

Genesis

“I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse those who curse you,
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 12:3)

In biblical studies beginnings are the indispensable materials for understanding declarations about the end. “Genesis” means “beginning” or “generations” and as such aptly titles the first book of the Bible. Genesis gives us essential information for answering the five big questions, which when answered form the basis of a person’s world-view. Those questions are: (1) Where did we come from? (2) Why are we here? (3) What is the problem? (4) Where are we going? and (5) How do we get there? The foundation for answering each of these questions is laid in Genesis. Genesis tells us that we (and everything else in the universe) are the result of the creative act of God and that we are here to exercise dominion over the rest of creation as His vice-regents. The problem is that mankind rebelled against God’s way of realizing this purpose with the result that all creation fell under a curse of deception, debilitation, and death. However, mankind is destined to restoration to full partnership with God in His reign over the universe through a salvation that He alone can provide which will lead ultimately to the restoration of creation order that He alone will effect. Genesis contains the seed-plot of each of these facets of man’s existence all of which are developed and finally resolved in the rest of the Bible.

Authorship

The question of the authorship of Genesis is inseparable from the issue of the origin and composition of the Pentateuch as a whole. Though these five books nowhere state that Moses was their author, Jewish and Christian tradition holds this to be so on the

basis of numerous and specific textual references. Moses' writing activity is referred to both within and outside the Torah. He was to record certain events (Exod 17:14; Num 33:2) and laws (Exod 24:4; 34:27); he wrote a song (Deut 31:22). Since Moses received God's revelation of the Law and it found its way onto a scroll, it stands to reason that he was responsible for it. Joshua associates the Book of the Law with that which was commanded by Moses (Josh 1:7–8). Later on the Israelites referred to the "Book of Moses" with reference to certain regulations and procedures (2 Chr 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1). In addition, Jesus and the early church attributed the Law to Moses (Matt 19:7; 22:24; Mark 7:10; 12:26; John 1:17; 5:45; 7:23). Though there are a number of insertions and additions, especially in the later books of the Pentateuch, which post-date Moses (e.g. the report of his death and certain explanatory remarks) these are not sufficient to deny the "essential authorship" of Moses.¹ The unity of the Pentateuch is another powerful argument for a single authorial hand, notwithstanding the co-authorship of the Holy Spirit.² Modern theories that deny Mosaic authorship fail to give an adequate basis for discovering the meaning of the text.³

Date

Accepting Genesis as part of the Book of the Law (of Moses) it would have been written during his ministry, between 1486 and 1406 B.C. As an introduction to the Exodus and the creation of the nation of Israel it is conceivable that Moses could have

¹ Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 40.

² For a recent structural display of the unity of the Pentateuch see David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 47-102. See also John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

³ For a discussion of these theories see Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 60-78 and Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 40-48.

worked on it in the early part of his ministry of delivering Israel from Egypt so that the first generation could benefit from the knowledge of their origin. It cannot be later than 1406 B.C., the date of Moses' death.

Historical Setting

Genesis covers the greatest expanse of time of any book in the Bible with the exception of Revelation (which extends into eternity future). The events in Genesis begin with the creation of the universe and end with the entrance of the family of Jacob into Egypt in 1876 B.C.⁴ There is no way to calculate this span of time, but for sure it covers thousands of years. When cultural and historical reference points do appear they are Mesopotamian, Canaanite, or Egyptian. The patriarchal period occurs during the Amorite occupation of Canaan which may have facilitated Abraham's movement into the area or at least allowed for it.⁵ During Abraham's time (ca. 2090 B.C.) Egypt was known for showing "courteous hospitality to Semitic peoples."⁶ Joseph's sojourn in Egypt probably occurred during the Middle Kingdom which "was a peaceful reign characterized by an improved agricultural and economic life and by the fostering of close relationships with western Asia. Joseph would not be unwelcome on the basis of his ethnic background."⁷

Original Readers / Occasion

Since Genesis serves as the introduction to the Exodus and the subsequent formation of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and the descendants of Jacob, the original readers would have been the second generation, and perhaps the first as well, as

⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987, 1996), 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

they were preparing to fulfill their covenant mandate in the Promised Land. Thus, the occasion for the writing of Genesis is entirely bound to the creation and purpose of Israel as the covenant people of promise.

Special Issues

The Creation Accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. With the advent and growth of source criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries passages like Genesis 1 and 2 began to be disassociated with respect to origin. It was supposed, on the basis of such things as the use of different divine names, that such accounts had arisen over a long period of time as completely separate traditions, and were joined only much later by editors seeking to make certain points about Israel and its history. This eventually came to be known as the documentary hypothesis and was utilized in accounting for much of the Old Testament.⁸ Though such theories of literary composition fly in the face of the text itself and are contrary to numerous examples in ancient literature, the interpreter who accepts Mosaic authorship is still faced with the question of Why two accounts of creation. The answer must be sought in the meaning of the text itself as it relates to the larger canonical purpose of the Pentateuch, rather than in theories of composition. Since creation is given priority in the unfolding of the origin and purpose of the nation of Israel, these two complementary accounts of creation—one cosmic and universal, the other man-centered and specific—must relate to that history (see below).

Science and the Interpretation of the Bible. Since Genesis portrays the beginning of the physical universe what is knowable (actually or supposed) about the physical realm via scientific study must be related in some fashion to the written text. Questions

⁸ See Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 62-71.

dealing with things like the age of the earth, the origin and development of life, and the size and nature of the universe have both scientific and philosophical components, since their actual inception is couched in the unrecorded past. Should the Bible be interpreted by, or only in a way that is strictly consistent with, scientific data? Or should the Bible be taken as asserting factual scientific truth regardless of what may be demonstrable in the lab or viewable through the telescope. Issues such as the meaning of “day” in Genesis 1:1—2:3, the origin of life via creation versus evolution, the origin and development of the species, and the age of man are some of the questions that can confound those committed to both the accuracy of the biblical text and the pursuit of a scientific understanding of the universe in which we live. With respect to the interpretation of the Bible two things must be affirmed: (1) the text of Scripture is the final authority for whatever it actually asserts and (2) there will never be a complete and indisputable reconciliation of all scientific data with biblical cosmology since God has decided to allow apparently contradictory data to remain side by side in His universe. What the interpreter must be careful to do is ascertain what the Bible is actually asserting before making pronouncements in the realm of physical science (or any other field of study). The Bible was not written as a scientific treatise; however when the text of Scripture clearly states that something happened in the physical realm (like a dead body coming back to life or the waters of a sea inexplicably separating) then the Bible is “expecting” to be believed.⁹ One final comment is in order. Whatever view one takes of the origin and age of mankind with respect to science, the issue of sin’s introduction cannot be lightly dismissed. There

