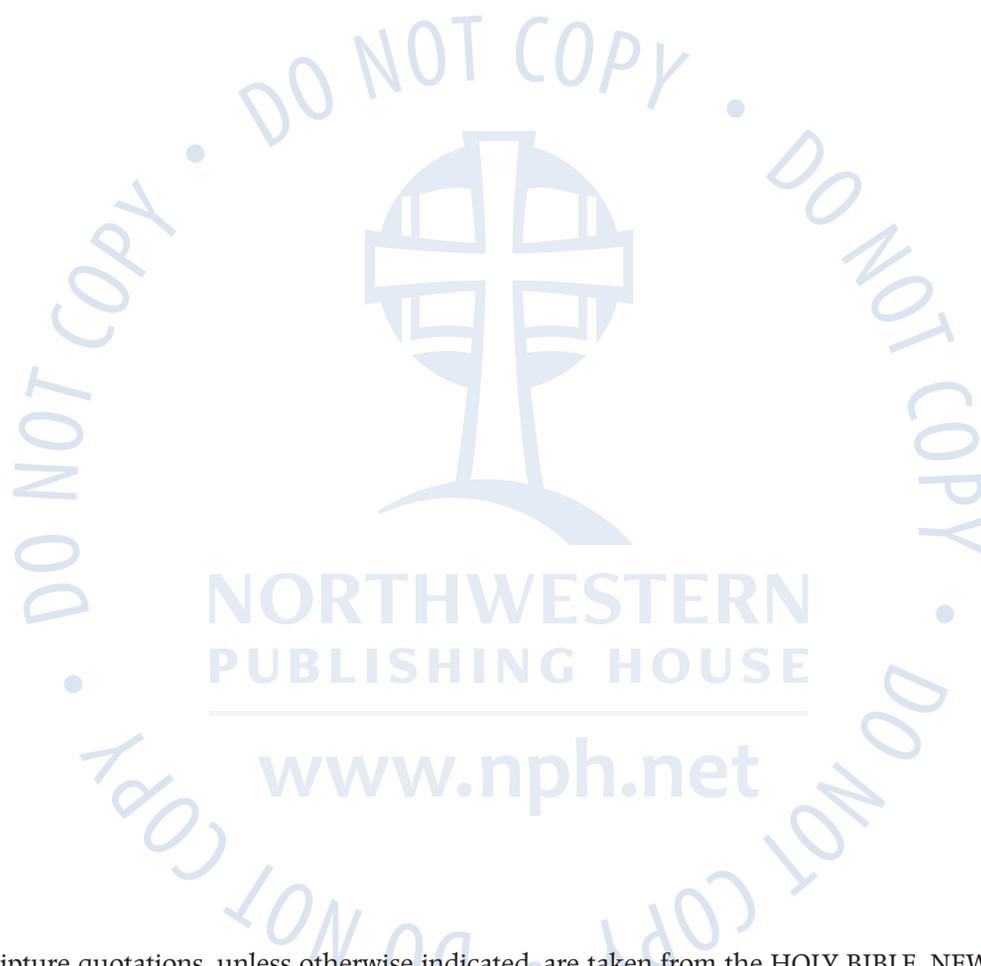
**Old Testament Student Lessons**

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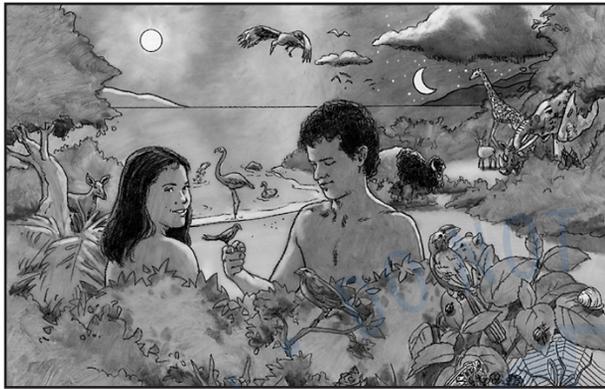
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# Lesson 1—From Creation to the Tower of Babel— Genesis 1–11



In the beginning—that's where the Bible starts. In the beginning God created us and everything on this earth and in the vast universe around us.

In the beginning God created a formless mass. Over six days he gave shape to this raw form, giving it order and complexity.

On the first day God created light. On the second day he created the expanse above the world we call the sky. On the third day he made dry land, creating oceans and continents. Then he created plants of color and delicacy—from the smallest violet to the most massive redwood.

On the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars, setting them in motion, dividing days, months, and seasons.

On the fifth day he made the birds that live in the sky and the fish that live in lakes and oceans.

On the sixth day he made animals—insects, wild animals like lions, and domestic animals like sheep.

Finally, he created a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. He told them to take care of the earth and rule over it. On the seventh day God admired what he had done. It was all very good.

God created Adam and Eve in his own image; they were perfect and holy. He gave them one command by which they could show their love for him. They could eat from all the trees of the garden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate from that tree, they would die.

The history of our perfect world was brief. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God and eat from the forbidden tree. They listened to Satan and ate, and that one act created a barrier of sin, anger, and hostility between human beings and God.

Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, but God found them—not to destroy them, but to give them a promise. God promised Adam and Eve that

someday a man would be born who would defeat Satan's evil.

Yet God placed a curse on this world. The ground would be cursed with thorns and thistles, and men and women would die. For the time being, life would be hard and heartbreaking. But that would make Adam and Eve, and all people to come after them, yearn for a better place and time when everything would be perfect again.

We'll have to move quickly now if we're going to make it through the Bible. I wanted to tell these stories in more detail because nothing in the Bible will make sense if we don't know about the creation, and the fall, and the promise. Only then will God's promise to send a Savior make sense.

Adam and Eve initially had two children, Cain and Abel. Both offered sacrifices to God. Cain offered some grain; Abel offered some animals. On the surface both sacrifices seemed good. But God accepted only Abel's sacrifice. Why?

You see, Abel believed God's promise of a Savior. He gave something to God in gratitude. But with Cain's sacrifice, there was no faith and, therefore, no gratitude.

Because he was jealous of Abel, Cain killed him. It's a story we'll hear again and again. Friction between those who believe God's promise and those who don't is an underlying theme of Bible history.

Abel had chosen the path that leads to eternal life through God's promise. Cain had chosen the path that leads to eternal death.

In the years that followed, most people lost sight of God's promises. So God sent a flood to destroy the world. It was a big flood, a very big flood. Rains covered the whole world and destroyed every living thing.

To preserve his promise, though, God chose one man and his family and told them to build a ship. When the ship was finished, God sent him passengers—animals of every kind. When the waters finally disappeared, the world had a fresh start. God gave the people a simple command: Spread out and fill the world.

But, instead, they built a city with a tower as a monument to what people could accomplish. God put a stop to this. He confused people's languages so they couldn't work together. Their tower came to be called the Tower of Babel, or confusion.

Then he sent them away in groups. From these groups came the great civilizations of the world.

**A. What's in Genesis 1–11?**

What?	Where?

**B. What's the big picture?**

Although this is a short portion of the Bible, it spans roughly half the world's history and forms the foundation for the rest of the Bible. If you understand the big picture here, you have gotten off to a good start!

1. The Bible begins with the account of God's creation of the world. Briefly share what you know about the opposing theory of evolution. Why is the biblical account of the creation foundational to the Christian faith?
2. Adam and Eve were created by God and were joined by God as husband and wife. How is this fact foundational to the world's society?
3. Adam and Eve fell into sin. In what way is the entire Bible God's answer to this dilemma?
4. Cain was the first murderer; Abel was the first Christian martyr. Explain.
5. What are some lessons the flood teaches us?
6. What were the long-term consequences of the events surrounding the Tower of Babel?

### **C. Where's the promise?**

1. How did God restore Adam and Eve to his love? See Genesis 3:15.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did God keep his promise alive during the flood?

### **D. During the week**

1. Review: How does Genesis chapters 1–11 help us understand (1) where the world came from; (2) marriage and family; (3) the meaning of sin and accountability to God; (4) the purpose of the Bible; and (5) the origin of languages and nations?
2. Page through Genesis chapters 12–50. Read the chapters whose content catches your eye. Or consider reading the following chapters:
  - Abram's call and faltering faith (Genesis 12)
  - God's covenant with Abram (Genesis 15)
  - Abram falters again (Genesis 16)
  - The covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17)
  - Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18,19)
  - Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 21)
  - Abraham's faith tested (Genesis 22)
  - Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24)
  - Jacob's trickery (Genesis 27)
  - The seasoning of Jacob as a man of God (Genesis 29–33)
  - Joseph sold by his brothers (Genesis 37)
  - Joseph's troubles and rise to power (Genesis 39–41)
  - Joseph's encounters with his brothers (Genesis 42–45)
  - The deaths of Jacob and Joseph (Genesis 49,50)
3. Certain sections play special roles in God's plan of salvation. Think about how the previous sections relate to God's promise of a Savior. Note especially:
  - God's promise and Abram's response (Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-6)
  - Joseph's life in Egypt (Genesis 39–45)
  - Jacob's blessings (Genesis 49)

## Lesson 2—The Patriarchs—Genesis 12–50



A tremendous amount of time is packed into the first 11 chapters of Genesis. We're only 11 chapters into the Bible, but we have covered nearly half the world's history.

To keep his promise from being forgotten, God chose one man to be the father of a new and great nation. The man's name was Abraham. God wanted Abraham to care for his promise, to keep it from being forgotten, to live in the hope the promise gave.

God led Abraham to a land called Canaan. God promised to give that land to Abraham's family.

God promised Abraham a son in his old age. Abraham struggled to hold on to God's promise when it seemed impossible that the promise would ever be fulfilled. But Abraham believed God could do the impossible and waited for God to give him a son. Finally, in her old age, his wife, Sarah, bore Abraham their first child, Isaac.

Isaac is the second of the patriarchs, as they are called. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, bore him twin sons, Esau and Jacob.

What a story their life was! It was filled with intrigue and trickery, with plots and double crosses. It is a story of struggle between brothers, much like the struggle between Cain and Abel, but with a better ending.

