
The Reader's Companion

for the

Five Day Bible

Reading Schedule

OLD TESTAMENT

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*For use with the Five Day Bible Reading Schedule
Complete the Bible in one year reading Monday-Friday!*

○ Reading 1 - Genesis 1-2

Introduction to Genesis - Welcome to the book of origins. Genesis shows us the origins of our world (**chs. 1-2**), the origins of the nations (**chs. 2-11**) and the origins of Israel (**chs. 12-50**). This helps focus us on Genesis' importance. It spans two thousand years in its text while other books at most span a few hundred. Genesis becomes the essential background for understanding the events which make the nation of Israel the people of God and make God the one true God that must be worshiped by all. Genesis develops several key themes: that God is the Creator, sin's consequences are disastrous, that God's ultimate purpose is to restore man to fellowship and relationship with Him, and that this purpose will be worked out through Abraham's children, the nation of Israel.

1 - These chapters brim with some of the most important material in all of Scripture. The key issues today in **Genesis 1** is how does this square with evolution's portrayal of origins and are these days literal 24-hour periods? The answer to the first question is that Genesis 1 and 2 do not and cannot be fit into the evolutionary model. The Bible reader must decide if he/she will believe what inspired writers (and Jesus, see Matthew 19:4-5) said about our world's origins or stand on the shifting sands of scientific theory. Biblical creationism is absolutely indispensable to the Bible's integrity (see Jn 1:3; Acts 17:23; 1 Cor 11:8-9; Heb 11:3). The days in chapter 1 are certainly 24-hour periods of time. That is the natural reading of the text, the word "day" is never used figuratively when attached to a number, Exodus 20:11 uses this as 24-hour days, and Adam is made on Day Six but is only 130 years old when Seth is born (Gen 5:3). Make certain you allow this chapter to speak to you of God's unimaginable power and the authority that comes to Him as our Creator.

2 - Note how these verses are beautifully arranged to echo the opening verse (**1:1**) and add information to them. These accounts are complementary, not contradictory. **Chapter 2** also adds to the "special-ness" of man that began in 1:26. Man there is made in God's image, but here we learn that man is subservient to God. **Verse 9** is a source of much discussion. What is the "knowledge of good and evil?" It may mean the consequences of what would happen if Adam disobeyed God's commands. Man would have known good if he obeyed; he knew evil because he disobeyed. The chapter closes with the founding of the first home. Notice how everything is now good. This changes dramatically in chapter 3.

○ Reading 2 - Genesis 3-5

3 - In **chapter 3** the devil arrives (**verse 1**) to test man (note John 8:44; Rev. 20:2; 2 Tim. 2:12). The text wants us to see the folly and foolishness of sin. Man had so much and threw it all away stupidly. Notice the test wasn't intelligence but man's trust of God. Is God good or is He holding out on us, keeping us from what we really need? Eve paints God too harshly (**verse 2**), adding prohibitions God did not make, and sin enters the world. A key issue here is the woman leading the man, a reversal of God's plan that has disastrous consequences (**verse 6**). As bitter as this chapter is it does contain hope: the first Messianic prophecy (**verse 15**).

4 - Watch the spread of sin, and it's not just a repeat of chapter 3. Sin gets worse (murder!), and man becomes embittered against God. This chapter also introduces the theme of the oldest son *not* always getting the blessing or being the one through whom God works. There is much speculation about Cain's failure (**verses 4-6**), but in truth all we know is that he sinned. God did accept grain offerings later (Lev 2:1ff) so his lack of a blood sacrifice may not be the problem. He certainly failed to "offer by faith" (Heb 11:4) but faith means more than just positive instruction. Faith involves a heart that longs to serve God. Cain never seems to possess such a heart. The chapter concludes with two genealogies (**verses 17-26**). Cain's descendants invent various technologies and seem to specialize in sin (**verses 23-24**). Seth's line worships God (**verse 26**). The story of those two families continues in chapter 5.

5 - **Chapter 5** looks dull and dry to the modern reader, but it certainly confirms the effects of sin as spoken by God. Man does die! Indeed, the exception to this unfailing rule in **chapter 5** points out some interesting points on how to live and not die (**verse 22**).

○ Reading 3 - Genesis 6-8

6 - The interesting note about marriage between the "sons of God" and "the daughters of men" that begins the chapter attracts much speculation (**verses 1-2**). Some see angels marrying women here, but this seems doubtful. Why are men punished for what angels do (**verse 3**)? How would angelic marriages relate to the increase of sin we find in **verse 5**? Instead what we should see is that the line of Seth, known for worshipping God, intermarried with the line of Cain, known for worldliness and sin. The result was the dilution of godliness and the spread of evil everywhere. **verse 9** uses the language of Enoch's deliverance from death to speak now of Noah: he walked with God. The point is clear: God delivers those who walk with Him. The chapter ends with an emphasis on Noah's obedience (**verse 22**). That is how one walks with God.