⁹ For a well reasoned example of the way in which this tension should be approached see Frederic R. Howe, “The Age of the Earth: An Appraisal of Some Current Evangelical Positions,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142:565 (January-March, 1985): 23-36 and 142:566 (April-June, 1985): 114-28. See also Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 84-97.

is no question that the Bible asserts mankind's creation in innocence and subsequent fall. Any scientific theory that discounts this most fundamental facet of theology must be suspect with respect to its understanding of anthropology.

The Nature and Extent of the Flood. A key feature of Genesis is the account of what appears on the face of it to be a world-wide flood that destroyed all but eight people of the human race. The case for a universal flood is clearly based in the text. The difficulty comes in seeking to validate that understanding by means of the geologic and fossil records. Certain types of scientific evidence for a universal deluge may have been overstated or misrepresented in the past by well-meaning commentators and apologetes. Once again, it must be remembered that the biblical text is the final authority as properly understood with respect to what it is actually asserting. That God inflicted judgment upon the human race and started over with one family cannot be debated. How that looked meteorologically and what actually transpired ark-eologically will never be completely understood, if at all.¹⁰

The Genealogies. Before there was the wealth of information about ancient civilizations that we now have, it was not uncommon to view the genealogies of Genesis as tight, that is as having no generational gaps, therefore making it possible to date creation, which Bishop Ussher did as 4004 B.C. The genealogies are not intended to give a strict chronology of mankind from creation to written history, but rather to set forth God's dealings with mankind through certain individuals and their progeny. While the figures for people's ages must be taken at face value, simply summing them does not

¹⁰ For an overview of the issues see *ibid.*, 101-106. For an interesting study from the standpoint of how extrabiblical evidence has been handled over the years see Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995).

yield a historically verifiable chronology until they arrive at a point at which they can be coordinated with extra-biblical history, such as in the case of Abraham and his descendants.

Message

Israel's existence stems from God's unconditional promise to Abraham to create a nation from his descendants, through which He will restore the earth to a fully harmonious condition of blessing wherein man reigns as the vice-regent of God.

Outline

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| I. | Prologue: Creation resulted in a universe ordered for the blessing of mankind as God's vice-regent on earth. | 1:1—2:3 |
| | A. Summary Statement: God is the sovereign creator. | 1:1 |
| | B. Activity of Creation: God creates perfect order out of disorder. | 1:2–31 |
| | 1. The initial condition was one of darkness and chaos. | 1:2 |
| | 2. God's creative activity results in the establishment of a co-regency with man. | 1:3–31 |
| | a. God begins to overcome the darkness and chaos. | 1:3–13 |
| | b. God completes the restoration of order with man at the pinnacle of creation. | 1:14–31 |
| | C. Concluding statement: God sanctifies the day of His rest following the finished work of creation. | 2:1–3 |
| II. | Primeval Degradation: Contrary to the design and intent of creation mankind rebelled and came under judgment. | 2:4—11:26 |
| | A. The Account of the Heavens and Earth: The original condition of blessing is replaced by a curse due to mankind's sin. | 2:4—4:26 |
| | 1. Man is placed in special relationship with the Creator. | 2:4–25 |
| | a. Man is formed as a unique being. | 2:4–7 |
| | b. Man is given responsibility and privilege in the garden. | 2:8–17 |
| | c. Man is completed as a complement of genders. | 2:18–25 |
| | 2. Man violates relationship with God and becomes estranged. | 3:1–24 |
| | a. Adam disobeys God's prohibition. | 3:1–13 |
| | b. God places all under a curse. | 3:14–24 |
| | 1) The serpent is cursed with humiliation and enmity. | 3:14–15 |
| | 2) The woman is cursed with sorrow and subservience. | 3:16 |
| | 3) The man is cursed with frustration and futility. | 3:17–19 |

- 4) Though God provided man with a means of fellowship with Himself, He also restricts their former place of blessing. 3:20–24
 - 3. Man reaps a curse as the consequences of his sin. 4:1–26
 - a. Cain murders Abel and experiences banishment. 4:1–16
 - b. Mankind divides over its respect for God and His laws. 4:17–26
 - 1) Society sprung from Cain repudiates God’s rule, replacing it with the desires of man. 4:17–24
 - 2) Some men choose to submit to God’s rule. 4:25–26
- B. The Account of Adam: The descendants of Adam produce a wicked population necessitating divine judgment. 5:1—6:8
 - 1. Mankind continues to obey the divine mandate to procreate, though under the shadow of death. 5:1–32
 - a. Man’s creation in the likeness of God is reviewed. 5:1–2
 - b. Though living long lives, all of Adam’s children die as a consequence of the curse of sin. 5:3–32
 - 2. Violation of divine boundaries brings mankind under the shadow of judgment. 6:1–8
- C. The Account of Noah: Noah becomes the agent of salvation from God’s judgment and the recipient of a covenant of preservation for the human race. 6:9—9:29
 - 1. God judges the earth but saves a remnant through Noah. 6:9—8:19
 - a. God is pleased with Noah who becomes the agent of salvation. 6:9–22
 - b. God judges the world through a flood but delivers Noah’s family in the ark. 7:1–24
 - c. God directs Noah to establish a new order on the earth. 8:1–19
 - 2. God establishes a covenant of preservation with mankind through Noah. 8:22—9:17
 - a. Yahweh vows to not curse the ground as in the flood. 8:20–22
 - b. The mandate to multiply is reiterated with a new relationship to the rest of creation. 9:1–7
 - c. A covenant of restraint in judgment is made and signified by the rainbow. 9:8–17
 - 3. Noah’s descendants remain prone to the curse of sin. 9:18–29
- D. The Account of the Sons of Noah: Nations have their beginning coincidental with the judgment of scattering. 10:1—11:9
 - 1. Noah’s sons become the nations of the earth. 10:1–32
 - 2. Mankind’s presumption at Babel brings God’s judgment of scattering through the confusion of languages. 11:1–9
- E. The Account of Shem: God chooses Shem to be the progenitor of Abraham. 11:10–26

