

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 1, Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Kenneth Mathews's lecture introduces the book of Genesis, focusing on its title, main message (beginnings and blessings), and structure. He explains the book's context within the Pentateuch (Torah), emphasizing its portrayal of God's plan for blessing humanity despite sin and its connection to the later revelation at Mount Sinai. The lecture also discusses the authorship and setting, suggesting Moses as a primary compiler incorporating earlier writings and later additions, providing a historical and theological framework for understanding Genesis's narrative. Finally, the lecture sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the creation account in subsequent sessions.

2. 28 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 1, Introduction

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Kenneth Mathews' "Genesis, Session 1, Introduction":

Briefing Document: Dr. Kenneth Mathews on Genesis, Session 1

I. Introduction & Purpose of Studying Genesis

- **God's Importance:** The primary reason to study Genesis is because it's important to God. It's a book through which God has chosen to make Himself known and to foster a relationship with humanity. As Mathews states, "God has chosen to make himself known to us so that he might form a relationship with us."
- **Personal God:** Genesis reveals God as intensely personal, motivated by love. He created humans as persons to communicate, love, and experience His love: "And he, we discover from Genesis, has created us, men and women, to be persons, to engage, to communicate, and to love God, and to experience his love for us."
- **Plan of Deliverance:** Genesis unveils God's plan for a deliverer to restore humanity's broken relationship with Him and heal broken human relationships. This deliverer is understood by Christian readers as being Jesus Christ.
- **Orientation:** This session provides an orientation to Genesis, covering the title, main message, structure, context within the Pentateuch/Torah, and authorship/setting.

II. Title and Main Message

- **English Title "Genesis":** Derived from the Greek word for "origins" (from the Septuagint).
- **Hebrew Title "Bereshit":** The first Hebrew word of the book, meaning "in the beginning."
- **Book of Beginnings:** Both titles aptly describe Genesis as the book of beginnings.
- **Main Message: Beginnings and Blessings:** The book is concerned with beginnings, not just as starting points but as orientations toward an ultimate outcome or ending (eschatological). The concept of "blessing" is also central, with related terms appearing more frequently in Genesis than other biblical books.

III. Three Programmatic Blessings

- **First Program (Genesis 1:28):** God blesses humanity (made in His image) with three elements:
 - Personal relationship with God through communication
 - Procreation and reproduction. "Be fruitful and increase in number"
 - Responsible stewardship over the created world; "subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea..."
- **Second Program (Genesis 3:15):** After the Fall (Adam and Eve's rebellion), God promises a deliverer (the offspring of the woman) who will defeat the serpent (Satan) but will be injured in the process. "He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel"
- This is seen as a foreshadowing (eschatological orientation) of Jesus Christ.
- **Third Program (Genesis 12:1-3):** God blesses Abraham with:
 - Land (Canaan).
 - A great nation through procreation.
 - Blessing and a great name, emphasizing relationship and God's benevolence.
 - Abraham will be a blessing to all people. The nations' ability to receive God's blessing is tied to their relationship with Abraham's lineage and legacy. "I will bless those who bless you..." The ideal descendant (Jesus) is the ultimate means for blessing all people.

IV. Structure of Genesis

- **Two Major Parts (Content-Based):**
 - **Universal Family (Chapters 1-11):** From creation to the various people groups of the human family, portraying a universal story.
 - Subdivided into narratives of Creation, the Garden Story, Noah's Flood, and the Tower of Babel.
 - **Particular Family (Chapters 12-50):** The story of Abraham and his descendants (the patriarchs), representing a particular story.

- Subdivided into narratives focusing on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Isaac is seen more as a transitional figure connecting Abraham and Jacob. Joseph is highlighted for his critical role in the survival of Jacob's family in Egypt.
- **Formal Structure (Author-Based):**
- **The "Generations" Formula:** Eleven instances of the superscription "these are the generations of..." Each occurrence introduces either a genealogy or a narrative. The Hebrew term for "generations" relates to procreation and birth.
- This superscription is not just a genealogy indicator, but can also introduce a story or account.
- Mathews plans to merge both the content structure and the "generations" structure in his study.

