

CHAPTER TWO

BEGINNINGS PERIOD

Downward Spiral of Sin

The source for the first three and a half periods of biblical history is the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The name *Genesis* means *beginnings*. This is an appropriate name for this first book. Genesis literally describes the beginning of everything—the natural world, sin, marriage, Israel, the hope of salvation through Messiah, just to name a few “beginnings.” *Beginnings* is also a very good name for the first period of biblical history.

In scholarly circles the Beginnings Period is called the Antediluvian Period. *Antediluvian* means *before the Flood*, referring to the great worldwide Flood in the days of Noah. The Scripture location for the Beginnings Period is **Genesis 1-8**.

Duration

How much time elapsed before the Flood? That is a difficult question. If one adds together the ages of the ten Beginnings Patriarchs (Genesis 5) at the age when each is said to have fathered his first son, then one would conclude that *at least* 1,656 years elapsed between Creation and the Flood. Christians have never been dogmatic about this time element. Some scholars believe that some names have been omitted from the list in Genesis 5, as is frequently done in biblical genealogies. For the purpose of

this crash course in Bible history, we will designate the duration of the Beginnings period as *uncertain*.

Theme Scripture

The first verse of the Bible sets the theme for the Beginnings Period. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). The details of how God created the heavens and earth are part of the report of the Beginnings Period.

Key Players

Seven major characters are in the spotlight during the Beginnings Period.

- ❖ **Adam and Eve**
- ❖ **Cain and Abel**
- ❖ **Seth**
- ❖ **Enoch and Noah**

Adam (*ad'-uhm*) and **Eve** (*eeve*), the only human couple created directly by God's hand, are certainly worthy to be remembered.

Cain (*kayn*) and **Abel** (*ay'-behl*), possibly twin brothers, were the first humans who ever entered the world by the birth process.

Not much is known about **Seth** (*sehth*), except that he became Adam's son through whom the promised Messiah eventually came into the world. For this reason he makes the list of worthies in this period.

Enoch (*ee'-nawkh*) and **Noah** (*noh'-uh*) are the only two men in the Bible who are said to have *walked* with God (Genesis 5:22; 6:9). Both Enoch and Noah also experienced God's salvation. Enoch was saved out of the world so that he never experienced death (Genesis 5:24); Noah was saved through the Flood.

Major Events

During the years of the Beginnings Period five major events are recorded, four of which are mentioned in the New Testament writings. Read the New Testament references beside each of the events. Be prepared to share with the class what you learn from the New Testament about these great events of the Beginnings period. Here are the five events:

- ❖ **Creation of the world** (Hebrews 11:3; John 1:1-3)
- ❖ **A sudden Fall** (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14)
- ❖ **A vicious murder** (Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12)
- ❖ **A unique rapture** (Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14-15)
- ❖ **Corruption of marriage**

Creation (*Genesis 1-2*). There are two accounts of the creation of the world. In Genesis 1 God created the universe (1:1). He then formed (1:3-13) and filled (1:14-31) the earth in six days. In Genesis 2 God gives us an enlargement or zoom shot of the sixth creative day. We learn that on the sixth day God created man, a garden, special garden animals, and a lovely bride for Adam. That God is the Creator and that man is the special creation of God are foundational truths of the Bible.

Fall (*Genesis 3*). The term *Fall* refers to the first sin. Adam and his bride Eve chose to disobey the only prohibition God had given them. Eve was deceived by the devil. She in turn led her husband into disobedience. Because of this deliberate sin Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. They lost access to the tree of life that was in the midst of the garden. The process of death began to work in their lives.

Fratricide (*Genesis 4*). Life was hard for Adam and Eve outside the garden. Eventually two sons were born. Abel grew up to be a righteous man. He gave to God the best that he had in worship. His brother Cain, however, was evil. He went through the motions of worshiping the Lord, but Cain only gave to God the

leftovers of his crops. Cain became jealous because it was obvious that God favored Abel. Eventually Cain **murdered his brother**. God expelled Cain from the area where the human family was rapidly growing. Cain was forced to become a wanderer on the earth. Among Cain's descendants civilization developed. Sin became more prevalent and ugly.

Rapture (Genesis 5:24). Eventually God gave to Eve a son to replace Abel. That son's name was Seth. Among his descendants were some godly people. The godliest of them was Enoch, the seventh from Adam. Enoch walked with God in such intimate fellowship that one day God simply took him to heaven. This is called the **rapture** or translation of Enoch. He was translated or transformed into his immortal heavenly body without passing through death. What happened to Enoch is what will happen to the saints of God who are on the earth at the time Christ returns. Christians will be transformed in a twinkling of an eye into their immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Corruption. In spite of the few bright spots like Enoch, the general tendency of mankind was to become ever more rebellious against God. Marriage as originally established by God broke down. The sons of God—probably the descendants of Seth—married the daughters of men whomever they chose. The reference appears to be to polygamy. About the time of these sinful marriages a group of bullies or tyrants called *Nephilim* (*ne-fihl-ihm'*) arose on the earth. They filled the earth with violence (Genesis 6:11). The picture is one of complete lawlessness and immorality. Corruption of marriage was the culminating sin of the Beginnings Period.

Great Miracles

Creation was a miracle from start to finish, as was the deliverance of Noah from the Flood. No other miracles are recorded during this period, unless the sign given to Cain was some unspecified miracle (Genesis 4:15 NASB).

