

An ancient African proverb imparts wisdom about tackling huge projects: “How does one person eat a whole elephant? One bite at a time.” The *Genesis & Job* Series is the first bite of Eyewitness Bible Series in tackling the Old Testament.

The most casual reader soon recognizes the majority of the writings of the Old Testament have to do with the history of the Israelites (also known as Hebrews or Jews). Embedded in the Old Testament is a wealth of knowledge about God and his character, books of poetry and proverbs, and a host of prophecies.

In Bibles used by most Protestant Christians, the Old Testament consists of 39 writings, called books. The Eyewitness Bible Series groups these books into three different series:

- *Genesis & Job*: *Genesis* describes the creation of Earth, gives the history of all mankind, and describes a brief history of the Israelite nation from its beginning until it moves to Egypt. All of *Genesis* is saturated with knowledge about God, his power, and his relationship with mankind. *Job* is a story of an ancient man, his struggles, and his dealings with God. Although nothing is absolutely clear concerning the time period of his life, it seems as if Job lived in the time before the Israelite nation existed.
- *Promised Land*: Covers the time period from the Israelites being slaves in Egypt, their exodus to Canaan, and the conquering of Canaan. This series includes the Old Testament books of *Exodus* to *Judges*.
- *Prophets and Kings*: Covers the time period from the first prophet and king until the last prophet. It describes the initial occupation of Canaan, the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, the exile of the Southern kingdom, and the return to Judah. With the exception of *Job*, this includes the Old Testament books of *Ruth* to *Malachi*.

No modern book or movie competes with the sweeping drama of the book of *Genesis*. Its first sentence describes the beginning of the existence of the heavens and Earth, and introduces God. The book talks of the creation and history of ancient mankind over countless eons. It reveals characteristics of God and his desires to have a relationship with the humans he created. It tells of the birth of the Israelite nation, and the promises God made to Abraham. All of these things will reverberate through the remainder of Earth’s future.

A useful outline of *Genesis* might be:

- Creation of the heavens and earth
- Creation of mankind
- Adam and Eve live in Eden, then are exiled forever

- The lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve until the time of Noah
- Noah and the world-wide flood
- Abraham moves to Canaan
- God gives his promises to Abraham
- The descendants of Abraham become the Israelite nation
- Joseph is taken to Egypt and becomes a powerful ruler
- The Israelite nation moves to Egypt because of the influence of Joseph.

There are many challenges to readers of *Genesis* and *Job*. Perhaps the biggest challenge to modern readers is the lack of specific chronological markers in the texts. Maybe the next biggest challenge is determining which passages, if any, are meant to be symbolic instead of literal. And, if there are symbolic passages, what messages are intended by the symbolism? Christians are confronted with another level of interpretation. Which passages deal with Jesus and/or the messiah to come? Of those passages, what messages are conveyed to Christians that help them with their faith?

Anybody who attended Sunday School probably knows many stories from Genesis. It is a book filled with stories that young children remember. However, a lifetime of study may not reveal the rich textures and loving messages from God found in *Genesis* and *Job*.