7 - Chapter 7 tells of a worldwide cataclysm of unprecedented dimension. Remember, if this was simply a local flood Noah could have walked to safety. Notice again Noah's obedience (**verses 9, 16**).

8 - The chapter begins with "God remembering," (**verse 1**) a phrase that means God acts decisively (Exo. 2:24). Noah patiently waits and is rewarded for his obedience.

○ Reading 4 - Genesis 9-11

9 - Chapter 9 shows us a fresh start for creation. The earth had been filled with violence, but now begins anew with the same command given to Adam and Eve. This is the third time God blesses man (**1:28; 5:2**) and the third time man is told to multiply (**1:28; 8:17**). Unfortunately, sin reappears as well (**9:18-27**). Many look for hints of a more sinister deed by Ham than what the text simply reports but in a society that values honoring parents as the Old Testament world did this is more than enough. The Bible is stressing that the Flood did not cure the problem of sin. Sin marches on.

10 - This table of nations shows how the world was repopulated. The focus is shifted squarely to Shem (**verses 21-31**), showing him to be the most important.

11 - How did the nations become so divided? The tower of Babel shows how man's pride ruins everything, as sin continues. Man is deliberately violating God's command to "go forth," choosing instead to cluster (**verse 4**). The chapter ends with a man named Abram (**verses 27-32**), one of the most significant characters in human history.

○ Reading 5 - Genesis 12-15

12 - God calls Abram (**verses 1-3**), a call Abram will gradually fully accept (notice Abram does not leave his family at first). Abram is made three great promises: his descendants will be a great nation, they will inherit Canaan, and the Messiah (the remedy to the sin problem begun in chapter 3) will come through his lineage to bless the world. These promises will be refined and further explained as we journey with Abram but they form the basis of the Old Testament. Why is the Bible about the Israelites? *Because they are Abraham's descendants and God wants us to see how He fulfilled His promises to them.* Notice how Abram doesn't trust God's promise of care, so he tries to protect himself with lies (**verses 11-13**). Yet God still bears with Abram and cares for him! We want to keep our eye on Abram's growing faith. He's not the astonishingly obedient and faithful man we think of him as being quite yet, is he?

13 - Chapter 13 shows just how God did keep His word: Abram became exceedingly rich. Riches can cause problems (**verses 5-8**), leading Abram to finally pull away from family, as God had always wanted. One of the key themes we want to observe is how Abram's faith develops. People think of Abram as a giant of faith from the very beginning but this is not so. Abram isn't even in complete obedience to God here!

14 - Lot is the Bible's version of that crazy family member who is always getting into trouble. Lot's interest in financial prosperity over spiritual things (**13:11, 13**) pays off badly when the city is attacked and he is taken in the raid. Abram rescues him (what riches - Abram owns 318 slaves!, **verse 14**). On the way home Abram meets Melchizedek, one of the most mysterious figures in the Bible. We know little of him but Hebrews 7 makes it clear he is a unique and significant Bible figure as he is both king and priest. Even one as great as Abram pays a tithe to him!

15 - Abram is afraid (**verse 1**), perhaps that the raiders will return, or that the lands he got in the division with Lot can't sustain him, or because he has no son. God reassures Abram, spelling out the promises in even greater detail. The covenant ceremony (**verses 9-21**) is strange to us but it means "let this happen to me (i.e. be cut in half) if I fail to honor the covenant." God uses the local customs Abram was familiar with to swear a great oath to Him and reassure Him. Romans 4:1-5 and James 2:21-23 both use **verse 6** as a model of how we are saved by faith today, but that faith does not exclude obedience.

Week 2 - Genesis 16-40

○ Reading 1 - Genesis 16-18

16 - Read **verses 3-4** carefully and you'll hear Genesis 3 all over again. It sounds just like what Eve did! We need to learn from this account the foolishness of trying to "help God!" Abram's lack of leadership here causes strife in his home and will cause further troubles down the road. Where is Abram's faith in God's promises? Notice again that Abram struggles in his walk with God just as people do today. It will be thirteen years before God speaks to Abram again (compare **16:16** and **17:1**).

17 - Chapter 17 is a watershed in the Abraham story. It marks a most significant turning point, and the Bible does all it can to alert us to how crucial these events are. Notice it is very precisely dated. A cluster of dates (**16:16; 17:1, 17, 24**) mark this section out as special, just as the flood story is marked. Also striking here is the change of name for Abram and Sarai to the more familiar Abraham and Sarah. Further, there are five long speeches from God. This culminates in the sign of circumcision. Abraham's immediate obedience is striking (**verse 26**).

