



# An Exposition of 1:1-12:3

## Introduction

Five Points Baptist Church | Northport, AL  
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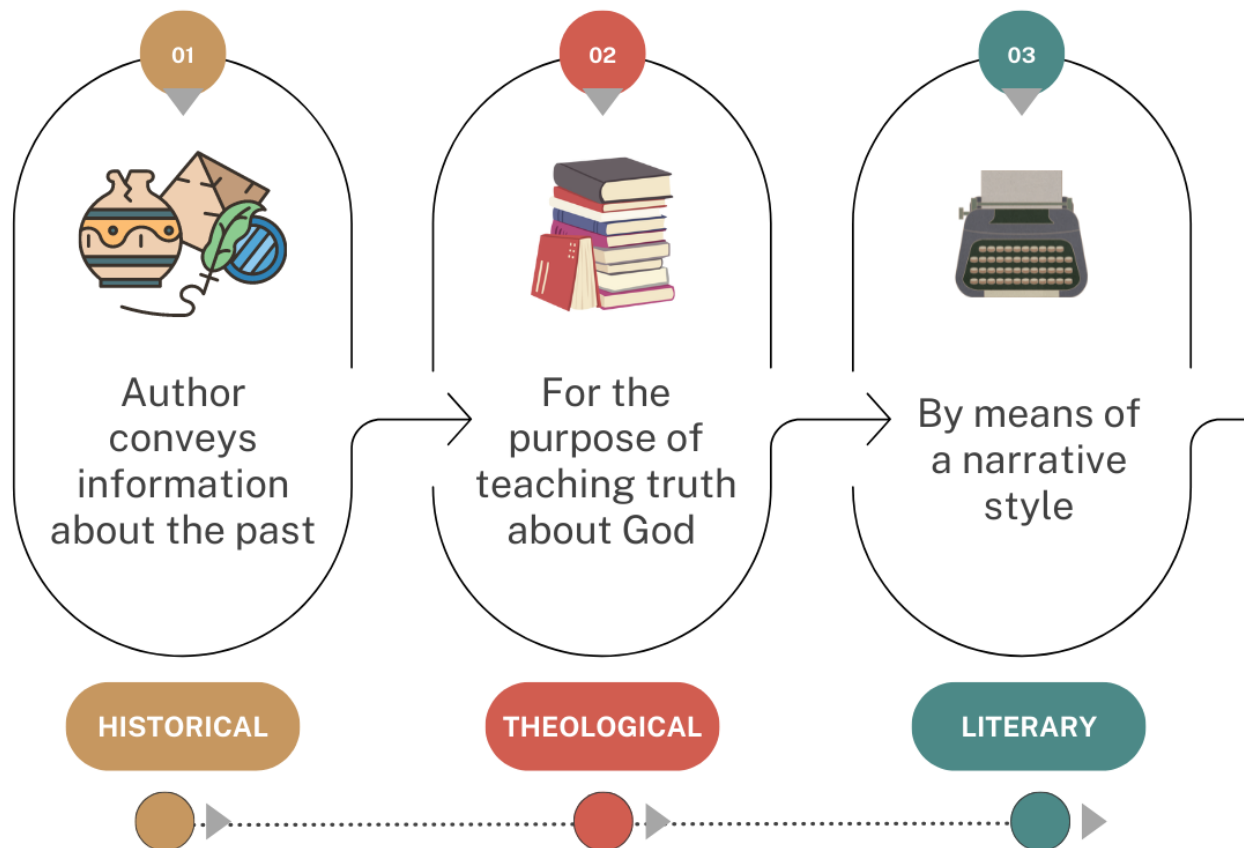
FIVE POINTS BAPTIST  
TREASURING JESUS TOGETHER

## Features To Pay Attention To In Genesis

Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman has noted three features that we must take note of in our study of Genesis: (1) History, (2) Theology, and (3) Literary Style. We must consider each of these if we truly want to grasp what God has for us in this amazing book!

In these early chapters of Genesis, we see that the author has a clear interest in conveying information to us about what happened in the past (historical). But this isn't just history for history's sake. Unlike a standard history textbook that you may have read in high school or college, the author of Genesis has a broader aim than just giving us facts. He wants to help us understand truth about God (theological). How does he set out to do this? By means of a distinct literary style. Genesis conveys theology in the context of history by means of narrative.