- III. Patriarchal Promise: To restore the earth to its intended condition God institutes a covenant of blessing with Abraham and his descendants. 11:27—50:26
- A. The Account of Terah: Abraham becomes the recipient of God's unconditional covenant of blessing for the whole earth. 11:27—25:11
1. Yahweh makes a covenant of blessing with Abraham, promising him land and seed. 11:27—15:21
 - a. Yahweh calls Abraham to a new land with promises. 11:27—12:3
 - b. Abraham begins to dwell in the land though not in complete trust. 12:4—13:24
 - c. Abraham delivers lot and pays tithes to Melchizedek. 14:1—24
 - d. Yahweh enters into covenant with Abraham. 15:1—21
 2. Yahweh assures Abraham regarding the promises of seed and land. 16:1—20:18
 - a. Abraham acts on his own to secure the promise resulting in the birth of Ishmael. 16:1—15
 - b. Abraham is promised a son by Sarah and receives circumcision as the sign of the covenant. 17:1—27
 - c. Abraham is visited by Yahweh in assurance and revelation. 18:1—33
 - d. Lot is delivered from Sodom and fathers two nations. 19:1—38
 - e. Abraham acts on his own to protect the promise of the seed. 20:1—18
 3. God fulfills for Abraham the promise of the seed. 21:1—25:11
 - a. Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah and confirmed as the seed of promise. 21:1—22:19
 - 1) Isaac's birth confirms Yahweh's promise. 21:1—7
 - 2) Isaac's exaltation protects Yahweh's purposes. 21:8—21
 - 3) Abraham secures peace with the Canaanites. 21:22—34
 - 4) Abraham's faith results in covenant confirmation. 22:1—19
 - b. Isaac is provided with a wife for the promotion of the seed of promise. 22:20—24:67
 - 1) Rebekah's family is related to Abraham. 22:20—24
 - 2) Sarah dies and is buried in Canaan. 23:1—20
 - 3) Isaac receives a wife from Mesopotamia to provide for the seed of promise. 24:1—67
 - c. Abraham, before he dies, provides for Isaac in preference to the rest of his sons to protect the promise. 25:1—11
- B. The Account of Ishmael: Abraham's firstborn son is blessed but not as the son of promise. 25:12—18
- C. The Account of Isaac: Isaac's son Jacob is selected to receive the covenant of blessing. 25:19—35:29
1. Jacob is selected as the son of covenant blessing. 25:19—27:40
 - a. Jacob and Esau are in conflict from the beginning. 25:19—28
 - b. Esau sells his birthright. 25:29—34

- c. Isaac is blessed by virtue of Yahweh's covenant with his father Abraham. 26:1–35
 - 1) Yahweh appears to Isaac to assure him of blessing. 26:1–5
 - 2) Isaac's faith falters with respect to the sanctity of marriage and the protection of the promised seed. 26:6–11
 - 3) Isaac prospers and lives at peace in the land. 26:12–33
- d. Esau takes wives of the Canaanites. 26:34–35
- e. Jacob steals the blessing of the firstborn from Esau. 27:1–40
- 2. Jacob lives in exile out of fear for his life. 27:41—33:20
 - a. Jacob flees Esau to get a wife whereas Esau adds a Canaanite bride to his house. 27:41—28:9
 - b. Jacob encounters Yahweh at Bethel and receives assurance of the covenant of blessing. 28:10–22
 - c. Jacob marries Leah and Rachel and bears eleven children. 29:1—30:24
 - d. Jacob flees Laban with prosperity from God to return to Canaan. 30:25—32:21
 - e. Jacob wrestles with God at the Jabbok. 32:22–32
 - f. Jacob is reconciled with Esau and returns to Canaan. 33:1–20
- 3. Jacob is confirmed as the recipient of the covenant of blessing. 34:1—35:29
 - a. Dinah's defilement illustrated the threat of Canaanite assimilation. 34:1–31
 - b. Jacob is commanded to return to Bethel where Yahweh confirms the covenant and changes his name. 35:1–15
 - c. Jacob dies without a son being designated as inheriting the covenant of blessing. 35:16–29
 - 1) Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin. 35:16–20
 - 2) Reuben dishonors his father. 35:21–22
 - 3) Jacob's twelve sons are listed indicating that they will carrying forward the promise as a family. 35:23–26
 - 4) Isaac dies. 35:27–29
- D. The Account of Esau: Abraham's non-elect seed is blessed with respect to its treatment of the seed of promise. 36:1—37:1
 - 1. Esau marries Canannites but is still blessed by Yahweh because he exhibits respect for his brother Jacob. 36:1–7
 - 2. Esau becomes a nation blessed by God. 36:8—37:1
- E. The Account of Jacob: Joseph becomes God's instrument for the preservation of the children of Israel, the objects of the promises of blessing. 37:2—50:26
 - 1. Joseph is chosen and prepared to deliver his brothers. 37:2—41:57
 - a. Joseph is honored by his father but rejected by his brothers. 37:2–36

- b. Judah's failure illustrates God working to protect the promise. 38:1–30
- c. Joseph is enslaved and mistreated but then elevated by God. 39:1—41:57
 - 1) He is sold into slavery and taken advantage of by an Egyptian. 39:1–20
 - 2) He is blessed in prison and elevated into Pharaoh's court. 39:21—41:57
 - a) He distinguishes himself to the prison keeper. 39:21–23
 - b) He displays divine insight in the interpretation of dreams. 40:1—41:36
 - c) He distinguishes himself before Pharaoh and is elevated over all the realm. 41:37–57
- 2. Joseph's brothers are prepared for reconciliation with their brother-deliverer. 42:1—45:28
 - a. A famine providentially delivers them into the hand of Joseph for testing. 42:1—38
 - b. The famine providentially directs them back to Egypt for a demonstration of repentance and familial responsibility. 43:1—44:34
 - c. Joseph is reconciled to his brothers. 45:1–28
- 3. Jacob moves to Egypt as God's providential means of preserving the family from assimilation. 46:1—50:26
 - a. Jacob journeys to Egypt and settles in Goshen as God's provision for the family's preservation. 46:1—47:12
 - b. Joseph becomes a blessing to Egypt as evidence of God's faithfulness to his promises to Abraham. 47:13–26
 - c. The children of Israel are prepared for a future return to Canaan. 47:27—50:26
 - 1) Joseph vows to bury Jacob in Canaan. 47:27–31
 - 2) Jacob blesses Joseph's sons as members of the tribes of Israel. 48:1–22
 - 3) Jacob blesses his own sons as the twelve tribes. 49:1–28
 - 4) Jacob's death gives occasion for reassurance of God's ultimate purpose for the twelve tribes. 49:29—50:21
 - 5) At his death, Joseph assures Israel of their future return to the land and secures a promise that his remains go with them. 50:22–26

