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NIV | NEW INTERNATIONAL
VERSION

Mail: Biblica Europe
The Mount Business
and Conference Centre
2 Woodstock Link
Belfast BT6 8DD

Website: BiblicaEurope.com
E-mail: BiblicaEurope@Biblica.com
Phone: +44 (0) 28 9073 5875

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2011 British Text NIV

GENESIS

Genesis explains how one nation comes to have a special role in God's plans for all of humanity. Early on the order and harmony of God's good creation are overwhelmed by the destructive consequences of human rebellion and pride. The violence, injustice and suffering that follow lead God to condemn and restrain human wickedness through the judgment of the great flood. God then makes a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, providing an ongoing framework for the story. The family of Abraham – Israel – will be God's chosen means to bring the nations back to himself. Genesis closes with Abraham's descendants having grown into a league of large tribes, but they are not in the land God has promised them. So the story leads naturally into the books that follow.

The book is divided into twelve parts by eleven repetitions of the phrase this is the account of a certain person. Each section is about the life and family of the person named. These are woven together to document the story of humanity and the beginnings of God's plan to restore them and their place in his world through Israel.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

⁶And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

⁹And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

¹⁴And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶God made two

great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' ²³And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^a and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

²⁹Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was mornin – the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^a and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶but streams^b came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man^c from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^d and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^e ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

¹⁸The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam^f no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs^g and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^h he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called "woman",
for she was taken out of man.'

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

3 Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?''

²The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."'

⁴'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. ⁵'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

¹⁰He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

¹¹And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

^a 5 Or land; also in verse 6 ^b 6 Or mist ^c 7 The Hebrew for man (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (*adamah*); it is also the name *Adam* (see verse 20). ^d 12 Or good; pearls ^e 13 Possibly south-east Mesopotamia ^f 20 Or the man ^g 21 Or took part of the man's side ^h 22 Or part