Above all, it is the story of God passing on his promise, choosing Jacob and his descendants as the people through whom the Savior would be born. God tested Jacob, blessed Jacob, and disciplined Jacob. God gave Jacob 12 sons. We will speak of two.

The Savior would come through descendants of the fourth son, Judah.

And the eleventh son, Joseph, would save the world from famine.

Even if you don't know a lot about the Bible, you may know of Joseph's coat of many colors. The coat was a special gift from his father, Jacob. The coat also inspired treachery. When Joseph's brothers saw that Jacob favored Joseph, they hated Joseph. One day the brothers decided to kill him. But instead, they decided to sell Joseph as a slave.

Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold to Potiphar, a high-ranking official who served the king of Egypt, the pharaoh. In Potiphar's house, Joseph became the highest ranking servant.

Potiphar's wife lusted after Joseph and tried to seduce him. He resisted, and she accused Joseph of rape. Potiphar became angry and threw Joseph into prison.

God had other plans, though. In prison Joseph met two of Pharaoh's officials who had also been accused of crimes. One night the imprisoned officials had dreams. Joseph interpreted their dreams, and his interpretations came true. Still, for two more years Joseph rotted in prison.

Then Pharaoh himself had a wild and troubling dream. None of Pharaoh's trusted advisors could interpret it. Finally, one of the officials imprisoned with Joseph remembered. "Call Joseph out of prison," Pharaoh said.

Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream. "Seven years of rich harvests will be followed by seven years of famine. Don't waste the food from the good years. Save, or Egypt and the rest of the world will starve." This story weighs heavily on God's promise. If the world's population had died of starvation, Jacob and his family would have died and God could not have fulfilled his promise.

Who could manage Egypt's food storage program? Pharaoh decided. It would be Joseph.

Back in Canaan, Jacob and his sons were hungry. They looked for help in Egypt—from Joseph, the brother they sold into slavery.

Joseph planned for that day, but not to get even. How Joseph hid his identity from his brothers, led them to repent of their sin, and then gave them honor and prosperity is a testimony to Joseph's wisdom and love.

After Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he invited them, along with their father, Jacob, to live in Egypt.

Genesis ends with the deaths of Jacob and Joseph. Before he died, Joseph made his brothers swear to bring his bones back to Canaan. Joseph knew God's promise to Abraham would come true.

**A. What's in Genesis 12–50?**

<b>What?</b>	<b>Where?</b>

**B. What's the big picture?**

The last 39 chapters of Genesis cover roughly 225 years. These chapters tell us how God repeated and detailed the promise of a Savior that he had first given in Eden. God entrusted this promise to the patriarchs and to Israel.

1. Read the account of the call of Abraham, the first patriarch, in Genesis 12:1-7. What does this account teach us about establishing and having a relationship with God?
2. In Genesis 15:1-6, God repeated his promise to Abraham. Note Abraham's response to God's promise. What was the result?
3. Isaac was a miracle child, born when Abraham was 100 years old and his wife, Sarah, was 90. He was the second patriarch—the second to receive the promise that one of his descendants would be the Savior. One of the most well-known stories from the life of Isaac is recorded in Genesis 22:1-19. What do we learn from this account about the faith of Abraham? the faith of Isaac? the goodness and faithfulness of God?
4. Jacob was the third patriarch. In his early life, he had the tendency to rely on himself—on his own cleverness and trickery—for success. God, however, disciplined Jacob by allowing him to suffer pain and heartache as results of his sinful self-reliance. Finally, God brought Jacob to a defining moment in his life as a patriarch. Read Genesis 32:22-31. Explain what happened in this account and the change that had taken place in this patriarch.
5. Agree or disagree? The life of Joseph is an illustration of the truth that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28).
6. As a result of his brothers' hatred and sin, Joseph suffered for years as a slave and a prisoner. Explain how Joseph was able to forgive his brothers.

### C. Where's the promise?

1. What connection does the life of Joseph have with God's promise of a Savior?
2. Read Genesis 49:8-12. What special blessing did Judah receive from Jacob?

### D. During the week

1. Review: What does Genesis chapters 12–50 tell us about (1) God's intervention in human lives and history; (2) the role of the patriarchs; and (3) God's use of all things in the interest of his plan of salvation?
2. Page through Exodus to Joshua. Read the chapters whose content catches your eye. Consider reading one or more of the following chapters:
  - Moses' call (Exodus 3,4)
  - The Passover and the exodus (Exodus 12,13)
  - The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19,20)
  - Israel's sin and God's mercy (Exodus 32,33)
  - The tabernacle (Exodus 35–40)
  - The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
  - The Jewish church year (Leviticus 23)
  - Israel's refusal to enter the land (Numbers 13,14)
  - Balaam blesses Israel (Numbers 22–24)
  - Do not forget the Lord (Deuteronomy 8)
  - The fall of Jericho (Joshua 5,6)
  - Joshua's farewell (Joshua 23)
3. Certain sections play special roles in God's plan of salvation. Think about how the previous sections relate to God's promise of a Savior. Note especially:
  - The Passover (Exodus 12)
  - The great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)