Argument

The structure of Genesis is fairly straight forward. It revolves around eleven sections beginning with the Hebrew word תולדות (*tôl' dôt*), variously translated as “genealogies,” “history,” “account,” or “descendants” followed by something (usually a person) that is to be traced out.¹¹ This makes the first section (1:1—2:3) a prologue to the whole book. On a larger scale the book divides into two major sections, mostly noticeably marked out by the dramatic change of pace as Moses begins to deal with one man and his descendants, namely Abraham. This results in the division of primeval history and patriarchal history (2:4—11:26 and 11:27—50:26). Generally speaking the prologue emphasizes purpose, primeval history focuses on problem, and patriarchal history highlights solution, though the last two contain both.

I. Prologue: Creation resulted in a universe ordered for the blessing of mankind as God's vice-regent on earth (1:1—2:3).

Genesis 1:1 is probably not intended to refer to the original act of creation *ex nihilo*. Grammatically and logically it is better to take it as a summary statement of which the next verse is an amplification. It is problematic to conclude that God would have originally created a world that was without form and empty, characterized by darkness and water. This refers to a subsequent act of creation, whereby the conditions of formlessness, emptiness, and darkness into which the world had fallen are replaced by perfect order and functionality, filled with life and capped by the special creation of man and

¹¹ Ross notes, on the basis of its etymology, that the word *tôl' dôt* “refers to the product or the result of its subject This subject marks the starting point in the narrative; the section combines narrative and genealogy to move from this point to the end of the *tôl' dôt* The *tôl' dôt* heading announces the historical development from the ancestor (or beginning point) and could be translated paraphrastically ‘this is what became of _____,’ or ‘this is where it started from’ (with reference to the following subject),” Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 71, 72-73.

woman.¹² The Bible nowhere explains the origination of evil and chaos in the universe. It is simply present in the tempter in the account of the Fall (Gen 3) and perhaps referred to in Isaiah 14 and/or Ezekiel 28. What is presented, in great clarity, is that the universe, as far as humanity is related to it, is the result of the orderly fashioning of God, the Sovereign of the universe who has ordained that man and woman should live in partnership with Him in a world created for their use and enjoyment. Hence, the prologue lays out the reversal of chaos through the divine activity of giving it a “form” on days one through three and then of “filling” that form with heavenly and earthly objects, including man as the pinnacle of creation (1:3–31).¹³ Theologically, the purpose for this special creative work is encapsulated in God’s blessing upon humanity: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion . . .” (1:28); “man as the image of God was created to represent God Himself as the sovereign over all creation.”¹⁴ In this way, Genesis 1:28–29 becomes the theme statement for the whole Bible, since this arrangement of vice-regency is shortly to be marred by sin (Gen 3), plunging the whole creation under a curse until such a time as redemption is accomplished and all is restored to a perfect order. As indication of the perfect completeness of creation to this end, God blesses and sanctifies the seventh day as a reminder of this mandate of dominion (2:1–3). Hence, the prologue to Genesis (indeed to the whole Bible) sets forth mankind’s original condition and ultimate destiny, God having done everything necessary for their blessing.

¹² For a full discussion of the various evangelical views on creation and their corresponding interpretations of this passage, along with an analysis of the grammar, cosmology, and theology of the creation accounts of Genesis see Bruce K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132:525 (January-March 1975):25-36; 526 (April-June 1975):136-144; 527 (July-September 1975):216-228; 528 (October-December 1975):327-342; 133:529 (January-March 1976):28-41.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 29-32. For a discussion of the meaning of the word of “create” in Genesis 1:1 as not necessitating the idea of creation *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”) see *idem.*, “Creation Account,” *BibSac* 133:528 (October-December 1975), 336-38.

¹⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, Roy B. Zuck, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 14.

II. Primeval Degradation: Contrary to the intent of creation mankind rebelled and came under judgment (2:4—11:26).

The basic idea of this section is reversal of the blessings of creation, though not without glimmers of hope along the way. Following an amplification of what it means for mankind to rule as God's vice-regent (2:4–25), sin enters the picture (3:1–7) with its awful and pervasive consequences (3:8—11:26).

A. The Account of the Heavens and Earth: The original condition of blessing is replaced by a curse due to mankind's sin (2:4—4:26).

Far from being a divergent view of creation, chapter two develops and displays the absolute blessedness of life before the fall. That mankind is more than just another evolved life-form is seen by the fact that Adam and Eve's rebellion negatively affected the whole universe, hence the title of this section, "the account of the heavens and earth" (2:4).

Man's special relationship with the Creator is seen first in the fact that the ground had been created with a view to man's tilling it (2:5–6). Being formed of that ground and yet animated by the very breath of God also marks the special nature humanity (2:7). Originally the ground produces only that which delights and satisfies (2: 8–9) and contains that which will enrich mankind (2:10–14). Work is granted as a positive (and enjoyable) expression of image bearing (2:15). However, as a derived and dependent creature, there must be a test of loyalty and obedience, for privilege brings with it responsibility (2:16–17). Mankind's exaltation does not entail self-assertive independence; "human dominion must be exercised within the framework of the permissions and pro-

hibitions of the King of whom man is only the image.”¹⁵ God’s creation of mankind in His image as male and female (cf. 1:27) is further developed around the idea of complementarity and completion as Adam begins to experience that relationship which is designed to aid him in his task of dominion (2:21–25).¹⁶ God’s design of His vice-regent mirrors His own personhood in component and function.