God's Message

The Bible records the great truths that God revealed over the centuries of human existence. This is called *progressive revelation*. In the Beginnings Period four great truths were revealed.

- ❖ **Dignity of man/equality of woman**
- ❖ **Structure of marriage**
- ❖ **Existence and work of Satan**
- ❖ **Need of a Savior**

Human dignity. Human beings were the crown of God's creation. That the creation of man was unique is indicated several ways. Before the creation of man there was deliberation within the Godhead (Genesis 1:26). Only man was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Only in respect to man is the sexuality – male and female – spelled out. This indicates that sexuality for man is different than for the animal kingdom. The woman was created from a rib taken from the side of man. This signaled that she was not inferior in any way to him. Man and his mate were given dominion over all the other creatures. God spoke directly to the first couple and blessed them. All of these facts indicate the dignity of man and the equality of woman.

Marriage. When God brought the woman to the man, he was inviting the two to form a union (Genesis 2:22). God, in effect, performed the first marriage in the beautiful surroundings of the Garden of Eden. Adam cheerfully and eagerly received his bride. She in no way protested the union. She gladly accepted the name that Adam bestowed upon her (Genesis 2:23). Genesis 2 sets forth the divinely ordained structure of marriage.

From the account in Genesis 2 the following principles about marriage can be deduced. First, marriage is monogamous and heterosexual. God created only one woman for Adam. Second, God sanctioned the union by bringing the woman to the man. True marriage is sanctioned by the governing authority. Third, both the man and the woman freely and eagerly entered into the

union. Fourth, the couple was invited to be fruitful and multiply. Sexual union is expected in marriage. Fifth, marriage establishes a bond equivalent to blood kinship. Adam declared: “*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*” (Genesis 2:23).

Moses himself (inspired by God) set forth three principles of marriage. “*A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24).

Satan. The Bible does not say much about how Satan came into being. He simply showed up in the Garden of Eden. Obviously Satan could not have been created in an evil state by God, for that would make God the author of evil. At some point prior to the creation (Genesis 1) one of God’s highest angels must have led a rebellion against God (Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4). Satan is not the equal of God; he can only do what God permits him to do. God permitted Satan to tempt Eve in the garden so that she might have the opportunity to make a conscious decision to obey the Lord.

Satan is called *Serpent* in Genesis 3. When he approached Eve he questioned God’s goodness and denied God’s word. Obviously Satan hates everything that God loves. Satan delights in dragging down people who are made in God’s image just as he deceived Eve in the garden.

Savior. The Fall of man into sin demanded countermeasures by the God who loves mankind and wants every person to be saved. Sinful man needed a Savior! God promised that someday One of the descendants of the woman would crush the head of Serpent (Genesis 3:15). This first revelation of the gospel is called by Bible students the *Protevangelium*—the first gospel. This is a way of saying that God would provide victory over Satan and evil. When Christ died on the cross, he dealt a crushing blow to the devil (1 John 3:8).

Christian Application

There are many New Testament references to the early chapters of Genesis. John 1:1-3, for example, makes clear that Christ

was present and actively involved in the creation of the world. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”* (See also Colossians 1:15-16.)

Watershed Event

A watershed event is one that was so important that it closed out one period and introduced a new period of biblical history. The first watershed event was literally a downpour of unparalleled proportions. The Flood is the main concern in four chapters of the Bible.



right now and read these New Testament references to this great event: Matthew 24:38-39; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 2:5.

Here are the key facts about the Flood:

- ❖ **Extent: worldwide**
- ❖ **Sources: rains and fountains of the deep**
- ❖ **Duration: over a year**
- ❖ **Survivors: eight people + representative animals**
- ❖ **Means of survival: a large boat called an ark**
- ❖ **Purpose: judgment on sinful mankind**
- ❖ **Result: a second start for mankind**

The Flood occurred in the 600th year of Noah’s life. Key dates in the rise and fall of the waters are noted. Noah must have been keeping a diary during this world-changing event. The rains fell for forty days and nights, but the waters prevailed over the earth for 150 days. It took seven additional months for the earth to dry out sufficiently for man to again inhabit it. In all, the survivors were on the ark for 370 days.

God found only one righteous man on the earth in the days before the Flood. Noah and his sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth)

and their wives found grace in God’s eyes (Genesis 6:8). They demonstrated their obedience to God by building the ark, herding the animals on board, and entering the vessel on the appointed day. The major families of animals were represented by at least one mated pair. Clean animals – those most used by man – numbered either seven or (more likely) seven pairs (Genesis 7:2; see footnote in NIV).

The Flood survivors rode out the Flood on a large vessel called an ark. This vessel was more than one-and-a-half football fields long. It had three decks. The decks were sectioned off for the various animals. The ark was built of gopher wood, which cannot be identified with certainty. The NIV interprets gopher wood to be cypress, which is known to have been used for ship-building in ancient times. The vessel was waterproofed with pitch or bitumen. This is a petroleum-based, sticky substance that oozes up from the ground in some areas of the Near East.

The Flood judgment cleansed the world from sin. It enabled mankind to make a fresh start.

Summary Chart

C R E A T I O N	Period # 1		F L O O D
	BEGINNINGS PERIOD		
	Genesis 1–8		
	Major Players Adam & Eve Cain & Abel Seth Enoch & Noah	Major Events Fall A Murder A Rapture Corrupt Marriages	
	Duration At Least 1,656 Yrs.		