V. Context of the Pentateuch/Torah

- **Pentateuch:** A Greek term for the five-book collection (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). These books form a distinctive and unified collection.
- **Torah:** The Hebrew term, transliterated rather than translated, generally translated as "law", though its meaning is broader.
- **Torah as Instruction:** Torah is related to the Hebrew verb meaning "to teach"; therefore, it is best understood as "instruction," encompassing both legal collections and broader teachings.
- **"The Way of the Lord":** A combined understanding of law and instruction; the Torah defines a lifestyle that conforms to God's character, resulting in blessings and a life well lived.
- **Genesis as a Narrative:** Genesis primarily uses narratives and genealogies to portray what it means to live "the way of the Lord," setting the stage for the specific commands in the rest of the Pentateuch. It describes through narrative what is later commanded as law.
- **Rabbinic View:** Rabbinic literature often refers to the "Books of Moses" (plural) to recognize the unity of narrative plot from creation to Moses' death, although a singular "Book of Moses" does appear. Moses dominates the Pentateuch (born in Exodus 2).

- **Genesis and Sinai:** Genesis provides context for the Sinai revelation. It reveals how Israel fits into God's cosmic plan, acting as a forecast or foreshadowing for what the first audience (the wilderness generation) experienced.
- **God of Creation:** Genesis implies the God of Israel is the God of creation, not just a national deity.
- This is shown through God's repeated "said" at creation and the spoken Ten Commandments at Sinai.

VI. Authorship and Setting

- **Historical Setting:** The primeval stories before Abraham cannot be dated with confidence.
- The patriarchal period is roughly dated from 2200 BC to 1550 BC, consistent with internal and external evidence regarding language, culture, and customs.
- The period of Moses and the Israelite journey to Canaan is around 1450 BC.
- During the patriarchal period, there were many small city-states, contrasting with the later great empires of the Egyptians, Hittites, and Babylonians.
- Customs like adoption of a servant as an heir are consistent with ancient Near Eastern practices.
- **Source Setting/Authorship:** The Pentateuch, including Genesis, is anonymous, but tradition ascribes it to Moses.
- Moses is the central figure in Exodus through Deuteronomy (eyewitness and author of accounts). Moses is repeatedly said to have authored and collected accounts in those books.
- However, Moses could not have been an eyewitness to the events of Genesis, so there is the idea of later updates, editorial additions, and revisions after the time of Moses, as shown in the description of Moses' death and burial in Deuteronomy 34.
- The book of Genesis likely incorporated earlier written records (e.g., "the book of the generations of Adam") as there was a scribal profession in the ancient Near East.
- Family stories and oral traditions were likely also accumulated and passed down.
- God could also have informed Moses through direct revelation.

- The author of Genesis likely compiled and organized the material to serve as a prologue to the Pentateuch, to place the patriarchs and the nation of Israel into the context of God's broader plan.

VII. Conclusion:

- Genesis is understood as a key book to understand God's plan of salvation, and it must be interpreted in the context of the revelation at Sinai.
- The next session will focus on the creation account.

This briefing document encapsulates the key elements discussed by Dr. Mathews in this first session, providing a comprehensive overview of his perspective on Genesis.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 1, Introduction

Genesis Study Guide: Session 1

Quiz

1. Why does Dr. Mathews suggest studying Genesis is important? Dr. Mathews suggests that Genesis is important because it is important to God, who desires to be in a relationship with humanity. The book reveals God's plan for restoring broken relationships through a promised deliverer, Jesus Christ.
2. What do the English and Hebrew titles of Genesis mean, and how do they relate to the book's content? The English title "Genesis" comes from the Greek word meaning "origins," while the Hebrew title "Bereshit" means "in the beginning." Both titles accurately reflect the book's content, which focuses on the beginnings of all things.
3. What are the two key words that summarize the main message of Genesis? Briefly explain them. The two key words are "beginnings" and "blessings." Beginnings refers not just to the start of things, but also implies an end or outcome. Blessings are God's program to bless all peoples and are a major theme within the book.
4. What are the three "programmatic blessings" found in early Genesis, and how are they described? The three programmatic blessings include: a personal relationship with God, procreation and reproduction, and responsible stewardship over creation. These are first seen in the creation account and later echoed in the covenant with Abraham.
5. Describe the significance of Genesis 3:15, and what does it forecast? Genesis 3:15 is an oracle of judgment against the serpent, where God promises that a deliverer will come from the woman's offspring who will defeat the serpent. It is a foretelling of a future redeemer, a savior.
6. What is significant about the blessing given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3? In Genesis 12:1-3, God promises Abraham land, a great nation, and that he will be a blessing to all people. This highlights the universal scope of God's blessings as they extend through Abraham's descendants.
7. What are the two main ways to understand the structure of Genesis, and how are they broken down? The book can be viewed by content (universal family and then the patriarchal stories) or through the formal structure of "generations". The