The impact of the events that are transcribed in just a very few verses (3:1–6) is both devastating and far reaching as Adam and Eve become estranged from their Creator and Lord. The one prohibition is too much to resist. The first Adam plunges the whole human race into servitude and separation by taking to himself the prerogative of unbounded autonomy (3:5). Instead of becoming like God, Adam and Eve become estranged from their Maker (3:7–11) and from each other (3:12) and come into conflict with their environment (3:17–19). God sets all under a curse (3:14, 17) though He Himself also moves to overcome their separation (cf. 3:15, 21). Enmity becomes the order of the day (3:15–19) and the full unhindered enjoyment of creation is divinely restricted (3:22–24). Life would no longer yield the satisfaction of reigning as God’s vice-regent over a submissive and supportive creation.

In the same way that Adam and Eve’s experience of dominion became spoiled, the other main part of their mandate, namely procreation, also experienced negative consequences (4:1–26). Even though there was delight in the bearing of the first two sons, there was also the grievous tragedy of the murder of one by the other, as Cain kills his brother (4:1–8). There is hardly a more heinous crime. God inflicts a curse on the guilty party (4:11–14) though not completely devoid of mercy (4:15). Already, the text

¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶ See Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126-27.

reveals God's gracious intention to restrict and overcome the effects of sin on the human race. Society in general experiences the same degradation of sin even while developing god-given capacities of cultural development (4:16–24). The only antidote for a complete and final breakdown of the human race is faith, which does find a home in some (4:25–26).

B. The Account of Adam: The descendants of Adam produce a wicked population necessitating divine judgment (5:1—6:8).

Now that the consequences of sin for the human race have been set forth, the narrative explores the ultimate ramifications, that is, what will happen if sin goes unchecked. The original mandate is repeated with respect to the provisions for procreation, namely, that mankind was created as male and female (5:1–2). It has already been seen that the fundamental joy of procreation had been spoiled by sin's entrance. Now it will be seen that as the human race multiplies, death reigns (5:3–32). No matter how long a person lived, death was the inevitable end, though one man is miraculously taken because he "walked with God" rather than merely "lived" (cf. 5:24).¹⁷ For the one who pursues God life has more to offer than death. Likewise, the birth of Noah affords hope in light of the curse (5:29). What Lamech's conception of that hope was is uncertain. What becomes evident quite quickly is that Noah will be the agent of salvation as God afflicts the whole earth in order to relieve it of its wickedness. This extreme judgment is necessitated by the violation of divine boundaries with respect to the human and angelic realms, as evil spiritual beings cohabit with human women in an obvious attempt by Satan to destroy the

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 174-76.

human race and thus nullify God's implicit intention to see His special creation realize its right of dominion (6:1–7).¹⁸

C. The Account of Noah: Noah becomes the agent of salvation from God's judgment and the recipient of a covenant of preservation for the human race (6:9—9:29).

As a result of the extreme wickedness of man, the earth once again comes under the waters of judgment.¹⁹ Like Enoch, Noah walked with God (5:9). However, Noah is delivered through the judgment of the earth rather than removed from it. He becomes recipient of the covenant (6:18, cf. 1:26–28) as clarified after the flood (9:1–8). The command to multiply and fill the earth remains unchanged (9:1). However, now the animal kingdom must be forcibly subdued and will become food for man (9:3). Not until the restoration of all things will the wolf lie down with the lamb and the child play with the adder (cf. Isa 11:6–8). In the meantime, God's covenant with Noah guarantees that the earth will not be judged by water again (9:8–17). God will preserve it until redeemed and restored. Though evil has been judged, it has not been eradicated. Even Noah falls victim to its defiling power (9:18–27).

D. The Account of the Sons of Noah: Nations have their beginning coincidental with the judgment of scattering (10:1—11:9).

Though sin's effect on the world will continue to deepen and expand, the genealogies begin to narrow their focus. The world is repopulated through Noah's three sons. By mention of the curse of Canaan it is evident that sin is still much at work in the

¹⁸ For a discussion on the problem of the "sons of God" see Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 (An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?)," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1981): 320-48.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the parallels between the waters of Genesis 1:2 and the present passage see Merrill, *Theology of the Pentateuch*, 23-24.

human race (9:26). However, the emphasis in chapter ten is on the development of nations and kingdoms (cf. 10:5, 10, 20, 31–32). This will serve as a backdrop for the theological account of the reason for the dispersion of the nations (11:1–9) as well as for the promise of the birth of a new nation to act as the agent of salvation (11:10—12:3). The other thing that is taking place is the tracing of a line of descent that extends all the way back to Adam. The line through Shem's descendant Eber and his son Peleg on the way to Abraham (11:16) will be resumed shortly. The division of the nations through the confusion of language at the tower of Babel demonstrates that man is still intent on autonomy and self-exaltation (11:4–6). However, instead of judging their rebellion, the Lord makes such monolithic feats extremely difficult through creating the barrier of (initially) undecipherable languages. Throughout the rest of Scripture Babylon, either actually or symbolically, will be found to oppose all that God sets out to accomplish.

E. The Account of Shem: God chooses Shem to be the progenitor of Abraham (11:10–26).

This account returns to just before the division of the earth (10:22–25) to trace the other line of Eber, that is Peleg. His line ends in Terah, the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Hence, the primeval history has progressed in two directions: one a ceaseless pursuit of its own way apart from divine direction and the other a line resulting in the patriarch Abraham.

III. Patriarchal Promise: To restore the earth to its intended condition God institutes a covenant of blessing with Abraham and his descendants (11:27—50:26).

Having stifled the swelling rebellion of self-directed unity through the creation of nations divided by language (with resulting cultural differentiation) God cove-

nants to create a nation through which He will restore all nations to the blessing of living under His rule as vice-regents over His realm. The rest of Genesis, as datable history, will trace the foundation of the creation of the nation Israel from Abraham, the descendant of Eber.²⁰

A. The Account of Terah: Abraham becomes the recipient of God's unconditional covenant of blessing for the whole earth (11:27—25:11).