### Primary Features

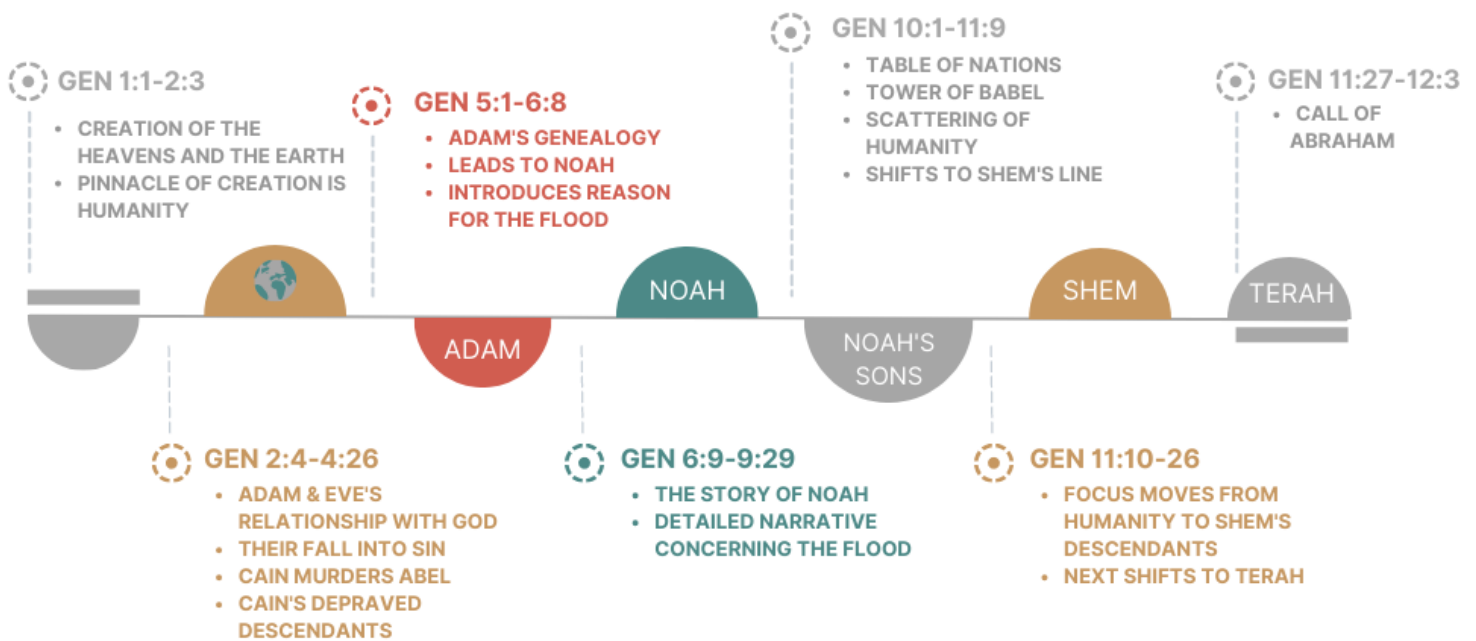


## Literary Structure

# GENESIS 1:1-12:3

## TOLEDOT STRUCTURE

"Toledot" is built off the Hebrew verb "yalad", which means "to give birth". Our English translations render this as "The generations of". This toledot structure helps the reader understand how the episodes in Genesis are organized.



As seen above, the author has helped us understand how the narrative is structured through what scholars call the "toledot" formula. This word is rendered as "the generations of..." in our English Bibles, and helps to mark off each major section in Genesis 1:1-12:3. When we understand this structuring device the author used, we see that a new section begins in 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, and 11:27. You can think of each of these as *episodes* within the broader storyline. While each episode has its own unique plot and characters, they also contribute in some way to the bigger picture (Genesis 1:1-12:3).

What should also be seen through the toledot structure is how there is a gradual narrowing in focus. Genesis 1:1-2:3 begins with God creating the heavens and earth (and no toledot formula is present). Here we learn of His dealings with humanity on a general level. But as the narrative progresses, the storyline continues to narrow until we are introduced to Abraham. In other words, the narrative begins with humanity *generally* and then progresses toward Abraham and his family *particularly*. And once we get to Abraham, the rest of Genesis is a continuation of this storyline. Before we move on to consider the broader contexts of Genesis 1:1-12:3, we first need to ask why the author has chosen to structure the narrative using the toledot formula. The reason is because he is ultimately giving a family history.

### **The Storyline of Genesis 1:1-12:3 Through The Toledot Formula**

**Genesis 1:1-2:3.** In the first section, we read about God creating the universe and the world and everything in them. The pinnacle of His creative acts was humanity. In Genesis 1:26-28, we are told that He made people in His image (this is not true of any other living being) and that their commission would be to rule over the created world and fill the world with more image-bearing humans through multiplication.

