
THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY: A BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY OF THE OLD AND NEW
TESTAMENTS

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PART ONE: FROM CREATION TO THE EDGE OF
CANAAN

GENESIS

1. CREATION

- a. The story commences where the book of Genesis begins, with the creation of the heavens and the earth (1:1).
- b. The first creation account (1:1-2:3) heralds the majesty and power of God for by His word He creates and orders the world in six days.
 - i. The simplicity and the depth of God's creative power are evident because all things come into existence by His word (Ps 33:6; Prov 8:22-31).
 - ii. God's creation of the entire universe communicates His sovereignty and lordship, for the creator of all is also the Lord of all.
 - iii. In creating the world, Yahweh shows His sovereignty over all other powers and gods (Ps 74:12-14; 89:5-13; 96:5; Jer 10:11).
- c. The creator of all is also the King of all, and His lordship is extended over a place – a realm.
 - i. Since God is the creator, it follows that “the creation exists for the praise and glory of its creator God... The earth is full of God's glory because what fills the earth constitutes His glory.” – Christopher J. H. Wright
 - ii. We see the glory of God when we delight in, reflect upon, and enjoy the world He has created.
 - iii. God's wisdom, power, and goodness in creating the world demonstrate His sovereignty over all things (see Ps 145).
- d. How should we interpret the “let us” in Gen 1:26? From a whole-Bible perspective, it should be understood as a reference to the Trinity.
 - i. The Spirit's role in creation is signified by His hovering over the waters (Gen 1:2; cf Ps 33:6).
 - ii. The Son's role as creator is even clearer (Jn 1:1, 3). The Word that spoke creation into existence (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26) is identified as the Son of God – Jesus the Christ (Jn 1:14).
- e. The other feature that must be considered is the creation of man and woman in the image of God (1:26-27).
 - i. If we pay attention to the text, the focus is on human beings as the vice-regents of creation (1:28). Human beings are in the image of God because they are servant kings and sons of God, and as a result of being made in God's image, they rule the world for God.
 - ii. This rule is not abstract, for God's reign is to be implemented in the world of space and time, over the good creation that God has made.

- iii. There are also indications that human beings functioned as priest-kings.
 - 1. Adam is commanded to work and keep the land (2:15). These two verbs are often used of priests and their work in the tabernacle/temple (Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14).
- f. The seventh day of creation (Gen 2:1-3) stands apart because on it God does not create but instead rests, since He has completed His creative work.
 - i. God's rest plays a significant role thematically in the storyline of the Bible (see Deut 5:12-15; Josh 23:1)
 - ii. The theme of rest points to the refreshment and joy found in God's presence, for the seventh day never ends. The Sabbath rest of God finds its fulfillment in the new creation, where believers will enjoy a heavenly and eternal rest during the eschaton (Heb 4:1-11; Rev 19-20).
- g. The second creation account (Gen 2:4-25) supplements the first by zeroing in on the creation of the man and the woman and their unique responsibility.
 - i. God's special covenant love for human beings is emphasized by the use of the term "Yahweh," whereas the first account regularly used the word "God" (elohim).
 - ii. The Lord's care for human beings is relayed by the terms used for His creation of both the man and the woman ("formed" & "breathed"; 2:7; 2:21-22).
- h. In Gen 2 the rule begins in the garden that the Lord had planted. The garden anticipates the tabernacle (Ex 25-31).
 - i. Desmond Alexander notes a number of parallels between the tabernacle/temple and the garden:
 - 1. The Lord walks in both (Gen 3:8; Lev 26:12).
 - 2. Both are guarded by cherubim and are accessed from the east.
 - 3. The lampstand may symbolize the tree of life (Gen 2:9; 3:22; Ex 25:31-35).
 - 4. A river flows from each (Gen 2:10; Ezek 47:1-12).
 - 5. Stones found in Eden are also in the tabernacle (Gen 2:11-12; Ex 25:7, 11, 17, 31).
 - 6. Both are on a mountain, which is sacred land in the Ancient Near East.
 - ii. The man and the woman do not exercise their rule autonomously. They are ever subject to the will of God.
 - 1. They would reveal their submission to God's lordship by refusing to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17) for it would bring death.

2. The tree of life anticipates the final joy of human beings who know the Lord (Rev 22:2, 14, 19).
3. The call to obedience forecasts the Mosaic covenant, where God's people are summoned to keep His commandments, thereby showing their devotion to Him.