Consistent with the pattern of the *tôlê dôt* introductory statements, the genealogy of Terah introduces the material about his most important son Abram (Abraham). Though Abraham was the youngest son he is listed first because he was the most important in the narrative purpose.²¹ His pagan origins and the barrenness of his wife Sarah highlight the unmerited nature of Yahweh's selection of him to be the beginning of a great nation. Yahweh calls Abraham to leave his country, relatives, and father's house and go to a land that he would be shown so that he could become a great nation. This arrangement will result not only in the blessing of Abraham, but eventually the blessing of all the families of the earth (12:1–3). Though Abraham was required to obey the Lord's command to go, the promises that are made to him here and expanded later in the narrative are unconditional after the ancient Near Eastern examples of the royal grant.²² God's strategy to bring mankind into a full experience of the blessing of dominion, originally envisioned in creation, is now focused in one man and his descendants in

²⁰ Eber (*'ēber*) is the patronym of the word "Hebrew" (*'ibrî*).

²¹ For a discussion of the dating of the patriarchs and their cultural and geographical background see Merrill, *Kingdom*, 25-40 and idem., "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (July–September 1980): 241–51.

²² Merrill, "Theology of the Pentateuch," 26-30 and Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184-203.

a (yet unspecified) tract of land. The rest of the patriarchal narratives revolve around the outworking of these promises against every kind human and Satanic obstacle.

By faith Abraham responds to this incredible proposition, moving into the land of Canaan as directed, and worshipping God along the way (12:4–9; cf. his building of altars in 12:7, 8). However, Abraham’s faith is not perfect as seen in a number of serious blunders. He abandons the land in time of famine for the bread of Egypt, exposing Sarah to what would have been a violation of the Lord’s purposes for her (12:10–20). When back in the land God begins to specify and amplify His promises concerning the land (13:14–18) and seed (15:1–21). Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek following his rescue of Lot presents him with a challenge of faith. Faced with choice of dependence upon God Most High or acceptance of the king of Sodom’s offer of material wealth Abraham chooses the former. His encounter with the priest-king Melchizedek, a type of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 5:6; 7:1–28), must have galvanized Abraham’s confidence in Yahweh’s promises.²³

In a covenant ceremony, in confirmation the Lord’s response to Abraham’s questions about the mode of promise fulfillment respecting the seed, Yahweh enters into an unconditional agreement with the patriarch to the effect that he will sire his own child whose descendants will return to possess the land of Canaan after a four hundred year sojourn (15:1–21). The rest of the Bible is the outworking of this complex of promises. In what might be considered a lapse of faith, Abraham sires a son by Sarah’s maidservant (16:1–16), only to be informed that the promise would be fulfilled in a child that Sarah

²³ Kidner comments: “The struggle of kings, the far-ranging armies and the spoil of a city are the small change of the story: the crux is the faith or failure of one man.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, in Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries series, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1967), 121.

herself would bear (17:15–22). As a sign of this covenant, and as another challenge to Abraham’s faith, the Lord institutes circumcision for the patriarch’s descendants (17:1–14). Abraham’s offspring would become a distinctive people in the world. This sign would remind them of that and serve as protection against the nation being assimilated by other peoples. Abraham’s descendants would be known by their supernatural inception and providential preservation (18:1–15) in contrast to the ways in which other nations came into being, exemplified by the two nations deriving from Lot, Moab and Ammon (19:30–38).

Isaac’s birth and separation from Ishmael (21:1–21) further demonstrate the elective purposes of Yahweh, though He must also bless Ishmael because of His promises to Abraham (21:18). Yahweh’s command for Abraham to sacrifice the son of promise, and the patriarch’s compliance, results in the penultimate validation of his faith in the Lord’s ability and resolve to effect His program of blessing (22:1–14; cf. Heb 11:17–19). Once again the covenant is confirmed (22:15–19). After Sarah’s death Abraham sends to Nahor for a bride for Isaac to guard against the danger of Canaanite assimilation (23:1–24:67). By now Abraham seems to have a perfect understanding of the Lord’s intentions with respect to the promised seed and so acts accordingly. Though Abraham had more children after Sarah’s death (25:1–4) he made sure that only Isaac was established in the land as the son of promise (25:1–6). The final verse of the Account of Terah summarizes the main point of the Abraham narrative by stating that “God blessed his son Isaac” (25:11).

B. The Account of Ishmael: Abraham’s firstborn son is blessed but not as the son of promise (25:12–18).

In order to underscore God’s promise to bless the descendants of Abraham, the account of Ishmael lists his children and their land inheritance. God’s election of special instruments for the accomplishing of His plan does not mean that there is no blessing for the rest of humanity. Even the nations that sprang from Israel will one day be blessed as members of “all the families of the earth” (12:3).

C. The Account of Isaac: Isaac’s son Jacob is selected to receive the covenant of blessing (25:19—35:29).

In accordance with to the *tôl’ dôt* pattern, by which the most important descendent of the particular head of family is developed, Isaac is almost completely overlooked since the “account” narrative moves from Terah to Isaac (not giving an “account” of Abraham!). This means that the account of Isaac focuses on his son Jacob as the elect seed and inheritor of the covenant of promise. Indeed the whole of Isaac’s life is summed up in chapter 26 which merely forms “an interlude to establish that the promises did indeed transfer to him.”²⁴ As with Abraham, famine puts pressure on Isaac to abandon the land of promise (26:1) which he avoids at Yahweh’s warning (26:2). Included with this warning is confirmation that he is the seed of promise whose descendants will be numerous and will receive the land (26:3–5). Yet, as with Abraham in his two unfortunate “betrayals” of Sarah, so Isaac exposes Rebekah to the same potential destruction of the line of the seed by exposing her to Abimelech’s attention as a possible wife (26:6–11). But Yahweh protects the line of the seed, as he had done with Abraham, rebuking Isaac in the process, then blessing him in the land with great prosperity (26:12–33), confirming the covenant a second time (26:23–25).

²⁴ Ross, *Genesis*, 433.