18 - Abraham's amazing relationship with God is demonstrated here, especially in God's patience with Abraham's attempts to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah (**verses 22-33**). Why does God tell Abraham His plans? Because that is what friends do (**verse 17**), and Abraham can use it as a teaching opportunity (see **19:27-28**).

○ Reading 2 - Genesis 19-20

19 - This is an incredible story of wickedness and disbelief, wrapped up in God's unbelievable patience with Lot. Finding Lot smack in the middle of city life in Sodom (the city gate was the center of town life, **verse 1**) is disappointing. It will cost him his family. The depravity of the men of Sodom is frightening (**verse 5**). We wonder that Lot would offer his daughters - perhaps he was grasping at straws and trying to say anything that would stop these wicked men (**verses 8**). Notice that even when struck blind they don't go home but keep trying to sin (**verse 11**)! Lot's story ends miserably in incest and shame. 2 Peter 2:7-8 commends him but sometimes it's hard to see why!

20 - **Chapter 20** finds Abraham lying again. He still doesn't fully trust God to care for him, does he? **Verse 3** shows that God does respect sincere hearts and good intentions. **Verse 11** reveals Abraham's wrong assumption about these people! Assumptions like this get us in trouble.

○ Reading 3 - Genesis 21-23

21 - The weaning of **verse 8** could take place as late as three years old. Ishmael is 13 years old here. Sarah's unhappiness (**verse 10**) is that Ishmael might inherit along with Isaac. This was very hard on Abraham, showing again that we reap what we sow. Abraham's mistake in chapter 16 just keeps bringing a harvest of strife! The chapter ends with God once again making good on His promise to care for Abraham (**verses 22-34**).

22 - This is one of the most famous, and most difficult to read, chapters in the Bible. It represents Abraham at his highest point, displaying a trust in God that is dazzling. What Abraham is told to do appears to violate God's very nature (**verse 2**). His immediate obedience is awe-inspiring to see (**verse 3a**). Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us the affirmation of **verse 5** was based on faith. "Know" in **verse 12** has troubled meaning. It just means knowledge confirmed by action. God knows everything (Psalms 147:5). This is merely God speaking in a way we can understand, i.e. "You have demonstrated your trust with your deeds." We need to take this chapter to heart. Here is how faith acts when human thinking contradicts God's word! Note the use of this story in Rom. 8:31-32; Hebrews 11:17-19 and especially James 2:21-23.

23 - The death of Sarah must have been hard for Abraham. Along with that, Abraham realizes that for all his journeying in Canaan - the so-called Promised Land - he doesn't own a square inch of it! The chapter shows the respect with which Abraham was held by the Canaanites, and reminds us again that God's time is often not ours.

○ Reading 4 - Genesis 24-25

24 - **Chapter 24** highlights again God keeping His promises (**verses 1, 35**). We're encouraged to see Abraham's faith as well (**verse 7**). He trusts that God will help the servant find the right woman. That woman is Rebekah (**verse 15**) who unfortunately has a greedy brother, Laban (**verse 30a**). We will see much more of Laban's greed in years to come.

25 - Abraham's death gives the author of Genesis the opportunity to "tidy" up several loose ends. One of the big keys is **verse 18** where we learn that Ishmael's family (**verses 12-18**) settled outside the land of Canaan. Ishmael is not the child of promise and he and his descendants do not live in the promised land. **Verses 29-34** contain a huge event, as Esau sells off his birthright. The birthright is not the same as the blessing that Esau loses in ch. 27 (27:36). What was the birthright? The birthright was the double portion given to the firstborn and the special privileges that go with being first (cf. Gen. 43:33). Esau cares little for this honor and foolishly sells it for a plate of stew (**verse 33**).

○ Reading 5 - Genesis 26-27

26 - Isaac doesn't make the mistake Abraham made of going to Egypt. God tells him to stay in Canaan (**verse 3**) and he does so (**verse 6**). However, Isaac shows the same lack of faith in God's protection his father had (**verse 7**). These Philistines (**verse 8**) are not the Philistines of Saul and David's day. We are unsure who they are. "Laughing with" (ESV) (**verse 8**) is a euphemism for physical intimacy. Note that like with Abraham God blesses and cares for Isaac (**verses 12, 29b**). **Verse 34** raises further issues about Esau's character as he marries not one but two Canaanite women!

27 - **Chapter 27** is full of questions. Doesn't Isaac know the oracle of 25:23? Why doesn't Isaac bless the whole family (as Jacob does in ch. 49)? Interestingly, what looks like a deathbed scene in **verse 1** is hardly that. Jacob will be gone for 20 years (31:38) and return to see his father's face (35:27). The over-riding theme is that God's purposes cannot be over-turned. For whatever reason Isaac seeks to make Esau the one whom God

will use in bringing about the fulfillment of the great promises to Abraham but it is not to be. God has announced His intent (25:23) and that is what *will* happen. You cannot fight against God successfully! In this chapter we also have profound insight into Jacob's character. He is a schemer and trickster *par excellence*, even willing to use God's name in his deception (**verse 20**)! God will have to remold a man like this for him to be useful to the Lord!

