



Key Passage: Genesis 12:2-3

Key Thought: God chooses a people, separating out one through whom He would bless all nations.

1. Creation

1:1 God comes first (in sequence and in importance), is the primary agent, and everything else is completely dependent on him for their existence. (cp. How Paul tells the story in Ephesians: Chapters 1-3 is what God did for you.)

Bible is a story. Begins with creation, ends with new creation (Rev 21-22)

1:26ff The Trinity at work.

(a) The Spirit creates and sustains life (see Ps 104:29; Job 26:13; Ps 33:6; Isa 32:15) and human life is dependent on the Spirit (Job 33:4; 34:15-15; Gen 6:3). In NT—creates life (womb of Mary)

(b) Jesus is the great creator (Jn 1:1-3; col 1:15-16; heb 1:2) AND the new Adam who comes to dwell within the world he created.

(c) Christians as new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:14-15). God makes good creations out of nothing, speaks into the void in our lives, and creates by the Word.

2:1ff God's good and blessed creation is destined for rest (Shalom). New creation will be good, ordered, lead to rest, everything right. Made for pleasure and rest. More beautiful than we can imagine.

Chapter 3: Sin corrupts everything: Land (work/live), seed (progeny), blessing (inheritance). We live with the tension between a good world and a fallen world. Live in a world of tension between both realities. But we will see God's blessing to Abraham include a promise involving land (world), seed (Jews, Gentiles, Christ), and blessing (life with God).

Answers 4 basic questions: Where are we? Who are we? What went wrong? What's the solution? Genesis 1-3 answers the first 3 questions; Gen 4-11 fleshes out the third question. Then beginning in Genesis 12, we have the solution promised.

Where are we? Creation is distinct from God but dependent on God. Creation is good. Creation reveals a good God; creation is good in God's sight; Creation is good as God's temple.

Who are we? Created to rule, kings in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28); located to serve, priests in the order of creation (Gen 2:15); created in relationship, male and female, for our task in creation.

What's gone wrong? Sin infects every part of life for every human being (physical, spiritual, rational, social); sin affects the earth; sin permeates human society and history.

What's the solution: the seed (Gen 3:15) of Abraham (Gen 12:2-3)

2. Covenant with Noah

Covenant is "a formal agreement between two parties characterized by dedication and commitment."¹

Gen 6:18-first explicit mention of "covenant.". Ratified in Gen 9:8-17.

First, God chooses someone to make a covenant with (Gen 6: Noah found grace)

Second, Promise made by God (Gen 8:22)—an everlasting promise

Third, A Sacrifice is given (Gen 8:20-21)

Fourth, A sign to remind people the covenant is reliable (rainbow)

8:15-9:17: Covenant with Noah is a covenant with CREATION (not just with Noah, but with all life on the earth).

¹ H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible: A Study of 10 Key Themes Traced Through the Scriptures* (Wipf & Stock, 2014), p.30.

We see conflict between God and humanity. Humanity sinful. God merciful; at times calling his people righteous. But his people inevitably fail. God is the reason humans survive, the covenant survives, and the future is secure.

3. Confounding Babel

Gen 11—God confuses and scatters babel is as much preventative as punitive. He causes his will to be done (multiply and fill the earth), he keeps them from destroying themselves, and he shows that he is actually at work with every tongue, tribe, and nation!

Salvation will not come to the world through human enterprises. God will redeem the land where his people dwell—wants his people over all the earth. Redeem the world.

4. Covenant with Abraham

God continues to separate out one through whom he will bless all nations (Adam, Noah, Abraham).

12:1-3: Messianic

God as the actor. Notice “I” language in Gen 12:2-3; God is relentlessly committed to a purpose. (Paul calls this the gospel-Gal 3:7-8) Also Acts 3:25 and Gal 3:26

Acts 13:26 “Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, to us has been given this message of salvation!” (see Luke 1:55, 73, where the prayers are thanking God for fulfilling what he promised to Abraham and his offspring forever.)

Mercy—God intervening without any human merit

12:1-3 Inherit the “land” is changed to “inherit the world” in Rom 4:13 (“all the nations of the earth be blessed, etc).

15:1-6: Going to have a son as heir. And your offspring will be as the stars in the sky. At end of Genesis there are 75 people! But Ex 1: multiplied... NT: Jews and Gentiles...Rev: ten thousands times ten thousands.

Choosing a people is major theme in OT. See 1 Peter: chosen nation, royal...

15:1/ 17:1-2 God chooses a person

Notice!! Covenant with Abraham: he will become a great (1)nation (through elderly childless; see Lk 1), enjoy God's (2) blessings (Eph 1:3) and live in God's (3) land, and through them all the nations of the earth will come to know God's blessing. Reversing the curse of Gen 3 already!

Also, notice God already knew, anticipated: Gen 15:13-16 – God will bring Abraham's descendants out of slavery in a foreign land. Compare to before foundations of world.

New: God introduces himself before covenant (stronger/weaker)

Promise: Gen 15:18 (17:1-8, restated as everlasting covenant)

Sacrifice (animal), but later human sacrifice anticipated (Isaac),

Sign: Gen 18:11—circumcision sign of covenant

New: Obligations: 17:14—obligations people must keep (cp James 2:21, 23)

15:6: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; James 2:23; cf Rom 4:9). Where is this?

See Rom 4:1-4, 9 Faith counted as righteousness. But faith is about “walking” more than the sign (see Rom 4:12). Active obedient faith (Heb 11:8, 17)

New covenant: Eph 2:11-12/ Sign of the covenant: baptism and Lord's supper

But confidence and boasting in the PROMISE not the obedience:

Abraham father of us all, grace to his offspring—not the law, but by PROMISE (Gal 3:18, 29) and our sharing in faith (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:14) receive the blessing (Gal 3:9). So anyone who is “of faith” is a son of Abraham (Gal 3:7)

The 10 Commandments can be summarized by Jesus: Love God (Commandments 1-4) & Love Neighbor (Commandments 5-10).