The opening paragraph of the account of Isaac introduces the theme of this section, and that is the acquisition of blessing in the midst of conflict and strife (25:1–28).²⁵ There is conflict in every situation that Jacob encounters until the very end when reconciliation finally does occur. Under and through it all, the reader sees Yahweh’s protection of His covenant intentions, even while He works with the covenant instrument to bring him to faith and obedience. Jacob’s basic strategy with respect to blessing is to acquire it for himself, by whatever means possible. Hence, he steals his brother’s birth-right (25:29–34) and the blessing of the eldest (27:1–29). When he has to flee Esau’s wrath over his covetous deception (27:30–46) he is directed to his ancestral home for the acquisition of a wife, once again in order to protect the line of the seed from Canaanite pollution (28:1–5). At Bethel, on his way toward Haran, Yahweh appears to Jacob in a dream and confirms him as the recipient of the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac (28:10–22). Though Jacob is duly impressed with the manifestation, he will yet require a process of breaking before he will be able to trust Yahweh for blessing on the basis of His oracle. While the patriarch experienced God’s presence and provision over the next years (cf. 28:20–21) his strategy for acquisition and supremacy did not change until his next meeting with the Lord on the way home (cf. 32:22–32).

Jacob’s experience in Haran was in many ways the reversal of the situation between him and his brother, for now it is the victor who is being taken advantage of (29:1–30). Not only is there conflict between Jacob and Laban, there is also conflict between his wives Leah and Rachel. Again, Jacob seems to be reaping the consequences of his past, all the while experiencing the blessing of the Lord as his family grows and

²⁵ Ross says “On the divine side, we learn how the blessing was guaranteed to Jacob; on the human side, we learn how the conflict between brothers threatened the blessing for Jacob” (ibid.).

grows (29:31—30:24). When finally Laban’s attitude toward Jacob begins to mirror Esau’s the Lord directs Jacob back to Canaan and his family with the promise that He would be with him (31:3). When Laban catches up with him and accuses him of stealing his household idols, Yahweh once again puts a hedge of protection around him, though from a human standpoint the company is delivered through Rachel’s dissimulation and Jacob’s protestations (31:22–55).

As Jacob prepares to meet Esau, Yahweh prepares to meet Jacob (32:1–3). Jacob’s strategy is to combine his own human ingenuity and devices with petition to Yahweh who had given him assurances of his safe return (32:4–21). However, his great fear and distress (32:7) betrays the fact that Jacob could still not trust Yahweh alone for his safety. Until Jacob was at the end of his own human strength and wisdom, he would never know the joy of the complete sufficiency of the grace and mercy of the all-powerful Sovereign of the universe. Jacob has been pursuing blessing, but not by faith. Therefore, God enters into a wrestling match with the willful mortal until he had been left lame, unable to fight if called on to do so—something that he must have been half anticipating (cf. 32:8) (32:22–32). Before God Jacob, the “One Who Grasps at the Heel (of Another)” (or “The Supplanter” cf. 27:36), is now “powerless and dependent.”²⁶ His name will be changed to Israel which will remind the nation for all time that their father had “struggled with God and with men, and [had] prevailed” (32:28). Jacob has “won” the blessing of God by fighting with God until disabled in his strength as a man. If the Lord was interested enough in bringing “Heel Grasper” into a face to face relationship with Himself that He wrestled with him all night, then no incapacity before Esau could

²⁶ Ross, *Genesis*, 549. See *ibid.* 553-54 for a discussion of the etymology and meaning of Jacob’s new name “Israel.”

make any difference in the outcome of their imminent meeting. That fight, by comparison, would be a non-fight. In fact the Lord had already performed a work of forgiveness in Esau's heart, resulting in their joyous reconciliation (33:1–17).

The fact that the nation would perpetuate Jacob's earlier practice of seeking to secure their own blessing by the schemes and power of the flesh is anticipated in the incident of the rape and avenging of Dinah, the daughter of Leah (34:1–31). The threat of Canaanite assimilation was, and would always be, a problem for Israel. However, using the sign of the Abraham covenant as a means of extracting revenge would certainly not have been Yahweh's way of countering such a threat.²⁷ Each of Israel's sons, and each generation of the nation after its formation at Sinai, would be in need of coming into what their father now possessed, namely, Yahweh's strength perfected in their own powerless dependence. Such behavior would become a regular occurrence in the nation's quest to be and become by their own strength.

Finally, Jacob is commanded to dwell at Bethel, which he obeys, apparently without compromise (35:1–7). At this point Yahweh also confirms his name change to Israel and pronounces him as the seed of promise a second time with special emphasis on its national aspects (35:11–12). Unlike his father Isaac, and grandfather Abraham, Jacob does not receive revelation regarding a "successor" to the seed promise. Rather, his twelve sons will become the nation, with none elevated above the rest at this point (35:23–26). This sets the stage for the final account, which will receive extensive treatment once the account of Esau is given.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 569.

D. The Account of Esau: Abraham's non-elect seed is blessed with respect to his treatment of the seed of promise (36:1—37:1).

This difficult section, which has a double *tôlê dôt* formula (36:1, 9), has to do basically with the blessing of Esau, though not as the seed of promise. The seed of Esau is blessed for two reasons: (1) because he was the physical descendant of Abraham and (2) because he became a blessing to Jacob (cf. 12:3). Therefore, this section contains a message of encouragement for the non-Israelite nations. The benefit for Israel derives from comparing the reference to Jacob dwelling in Canaan as a sojourner (37:1) with the repeated references to chiefs culminating in the listing of kings who reigned in Edom before there was a king in Israel (36:31–39). Whereas the descendants of Esau speedily realized their blessing in the world, Israel would have to patiently wait for all that was entailed in their blessing, living as sojourners in the meantime (cf. Heb 11:9–10).²⁸

E. The Account of Jacob: Joseph becomes God's instrument for the preservation of the children of Israel, the objects of the promises of blessing (37:2—50:26).

The story of Joseph is not only the climax of the Genesis narrative it is also a self-contained segment of beautiful literature.²⁹ It brings to a conclusion the beginning phase of the creation of a nation from Abraham's seed. Overall the Joseph story continues to reveal the themes of sovereign election and providential protection with respect to the Lord's purposes for the seed of Abraham. The account falls into three movements, all centering on Jacob's second to the youngest son.

In the first movement Joseph is chosen by God to become the family's deliverer, a fact that does not bring him honor but rather scorn and mistreatment (37:2—

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 585-88.

²⁹ See Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 121-24.