Week 3 - Genesis 28-40

oReading 1 - Gen 28-29

28 - The remodeling of Jacob's character begins straightway. Rebekah's deception costs her the son she loves. This chapter is marked off by vows (see **verse 10** and then the closing vow in **verse 22**). All of this material is built on the idea that Jacob will come home some day. Jacob must have been confused and afraid. He would need encouragement, and fortunately, God provides it. Note the repetition of the promises to Abraham in **verses 13-15**. Those promises go forward in the person of Jacob now, and they are the basis of a ladder up to heaven. The way to God is found in the promise of the Messiah to come.

29 - **Chapter 29** shows the trickster getting "schooled" by Laban, the master trickster. Jacob arrives in Haran and is relieved to find relatives (**verse 11**). Shortly he finds himself being fooled by Laban into marrying an extra wife (**verses 24-25**)! This leads to the Great Baby Race (**29:30-30:24**).

o Reading 2 - Gen 30-31

30 - While some might think the prospect of having four women vie over you enticing this verses actually reveals the sadness and depravity of polygamy. Jacob really only loves Rachel, yet often he cannot be the wife he loves and when he is she is unhappy! Further, we should see that sex does not equal love, as Jacob is with Leah sexually several times but she knows she is unloved (**29:32**). **Verse 14's** mandrakes may be a plant that was thought to make one fertile. The chapter ends with Jacob ready to leave Haran, having received God's blessings in an abundant way as God promised (**verse 43**).

31 - The emphasis here is on God's care (note **verses 5, 7, 13, 24, 29, 42** that all explicitly give God the credit for Jacob's prosperity). Jacob is a changed man. He no longer relies on his wits but trusts instead in God! Interestingly, the covenant of Mizpah (**verses 46-49**) is often cited in a very warm and fuzzy context, but here it was anything but that. Jacob says "You stay on this side of the boundary and may God get you if you come after me!" He has had it with his troublesome father-in-law hasn't he?

o Reading 3 - Genesis 32-34

32 - **Chapter 32** is filled with tension. Jacob has wanted to go home for so long, but what of Esau and his desire to kill Jacob? In the moment of crisis Jacob prays (**verses 9-12**). In his prayer Jacob asserts his obedience (**verse 9**), shows humility (**verse 10**), uses God's past actions to bolster present faith (**verse 10b**), asks God specifically for help (**verse 11**), by claiming the promises God made (**verse 12**). What a model of prayer! The episode of Jacob wrestling with God (**verses 22-32**) is shrouded in mystery. Why does God attack Jacob? How can Jacob hold God? When does Jacob realize he is wrestling with God? The key here seems to be Jacob's name change. "Jacob" means "trickster" but that is changed to "Israel" (**verse 28**). "Israel" means "God fights" - the idea may be that God will fight for Jacob and so he doesn't have to live by trickery any more. God will see him through the confrontation with Esau in the morning. Some are confused by **verse 30** because the Bible affirms no man can see God and live (Exodus 33:20). This simply means God saw a manifestation of God. No one can see God in His pure unaltered, unshielded form and live.

33 - **Verse 2** doesn't make Jacob look very brave does it? In **verses 12-15** Jacob doesn't seem very interested in hanging around with Esau. Is he afraid this good mood will pass? Perhaps a better reason is that he has been told to go home and this isn't it so he needs to press on (31:3, 13, 32:10).

34 - This material seems almost out of place, but it provides key insight into Jacob's fathering style. After reading this chapter we can easily believe brothers like this would sell Joseph into slavery. In **verse 2** the language is very violent. The term "lay" is used in Scripture for the sexual relationship, but is not the same as the term "to know" which is better for the marital relationship. This is nothing but a sexual assault. Count the personal pronouns in **verse 30**. This is very bad fathering. Jacob seems unconcerned about sin or about innocents who were murdered. His main issue is his own personal safety! Such poor fathering can only reap a harvest of misery, as we will see.

o Reading 4 - Genesis 35-37

35 - **Chapter 35** seems a little disjointed. But much of this relates to how Moses has been telling the stories of the patriarchs in a set order: divine call, obedience, promises reaffirmed, journey, birth of sons, death of wife, genealogies, etc. **Verse 1** tells that it is time for Jacob to pay the vow he made so long ago (note **verse 7**). **Verse 4** is very disturbing. Why did Jacob's household have idols in it? Some think this might have been spoils