The Golden calf (Ex 32-34) is a reminder that idolatry will continue to be a problem. God delivered the Israelites from external threats (slavery in Egypt). But constant care and awareness is needed to avoid internal threats. Similarly, we have been delivered from the power of sin. But our internal nature (the desire to sin) continues to need molding by God; thus, we are given his Spirit to sanctify us.

5. Life of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

Gen 18:18-19: Blessing all nations was always the plan. Election of Israel is not rejection of the others. Also, it carries a moral responsibility.

18 Sarah: miraculous birth sign of the promised child Isaac.

Gen 19: Lot, Sodom

Notice Lot chooses good land (rather than surrender) and pitched his tent toward Sodom. Next time we hear of him, he's moved into town. (Badness of humanity; easily tempted). Yet God wanted to rescue Lot. In fact, he wanted to rescue them all. Remember "If you can find 10 righteous people, I'll spare the whole city." Noah flood—only 8! But we see the beginnings of what will finally be true: if God finds 1 righteous person he'll spare the whole world in Jesus. Not willing that any should perish! Patient. Even waits to let Lot get out of town. Wife turns back—pillar of salt. Turning back is a symbol for where her heart was. If her heart is there, and she returns to the group, it won't be long before they move back in or worse—create a new Sodom in the camp. It's protection as much as punitive.

NT—Righteous Lot! He didn't turn back.

Gen 21 Hagar: "God heard the voice of the lad." "God was with him, and he grew." Outsider? God at work!

Even Abraham having two kids (one by slave woman, one by free woman) used to illustrate gospel in Gal 4:22.

Gen 22 Sacrifice Isaac. KJV "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Change emphasis! It was on the 3rd day that he saw the sacrifice opportunity. Hebrews says: He was convinced...he was coming down with a resurrected boy. Found alive on the 3rd day. Voice from heaven: "thy only son" (twice). Called "monogenes" (only begotten) in Hebrews. Same word in John 3:16. Found a substitute.

At end of chap 22, Text says Bless and multiply because didn't withhold only son. And in thy seed, all nations of earth be blessed." Promise made to 'seed', which is Christ (Gal 3:16, 19).

What about Isaac's faith? Ambrose (late 4th century): "Isaac feared the Lord, as was indeed but natural in the son of Abraham; being subject also to his father to such an extent that he would not avoid death in opposition to his father's will."

Jacob and Esau: like Cain and Abel, another example of the lesser chosen over the greater; weak over strong; the younger rather than the older (unexpected, upside down kingdom). Prodigal Son read through the lens of Jacob and Esau (Jew/Gentile relationship in NT). Life in the kingdom (whoever wishes to be lord must be servant of all).

God is kind to the people of Abraham because they are special to him. In Genesis, God appears to Abraham's descendants such as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, Because special to

God, he promises to bless them—despite the difficulties they face, some of which result from their own wrongdoing.

26:24—God of Abraham. Fear not, I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring because of Abraham. (cp Luke 1 to Mary)

28:13—God of Abraham and Isaac. I'll give you and your offspring the land (cp. Acts 2:39)

31:42-Because of God of Abraham and Isaac on my side; without him I would have been sent away empty handed (cp song “had it not been the Lord who was on our side)

50:24-Joseph about to die. But God will bring you to the promised land he promised to A, I, J. (cp. God will be faithful to his promise)

6. Life of Joseph

Joseph: gospel of redemption. At just the right time, son of Abraham who is favored by father treated badly by his own—even to the point of death; spends years in the wilderness of prison; rises to become ruler at the right hand of Caesar, and protects the chosen people, welcoming them into the land of plenty.

Tertullian: “Joseph, again, himself was made a figure of Christ in this point alone (to name no more, not to delay my own course), that he suffered persecution at the hands of his brethren, and was sold into Egypt, on account of the favour of God; just as Christ was sold by Israel—(and therefore,) “according to the flesh,” by His “brethren” when He is betrayed by Judas.”

Ambrose: “Joseph...though he dreamed that sun and moon and stars made obeisance to him yet was subject to his father’s will with ready obedience. So chaste was he, he would not hear even a word unless it were pure; humble was he even to doing the work of a slave, modest, even to taking flight, enduring, even to bearing imprisonment, so forgiving of wrong as even to repay it with good.”

7. Christ in Genesis?

Gen 3:15 Seed will crush head (called the protoevangelium, “first gospel”).

Gen 18 3 Strangers (“Abraham stood before the Lord”)

John 8: Abraham rejoiced to see my day...

Gen 32:22-32 Jacob wrestles with angel. Claims to have wrestled with God.

Messiah as king: 49:8-12

8. Hook Questions:²

1. In what ways has God equipped you to be a blessing to other people? Do people avoid you, or do they find in you some evidence of Christ's life, which has a character and quality they desire for themselves? Are you able to tell them about the source of this life in a clear way? Do your words and life communicate something good and attractive to unbelievers, or something no one would want?

2. Are Christians a blessing to you? Many of us seem to struggle with communicating the blessing of God in Jesus Christ as good news. Is there anything about the way this communication sometimes takes place that puts you off? How can you avoid these problems yourself?

3. What can you do to make yourself a clearer (and more relentless) message of the good news of Jesus Christ to those around you? Are you tapping into the resources God has made available to every believer? Are you aware of how you come across to others? Can you identify areas of your life that hinder your service as Christ's ambassador? Are you willing to tackle these areas with the strength God provides you?

² Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* (Zondervan, 2012), p.16.