content is divided into four narratives for each: Creation, Garden Story, Noah and the Flood, and Tower of Babel; Patriarchal narratives are: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

8. What is the meaning of "Torah" and how does it relate to the Pentateuch?
"Torah" is a Hebrew word meaning instruction or teaching. While often translated as "law," it refers more broadly to the way of the Lord and applies to the entire five-book collection.
9. What role does Genesis play in the context of the entire Pentateuch and how is it viewed by the rabbinic tradition? Genesis is the prologue of the Pentateuch and gives Israel an understanding of how they fit into God's cosmic plan. Rabbinic literature sees the Pentateuch as a unified story of Moses, from Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy.
10. What does the lecture suggest about the authorship of Genesis and the possible sources? The lecture suggests that Genesis (and the entire Pentateuch) are traditionally ascribed to Moses. There were likely pre-existing written and oral traditions, and possibly direct revelation from God used in the compilation of Genesis.

Answer Key

1. Dr. Mathews suggests that Genesis is important because it is important to God, who desires to be in a relationship with humanity. The book reveals God's plan for restoring broken relationships through a promised deliverer, Jesus Christ.
2. The English title "Genesis" comes from the Greek word meaning "origins," while the Hebrew title "Bereshit" means "in the beginning." Both titles accurately reflect the book's content, which focuses on the beginnings of all things.
3. The two key words are "beginnings" and "blessings." Beginnings refers not just to the start of things, but also implies an end or outcome. Blessings are God's program to bless all peoples and are a major theme within the book.
4. The three programmatic blessings include: a personal relationship with God, procreation and reproduction, and responsible stewardship over creation. These are first seen in the creation account and later echoed in the covenant with Abraham.

5. Genesis 3:15 is an oracle of judgment against the serpent, where God promises that a deliverer will come from the woman's offspring who will defeat the serpent. It is a foretelling of a future redeemer, a savior.
6. In Genesis 12:1-3, God promises Abraham land, a great nation, and that he will be a blessing to all people. This highlights the universal scope of God's blessings as they extend through Abraham's descendants.
7. The book can be viewed by content (universal family and then the patriarchal stories) or through the formal structure of "generations". The content is divided into four narratives for each: Creation, Garden Story, Noah and the Flood, and Tower of Babel; Patriarchal narratives are: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
8. "Torah" is a Hebrew word meaning instruction or teaching. While often translated as "law," it refers more broadly to the way of the Lord and applies to the entire five-book collection.
9. Genesis is the prologue of the Pentateuch and gives Israel an understanding of how they fit into God's cosmic plan. Rabbinic literature sees the Pentateuch as a unified story of Moses, from Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy.
10. The lecture suggests that Genesis (and the entire Pentateuch) are traditionally ascribed to Moses. There were likely pre-existing written and oral traditions, and possibly direct revelation from God used in the compilation of Genesis.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the "beginnings" and "blessings" themes in Genesis, and how they relate to the overarching narrative of the book.
2. Analyze the three "programmatic blessings" in Genesis and how they shape the relationship between God, humanity, and creation.
3. Examine the role of Genesis 3:15 as a pivotal point in the narrative of Genesis and its implications for the rest of the biblical story.
4. Compare and contrast the two major structural approaches to Genesis: by content and by the "generations" formula.
5. Explore the complex issues surrounding the authorship of Genesis and the possible sources that may have contributed to its composition.