**Toledot 1: Genesis 2:4-4:26.** The first “toledot” of the “heavens and the earth” helps move the narrative forward in several ways. First, in Genesis 2 we get a glimpse of the deep intimacy Adam and Eve shared with God in the Garden. While humanity had a commission to fulfill (Gen. 1:26-28), they were to do so in the context of a close and warm relationship with God. They were given only one prohibition — not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). Unfortunately, Satan, in the form of a serpent (Revelation 12:9), successfully deceives Adam and Eve into eating the fruit from that tree. The consequences for their actions were spiritual and physical death (Ephesians 2:1-3) and removal from God’s presence in the garden (Gen. 3:22-24). But God does give a promise of hope in Genesis 3:15. He tells the serpent that there will be a “seed” born of woman who will one day crush his head. This sets up for how the rest of the story will unfold. As readers, we are now put on alert to be looking for when this seed will be born. In Genesis 4 we read of Cain murdering Abel and it seems that the promise of the seed has been exterminated. But the story continues to the next toledot.

**Toledot 2: Genesis 5:1-6:8.** Genesis 5:1 opens up with God granting Adam and Eve another son, Seth. Thus, the promise of Genesis 3:15 is preserved. The rest of Genesis 5 is a genealogy of Adam leading to Noah. Noah will become a major player in the third toledot (6:9-9:29), but before the narrative goes into detail with him, this toledot ends in 6:1-8 by updating the reader on how bad things have gotten.

Humanity's "wickedness... was great in the earth, and... every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). The result? God decides to send a flood to wipe out humanity. But if He does that, how will the promise of Genesis 3:15 be fulfilled? The answer comes to us in the next toledot.

**Toledot 3: Genesis 6:9-9:29.** In this episode, God once again preserves His promise from Genesis 3:15 by preserving Noah and his family. Unfortunately, Noah's life ends with a sad story confirming his own sinfulness. Thus, we must continue to wait and look for the promised Seed to be born.

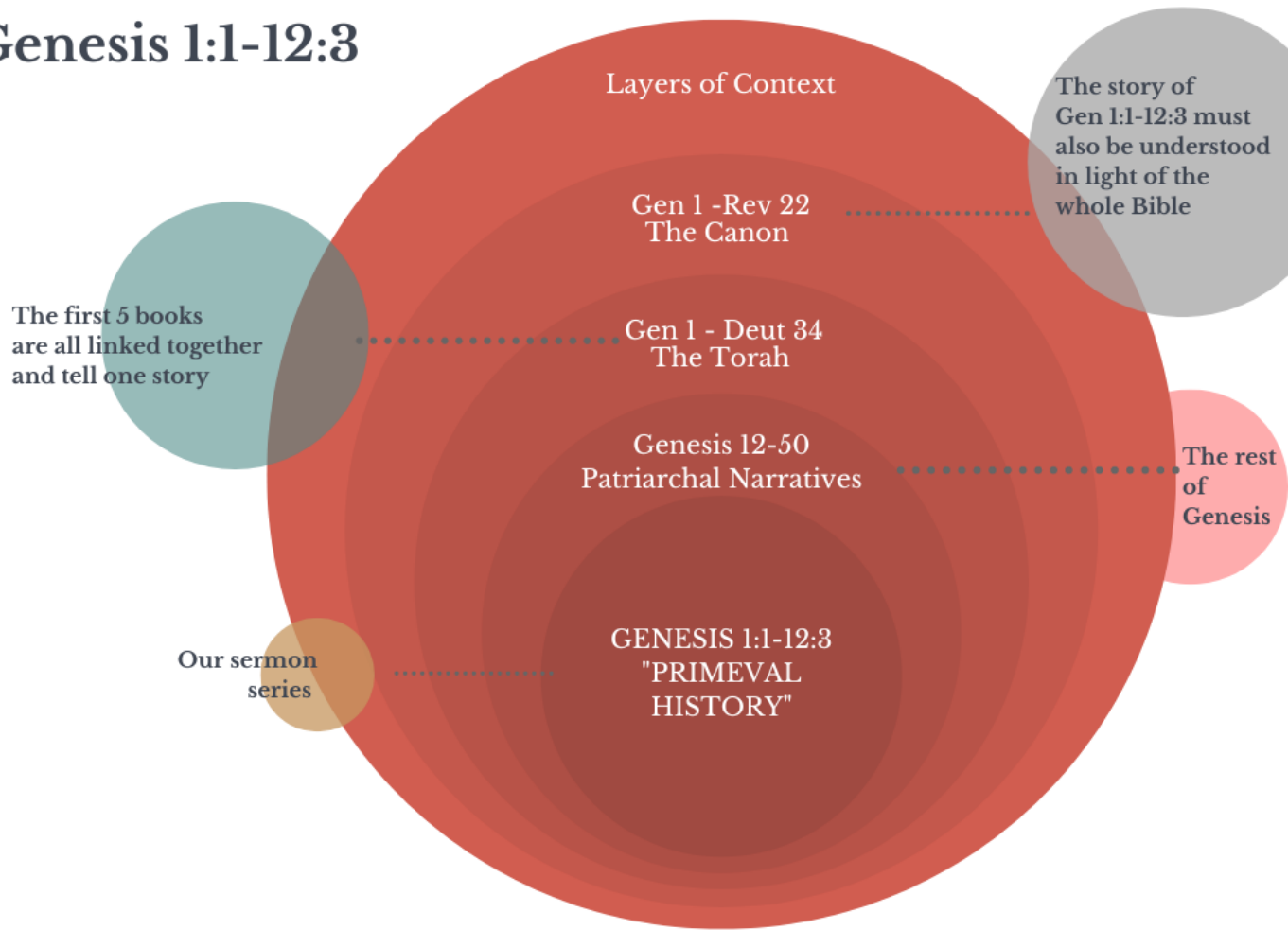
**Toledot 4: Genesis 10:1-11:9.** In this section, we are told about the nations of the world which stem from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Here again we see the sinfulness of humanity. God's commission for people in Genesis 1:26-28 was for them to multiply and spread over the earth. At Babel, we see people coming together in order to make a name for themselves by constructing a huge tower (Gen. 11:4). God has to come down in order to see this tower and when He does He confuses their language so that they would spread abroad as He intended. But even though one part of the commission is fulfilled (people filling the earth), they are still trapped in their sin. We are still waiting on the promised Seed who will come and crush the serpent's head and restore God's blessing on all the peoples of the earth.

