

The Pentateuch I: Genesis

Instructor-Pat Reeder

Wednesday evenings, 7pm-9:30pm

Course description

This course is the first of four courses on the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) and Genesis in particular. Genesis is often consigned to the rubbish heap of modern theology, a vestige of ancient mythologizing, a collection of moral tales for spiritual edification with no connection to the world of history or science. Francis Schaeffer challenges this position:

Some people assume that one can spiritualize the history of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. They assume they can weaken the propositional nature of these passages where they speak of history and the cosmos, and that nothing will change. But everything changes. These chapters tell us the “why” of all history man knows through his studies, including the “why” of each man’s personal history. For this reason, Genesis 1-11 is more important than anything else one could have. (*Genesis in Space and Time*, 159)

As Schaeffer indicates, Genesis is foundational. If we forfeit Genesis, we forfeit the whole theological edifice built on top of it. A large portion of this course will involve sorting through the interpretive difficulties of Genesis in order to discover exactly how this ancient book is theologically foundational and how it impacts our personal lives.

Course Expectations

Attendance You must attend 4 of 5 classes to receive credit. Roughly, everyone has 1 “excused absence” before receiving an incomplete. Any other absence is negotiable, to be discussed with the instructor.

Readings There will be weekly readings to keep in step with the material being covered each week. Questions on the readings can be found on the back of this sheet.

Calendar

Week	Content	Readings
1	Overview; Critical Theory and Authorship	N/A
2	Evolution and the Seven Days	Gen 1:1-2:3
3	Humanity: Its Creation and Fall	Gen 2:4-3:24
4	History of Adam-Terah	Gen 5:1-25:11
5	History of Ishmael-Isaac-Esau	Gen 25:12-36:23
6	History of Jacob	Gen 37ff

Miscellaneous

Students will be responsible for their own notes. We will provide notebooks and the presentations will be available upon request.

Homework 1- Read Gen 1:1-2:3-Reflect on and answer the following questions.

- A. Given what you know about modern science, what (at least appears) to conflict with it in the text?
- B. What do you learn about God in this passage?
- C. What do you learn about mankind in this passage?

Homework 2- Read Gen 2:4-3:24- Reflect on and answer the following questions.

- A. What do you learn about God in this passage?
- B. What do you learn about mankind in this passage?
- C. What do you learn about men and women?

Homework 3- Read Gen 5:1-25:11- Reflect on and answer the following questions.

- A. What lessons can we draw from the flood?
- B. What differences are there between God's appearances to Abram/Abraham (note, there are at least 5 such appearances)? Does anything stand out to you in how God relates to Abram/Abraham?

Homework 4- Read Gen 25:12-36:23- Reflect on and answer the following questions.

- A. What differences are there between Esau and Jacob? How do those harmonize with Romans 9:10-13?
- B. Based on Jacob's interactions with God (whether direct or through his prayers), how would you characterize Jacob's understanding of God?

Homework 5- Read Gen 37ff- Reflect on and answer the following questions.

- A. What do you think God was teaching Joseph while he was in Egypt? What do you think God was teaching *Jacob* while Joseph was in Egypt? What could the other brothers (first ten, of course) have learned from Joseph's experience in Egypt?
- B. Looking back, compare and contrast how God relates to the various players. Pay special attention to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joshua. How has he provided for them? Pay special attention to the scale of time. How do they relate to Genesis 12:1-3?