

Genesis

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Tradition says that it was one of the first five books written by Moses, but scholars now believe that Moses' name was attached to give more authority.

The book was written to answer the question, "Where did all of this come from?" It begins with the creation of the world. When God has finished creation, God gives Adam and Eve—identified as the first humans—the responsibility of being wise stewards over this creation.

Their children and grandchildren eventually turn away from God, becoming so wicked that God can only find one righteous person, Noah. Noah builds an ark; the people and animals on board are the only survivors of a great flood, but after the flood ends, God sends a rainbow as a promise that there will never be another flood like that.

Hundreds of years later, Noah's descendant Abraham is called by God to journey to a new land. Even though he is very old, he believes God's promise that he and his wife Sarah will have many descendants. He has two sons, Isaac (by his wife) and Ishmael (by the slave girl Hagar, and whom we learn little about); these two are considered the ancestors of the Jews and the Arabs.

Isaac grows up and has twin sons, Jacob and Esau. They don't get along because Jacob cheats Esau. Jacob has to leave home, lives with his uncle for 20 years, but finally returns back to the land of Canaan with a new name—Israel.

Israel has twelve sons, and his favorite is the youngest, Joseph. Joseph is sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, but because of his God-given gift to interpret dreams, he becomes second-in-command, warning Pharaoh that there will be a terrible famine. He is given authority to stockpile food—and he eventually meets and reconciles with his brothers when they come to Egypt to buy food. The whole family moves to Egypt until the famine is over. The book ends with the death of Joseph, whose last promise is that the children of Israel will be brought back to the promised land.