**Toledot 5: Genesis 11:10-26.** That's where this toledot section comes into play. Here we realize that it is through the line of Shem that the promised Seed will be born.

**Toledot 6: Genesis 11:27-12:3.** This final episode narrows it down even more. Terah, who is in Shem's line, has 3 sons, one of whom is named Abram (or later, Abraham). And it is in Genesis 12:1-3 that we learn that it is through Abraham that the line of the promised Seed will continue. In verse 3 of that chapter, the LORD tells Abraham that it will be through his descendants that one day all the families of the earth will be blessed. Why? Because the promised Seed will be born through Abraham's lineage.

But that's not the end of the story! We must continue reading through Genesis and the rest of the Bible to find out how the story ends. And that leads us to the different layers of context in which we must place Genesis 1:1-12:3.

# Genesis 1:1-12:3



Our sermon series will cover the first 12 chapters of Genesis. Scholars often refer to this section of Genesis as the Primeval History. It deals with God's interaction with humanity at a *general* level and ends by introducing his dealing with Abraham's descendants in *particular*.

That's how the story continues in Genesis chapters 12-50. This section is commonly known as the Patriarchal Narratives, because it deals with Abraham and his primary descendants. From the growth of this family, the nation of Israel is formed. But by the time we reach the end of Genesis, the story still isn't over. Indeed, the next 4 books (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) all show that they are intimately linked together. The story of Exodus depends on Genesis and points forward to Leviticus. The story of Leviticus depends on Exodus and points forward to Numbers. And the story of Numbers depends on Leviticus and points forward to Deuteronomy. In other words, the first 5 books of the Bible are meant to be understood as a unity. They are all working together to tell one story. The Jewish people refer to these first five books collectively as *The Torah*.

But guess what? When we reach the end of the Torah in Deuteronomy 34, the story still isn't over! That means that the story that began in Genesis 1:1-12:3 continues through the remainder of Genesis (chapters 12-50), the remainder of the Torah, and the remainder of the Bible. Indeed, Genesis 1:1 begins with God creating the heavens and the earth. And Revelation 21:1 tells of God ushering in a new heavens and new earth.

The point here is that Genesis 1:1-12:3 must be read in light of those three layers of context: The whole of Genesis (Chapters 12-50), the whole of the Torah (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and the whole of the canon of Scripture (Genesis — Revelation).

Genesis 1:1-12:3

# Preaching Schedule

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## SEPTEMBER

9/11/22 | Genesis 1:1-13

9/18/22 | Genesis 1:14-2:3

9/25/22 | Guest Preacher

## OCTOBER

10/2/22 | Genesis 2:4-17

10/9/22 | Genesis 2:18-25

10/16/22 | Genesis 3

10/23/22 | Genesis 4

10/30/22 | Genesis 5-6:8

## NOVEMBER

11/6/22 | Genesis 6:9-7:24

11/13/22 | Genesis 8-9

11/20/22 | Genesis 10-11:9

11/27/22 | Genesis 11:10-12:3

# Recommended Resources