41:57). Being honored openly by his father and having communicated two revelatory dreams of personal greatness, Joseph becomes the object of scorn by his brothers who at first seek to kill him but instead sell him into slavery to Egypt (37:2–36). God is not mentioned in this chapter, evidence that He is working behind the scenes, using the sinful attitudes and actions of Joseph's siblings to work His purposes. Egypt is exactly where the Lord wanted Joseph.

The sordid affair involving Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar is anything but an interruption in the account of Jacob (38:1–30). It has several strands of purpose in the narrative. First, it reveals the unsuitability of an older brother, Judah, to give righteous leadership to the multiple seed of Abraham, even though Messiah will come from his line. When God's purposes involve leaders of outstanding character He is free to choose those instruments apart from family standing or social convention. As a result, the right man, Joseph, is in Egypt being prepared for the right moment. Secondly, it demonstrates once again the problems of Canaanite intermarriage. Were the family of Jacob to remain in Canaan, there was every probability that they would be assimilated into that godless and perverse culture before they could become a nation under Yahweh. Hence, as the story will eventually unfold in Moses' second book (Exodus), it was necessary to remove them from the land of promise until they were numerous enough to become a viable nation. Finally, and underlying all, is the fact that God's promise will not be thwarted by human failure. He will work around, in, and through human failure in order to accomplish His will.

Meanwhile, Joseph is experiencing even more difficulty, but not of his own making. The Lord is training him through testing, all the while proving his devotion and

openly displaying his character in preparation for moving him into a position of authority (39:1–23). While Judah is acting unrighteously, Joseph is resisting temptation and doing what is right. Yahweh's presence with him is demonstrated through his ability to interpret dreams which leads to Pharaoh elevating him over all the realm (40:1—41:57).

Abraham's seed is a blessing to others (cf. 12:2). Not only will his own family be saved from famine (and worse) but Egypt will benefit as well through divinely granted wisdom.

Joseph's brothers must be prepared spiritually for their Egyptian sojourn as well. Through the circumstance of the famine, the brothers are tested with regard to their current attitudes toward Jacob's remaining favorite son, Benjamin, and this time found to be without blame (42:1—44:34). The resulting reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers was a necessary factor in moving Jacob's clan out of Canaan. The whole family must relocate to Egypt in unity for God's nation building to proceed. When they do move, they are providentially segregated in Goshen since herdsmen were an abomination to the Egyptians; this was in order to avoid Egyptian assimilation (46:1—47:12). Joseph's presence in Egypt not only saved his family but it was instrumental in Egypt's survival of the famine as well (47:13–26). Under Yahweh's blessing and direction Israel was to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, even as Egypt enjoyed great benefit from Jacob's most distinguished son (Gen 12:2–3).

As necessary as it was for Jacob's family to be relocated to Egypt for a time, they were not to become permanent residents; in God's timing 430 years can be called a temporary sojourn! To that end the last section of the book anticipates a long term existence for the tribes as distinct yet united families followed by return to the land (47:27—50:26). As an expression of his confidence in Yahweh's promises to him and his fathers,

Jacob secures a pledge from Joseph to bury him in Canaan (47:27–31), which he does (49:29—50:14). Before dying, Jacob blesses his sons. Joseph he blesses in his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh (48:1–22), making them his own, and thus part of the tribes of Israel (48:5), and granting to the younger the greater blessing. This re-emphasizes the theme of Yahweh’s sovereign election, a theme that has been running throughout the whole narrative (48:8–20).

Combining character traits and certain behavior patterns coupled with inspired foresight Jacob blesses his sons, pronouncing the future for their tribes in the Land of Promise (49:1–28). The blessings do not follow the sons’ birth order nor does it honor the eldest sons above the younger (repeating Yahweh’s elective strategies as already abundantly displayed). Reuben, Simeon and Levi are listed first but not given the greatest honor because of certain negative actions (49:1–7). It is Judah whom the brothers will praise, for from him will come a ruler who will command the obedience of the people (49:8–12). The rest of Israel’s history is closely bound to this messianic promise.³⁰

Following Jacob’s death and burial in Canaan (49:29—50:14) the issue of tribal solidarity is addressed one last time as Joseph’s brothers seek assurances that he will continue to be well disposed toward them now that their father has died (50:15–18). Joseph’s response is in a way a summation of the whole narrative: even though evil is at work in the hearts of the seed of Adam, God is at work in the seed of Abraham to accomplish salvation, sometimes through the very actions that were intended to result in de-

³⁰ Kidner characterizes Judah’s blessing in this way: “In length and eloquence this blessing is only matched by that on Joseph, which it far outdistances in its range of prophecy. It pivots on the ‘until’ clause of 10b. Up to that point the theme is the fierce dominance of the tribe among its fellows (8b, 9). Then with the advent of the promised one, who will rule the nations, the scene becomes an earthly paradise such as the prophets foretell in their Messianic [sic] poems. It is a miniature of the biblical scheme of history” (Kidner, *Genesis*, 217-18).

struction (50:19–21). The ultimate case of this will be Messiah's death for the sins of the ones who killed him.

Genesis ends with evidence of God's gracious blessing (50:22–23) and assurance that He will indeed keep His promises to the patriarchs by returning the children of Jacob to Canaan as their inheritance (50:24). Joseph's faith in this promise prompts him to request that his bones be carried back at that time rather than requesting the immediate return of his remains as did his father Jacob (50:26). Hence, Genesis ends on a note of dramatic tension, demanding a resolution in anticipation of the Book of Exodus.

Summary

A great beginning warrants a great conclusion. Genesis has begun on a most exalted plain as it testifies to God's fashioning of the universe for the enjoyment and dominion of His penultimate creation Man. Creation's plunge into another experience of darkness and chaos brought on by the rebellion of Man sets the stage for another of the Lord's redemptive works, one that will take thousands of years. Genesis demonstrates the great necessity for such a work and then focuses on one man and his descendants as the key to the restoration of creation order. Abraham is the recipient of an unconditional covenant with Yahweh which will guarantee that restoration and which begins to specify how it will come about. God will create a nation from the patriarch and through a special Seed of that nation will bring blessing to all the families of the earth. The rest of the Bible is the outworking of these great promises.

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