2. THE FALL AND THE FLOOD

- a. The fall of Adam and Eve into sin signifies their rejection of God's lordship over their lives (Gen 3).
 - i. The serpent is quite different from the other animals, for it is quite clear from 2:19-20 that Adam's naming of the animals symbolized his dominion over them.
 - ii. Presumably, Adam and Eve were to evict the serpent from the garden by obeying the Lord. Instead, they capitulated to the serpent's deception and transgressed the Lord's command.
- b. By failing to obey God's command, they manifested their stubborn independence and their desire to be godlike (3:5).
 - i. The precious fellowship that they enjoyed with God was shattered.
 - ii. The created world was also affected by their sin (3:16, 18, 22-24; Rom 8:20).
- c. The Lord promises a future victory over the serpent through the offspring of the woman (3:15).
 - i. In the storyline of the Bible, Jesus the Christ is the offspring predicted here (see Gal 3:16), who will triumph over Satan through His death and resurrection.
 - ii. The Lord bestowed His grace upon Adam and Eve by clothing them with the skins of animals (Gen 3:21). Such clothing anticipates the slaughter of animals for sacrifices, and it is warranted canonically to see the fulfillment in Christ's sacrifice for His people.
- d. Adam and Eve did not comprehend the horrific evil that they had unleashed into the world. The battle between the children of the serpent and the children of the woman had begun (4:2-7; Heb 11:4).
 - i. We see from the beginning that mechanical obedience is not pleasing to the Lord, that He demands obedience that flows from a heart of faith (Rom 1:5; 16:26; cf 1 Jn 3:12; cf Jn 8:44; Rev 12:15-17).
- e. The offspring of the woman continues through Seth (4:25-26), but later, the daughters of men intermarried with the sons of God, and the latter are most likely demons (Gen 6:1-4), though the identity of the sons of God remains controversial.

- f. The influence of the serpent was now becoming rampant on the earth so that the earth was filled with corruption (6:5, 11). God sends the flood, but saves the human race by preserving Noah and his family.
 - i. The story of the flood generation reveals that, human beings, left to themselves, turn toward violence and evil.
 - ii. The judgment and destruction of all humankind through the flood also demonstrates that the children of the serpent will not ultimately win.
 - iii. God’s kingdom is realized not only through salvation but also through judgment.
- g. God made a covenant with Noah and all humankind (9:8-17), pledging that the world would not be destroyed by water again.
 - i. The preservation of the world means that the saving promises for the world will be realized before the end comes. God’s creation of human beings will not end up being a failed experiment where the world ends up being destroyed.
 - ii. Nevertheless, the root problem with human beings has not been solved, but God will show mercy.
 - iii. “The implication is that God would be completely justified in wiping out every generation of humanity by means of a great judgment. There is only one reason why He does not: because of His own grace and mercy toward us.” – Peter Gentry & Steven Wellum
- h. The author of Genesis consciously draws parallels between the new start with Noah and the initial creation of Adam & Eve, indicating that a fresh era has commenced, that we have something like a new creation after the flood.
 - i. Creation out of water and chaos (1:2; 7:11-12; 17-24)
 - ii. Birds, animals, and creeping things are brought in to swarm upon the earth (1:20-21, 24-25; 8:17-19)
 - iii. God establishes days and seasons (1:14-18; 8:22)
 - iv. Animals are commanded to be fruitful and multiply (1:22; 8:17)
 - v. Repetition of the mandate to be fruitful and multiply (1:28; 9:1)
 - vi. Dominion over the world is reestablished (1:28; 9:2)
 - vii. God provides food for humans (1:29-30; 9:3)
 - viii. Human beings are still in the image of God (1:26-27; 9:6)
- i. All of these features signal that the plan to rescue the human race from sin and the serpent has not ended.

3. BABEL AND ABRAHAM

- a. The salvation of Noah and the new start with his family are not a return to paradise.
 - i. Sin is still pervasive (6:5; 8:21).

- ii. Noah, like Adam in the garden, also sinned in a garden by getting drunk from the fruit of the vine (9:21).
 - iii. Just as Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness after their sin (3:7), so Noah was shamed by his nakedness after his sin (9:21-23).
 - iv. Ham's dishonoring of his father (9:22-25) demonstrates that the children of the serpent were not extinguished by the flood but rather were alive and well upon planet earth.
 - v. Human government was also instituted to deter evil (9:6), so that the human society does not descend into anarchy.
- b. However, the power of evil increased exponentially, so that by the time of Babel, human arrogance had crested again (11:1-9).
 - i. They built to make a name for themselves (11:4) instead of living to make a name for God.
 - ii. They also congregated in one place instead of dispersing throughout the earth.
- c. The Lord reigns over all, and He judged human beings by introducing linguistic diversity and dispersing them throughout the world.
- d. Mark Strom says, "Abraham would receive the very things for which the people of Babel had grasped: he would have a great name; he would father a great nation; and he would become a source of blessing throughout all the earth. In other words, the Lord would maintain His purposes for creation and humanity through Abraham and those who followed him."
- e. Abraham's obedience, however, cannot be ascribed to his own virtue or wisdom.
 - i. Abraham himself was from a family of idolaters (Josh 24:2) and hence was classed among the ungodly (Rom 4:5).
 - ii. The Lord took Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans and led him to Canaan (Josh 24:3). This also functions as an anticipation of the exodus of Israel from Egypt, where Israel by the mercy of God left Egypt and settled in Canaan.
 - iii. Abraham was one man against the world, but he was a man of the world who had been summoned out of the world by the grace of God.
 - iv. The focus upon God's grace does not cancel out the reality of Abraham's obedience. Instead, it functions as the foundation upon which his obedience rested.
 - v. Abraham here functions as a new Adam, obeying the Lord in contrast to Adam. And yet, according to Hebrews, such obedience flowed from Abraham's faith (Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:1-9; Heb 11:8).
 - vi. Even though Abraham obeyed the Lord in contrast to Adam, he still needed God's forgiveness, for he was not entirely free from sin (Gen 12:11-20; 16:1-16; 20:1-18).