Glossary of Key Terms

Bereshit: The Hebrew title of Genesis, meaning "in the beginning."

Blessing: A key theme in Genesis, referring to God's favor, provision, and intention to bless all peoples.

Deliverer: A promised figure throughout Genesis who will restore the relationship between God and humanity, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Eschatological: Pertaining to the end times or ultimate outcome, often used to describe how Genesis points toward a future resolution.

Generations: A structuring device in Genesis marked by the phrase "these are the generations of," used to organize the narrative.

Image of God: The concept that humans are created in God's likeness and designed for a relationship with him.

Pentateuch: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Programmatic Blessing: God's announced program or project of blessing, initially described in Genesis 1:28.

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Torah: The Hebrew term referring to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Pentateuch), also meaning instruction or teaching.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Genesis

1. **Why is the book of Genesis important?** Genesis is important because it reveals God's desire to form a relationship with humanity. It outlines God's plan to overcome human brokenness through a deliverer and establishes the foundational narrative for understanding God's relationship with His creation, as well as the human condition. It also provides insight into how the nation of Israel fits into God's plan of blessing for humankind and all the nations.
2. **What are the main messages or themes of the book of Genesis?** The main messages of Genesis can be summarized in two words: beginnings and blessings. The book details the beginnings of the world, humanity, and God's interactions with them. Crucially, it reveals God's intention to bless all peoples through His plan, which includes creation, a chosen people, and a promised deliverer. It is also eschatological, pointing toward an ultimate resolution to the brokenness of the world and humanity's relationship with God.
3. **What are the three programmatic blessings outlined in Genesis?** The first programmatic blessing is found in Genesis 1:28, which involves a relationship with God, procreation and reproduction, and responsible stewardship of the earth. The second is the promise of a deliverer in Genesis 3:15, which is given in the context of the Fall, and provides for a way to be reconciled to God. The third is the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, where God promises land, a great nation, and that all peoples will be blessed through him.
4. **How is the book of Genesis structured?** Genesis can be viewed structurally in two ways: by content and by formal superscriptions. By content, it is divided into two major sections: the universal family story (chapters 1-11) and the story of the patriarchs (chapters 12-50). Each of these sections can be further divided into four narratives: creation, the garden, Noah and the flood, and the tower of Babel for the universal family and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph for the patriarchs. Formally, Genesis is marked by eleven "generations of" superscriptions which introduce both genealogies and narrative stories.

5. **What is the context of the Pentateuch (Torah) and how does Genesis relate to it?** The Pentateuch, or Torah, refers to the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). It's primarily a collection of instruction, "the way of the Lord," not just a law code. Genesis, while containing few explicit laws, sets the stage by narrating and portraying the way of the Lord. It provides a historical and theological foundation for understanding God's covenant with Israel, revealed at Mount Sinai, which is the main focus of the other books in the Pentateuch.
6. **What is the significance of the "way of the Lord" in the context of the Pentateuch and Genesis?** The "way of the Lord" refers to the lifestyle that conforms to God's character. It is the life that pleases God and receives his blessing. Genesis portrays what this looks like through its narratives, which set the stage for the more explicit commands found in the other books of the Pentateuch. In short, it provides a narrative basis for God's law which the Israelites received at Mount Sinai.
7. **Who is traditionally considered the author of Genesis and what is the evidence for or against this?** Tradition ascribes the authorship of the Pentateuch, including Genesis, to Moses. The books of Exodus through Deuteronomy feature Moses as a dominant figure who both experiences and writes down many of the events. Evidence, however, from within the text suggests there were also later updates and additions by other hands as well as early sources used by Moses, making Mosaic authorship unlikely in a purely singular sense. The "generations of" superscriptions, and ancient scribal practices might indicate that Moses made use of existing family records and writings.
8. **What is known about the historical and cultural setting of the events in Genesis?** While the primeval stories are difficult to date, the patriarchal narratives can be placed roughly from 2200 BC to 1550 BC. This era is consistent with external archeological and linguistic evidence of a time with many small city-states and kings. The customs and names within the stories also fit this period. The time of Moses and the Israelites journey through the desert is roughly dated to the 1400s BC.