Hey everybody, so this week you’re going to be reading in the book of Genesis. It’s a super long book of the Bible (50 chapters), but once you’re made aware of what’s going on in the main themes of the book, it’s really pretty easy to see what’s going on. So we’re going to cover it in two short videos here.

The book of Genesis breaks into two big pieces: chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-50. And I think about these two parts as if you were watching a movie or like a camera lens. In chapters 1-11 it’s about Yahweh and the whole world, Yahweh, the creator, God, and the whole world. Right here at chapter 12 the camera focuses in from the whole world to just into one guy and his family. A guy named Abram who would later be called Abraham.

Here is how the two parts relate (we’ll just cover the first half of the book in this little video). The story of Genesis begins with two different, ancient, Israelite creation stories. There is a story about how Yahweh makes a good world. He takes the darkness and the chaos that you read about in verse 2 of Genesis chapter 1 and turns it into light, and life, and flourishing. He makes these god-like creatures named humans or ‘adam in Hebrew. He gives them a commission to rule over the earth, to steward, to care for it, to tend to the garden, to multiply, flourish, and so on. He gives them a real sweet piece of real estate and he gives them a choice to obey and trust his wisdom or rebel.
The humanity chooses rebellion from the Creator. That begins in chapter 3 and pretty much chapters 3-11 the author of Genesis is concerned with tracing the downward spiral of humanity and all of humanity’s relationships just fracturing apart because of sin.

You read these stories and they’re kind of random. They’re about a guy and his wife having a quarrel about who actually disobeyed God first. You have a story about two brothers, one murders the other. You have a story about a guy who marries two women, the first polygamist in the Bible, and he begins the oppressive institution of polygamy, and then murders a young boy for hitting him. And then you get this weird story about angels coming down and marrying women or something. It is just these bizarre stories, but they all tie together because every one of these stories the author is painting a picture of what’s gone wrong with humanity, this downward spiral. Marriages break apart because of sin. Families break apart. Societies break apart.

So God’s response to this is the story of the flood which is right here in the middle. God brings the flood as an act of judgment on humanity, but he saves somebody. He saves Noah and Noah becomes sort of like a new Adam for whom the new human race comes.

So both we have right here this first chunk that Yahweh is going to bring justice on humans’ sin and rebellion. But He’s going to rescue and redeem and bring new life out the other side. Genesis 1-11 is just this downward spiral of humanity. The story climaxes here in chapter 11 with all the nations coming together to the land of Babylon and they build a tower. They say “We’re trying to make a name for ourselves” and
they’re trying to reach their way to the heavens to reach to God. What does God do? He sees their arrogance, their hubris, and he scatters them.

Basically what Genesis 1-11 paints for us is the world as we know it. Why is the world the way it is? Why is it so screwed up? It’s screwed up because there is something broken inside of us. Our relationships with Yahweh and with other people, and the earth itself have been broken because of sin. So that’s the portrait in Genesis 1-11. That’s what all the stories are about.

The question the author of Genesis poses you with then is as you look at the world around you and it’s totally screwed up, and people are screwed up. What is God doing about it? What is God’s response to a world in rebellion? God’s response is the rest of the book of Genesis.

The key hinge piece of the entire book is right here in chapter 12 verse 1-3. God calls one guy out of the entire rebellious nations, a guy named Abram. He [God] makes a promise a to him that he’s going to bless Abram, that he’s going to make him into a great nation and through Abram’s family (he’s later going to be named Abraham) that he’s going to bring blessing to all nations. That’s how this story (the story of Abraham and his family) relate to this story. What is God’s response to a world in rebellion? He chooses a family through whom he’s going to work out the salvation in the world and bring blessing to all nations. As you cross through into Genesis 12-50, the fate of the world, the world’s salvation hangs on one guy and his family and the promises that God made to him.
So That’s how the book of Genesis fits together in its two parts, and that’s the big chunk of what you’ll be reading this week. In the next video we’ll cover how the rest of the book of Genesis fits into the whole.