- f. The promises made to Abraham were the means by which God would undo the devastation wrought by Adam and would bring in His kingdom.
 - i. The Lord promised Abraham land, children, and blessing (Gen 12:1-3).
 - ii. The promise that God would make a great nation from Abraham signifies the promise of the kingdom.
 - iii. The command given to Adam to be fruitful and multiply (1:28) is now a promise given to Abraham and his offspring (17:2, 5-6; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4).
 - iv. The promise that the Lord would make Abraham's name great has kingly associations (12:2; cf 11:4; 2 Sam 7:9), pointing to the promise that kings would come from Abraham (17:6, 16; cf 35:11).
 - v. The land of Canaan, in a sense, represented a new Eden where the Lord would rule over His people (22:17).
 - vi. Just as the blessing through Abraham would be universal, so the land would begin with Canaan, but include the entire world (Rom 4:13; Heb 11:13-16; Rev 21:1-22:5).
 - vii. The promise that the world would be renewed through the children of one man emblazons the truth that salvation is of the Lord and is due entirely to His grace.
- g. Was the covenant with Abraham conditional or unconditional?
 - i. In one sense, it was conditional, for it depended upon Abraham's obedience (Gen 26:4-5).
 - ii. In a more profound sense, however, the covenant was unconditional (Gen 15).
 - 1. The Lord alone passing between the pieces symbolizes that the fulfillment of the covenant depends on Him alone.
 - iii. The unconditional nature of the covenant does not remove the need for human obedience. Any person who fails to obey will not enjoy the covenant blessings, and hence the demand for obedience remains in all its starkness. Nevertheless, the grace of God, not the obedience of human beings, remains central, for God will see to it that the covenantal demands are fulfilled by His grace.
 - iv. The covenant sign of circumcision (Gen 17), where Abram's name was changed to Abraham, functions as a concrete reminder to Abraham that his children were the result of the grace of God, not Abraham's own sexual virility. Furthermore, the rite signified that all of Israel was consecrated to God.
- h. Neither the promise of land, nor the promise of universal blessing was fulfilled during Abraham's life. Only the promise of offspring was fulfilled, which is covered by Gen 12-50.

- i. A strange twist in the story emerges in Gen 22, for God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. The command is astonishing, for it is only through Isaac that the offspring of the woman who would slay the serpent would come.
 - i. The Lord was testing Abraham, thereby confirming the blessing promised to him, for he was willing to obey the most radical directive imaginable (22:16-18).
 - ii. Abraham was convinced, even though God commanded that he sacrifice Isaac that Isaac would return with him from the sacrifice (22:5, 8; cf Heb 11:17-19).
 - iii. The sacrifice of the ram in place of Isaac anticipates the final fulfillment of the promise of the offspring, where the true offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ, fulfills what Isaac only forecasts (Gal 3:16). The atonement provided by the Lord becomes a reality in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who is the beloved Son of God (Rom 8:32).

4. THE PROMISE FOR NEW GENERATIONS

- a. The Genesis narrative continues to focus on the promise of children, though the entirety of the covenant made with Abraham is confirmed to Isaac: offspring, land, and universal blessing (26:3-4).
 - i. The first challenge for Isaac was to find a wife who worshipped the Lord (Gen 24), for if Isaac married a woman who turned his heart and the heart of his children away from the Lord, the promise of future salvation through Abraham's children would be nullified.
 - ii. The promise was also endangered because Rebekah, like Sarah, was barren. But the Lord, in response to Isaac's prayer, granted Rebekah children (25:21). The promised offspring survived only by the intervention of God, underlining the truth that the Lord graciously fulfills what He has pledged.
- b. The fulfillment of the promise was not dependent merely on Isaac and Rebekah producing children. For the children of Isaac and Rebekah were not necessarily the offspring of the woman merely because they were their physical children.
 - i. The Lord prophesied that the older son would serve the younger (25:23). Paul, in commenting on the choice of Jacob, highlights God's election (Rom 9:11-13).
 - ii. Esau's casual disregard for his birthright demonstrated that he was not a son of the promise (Gen 25:29-34), for it is almost inconceivable that he would give it up for the sake of one lunch (Heb 12:16).
 - iii. The mystery of God's sovereignty in choosing Jacob is relayed in the story of the blessing, for Rebekah and Jacob shamefully conspired together so that Jacob, rather than Esau, would receive the blessing from Isaac (Gen 27:1-40).

Despite their scheming – not because of – the Lord granted the blessing to Jacob rather than Esau.

- iv. Esau's murderous intentions (Gen 27:41) became the means by which Jacob would marry women who were devoted to the Lord, so that the parents of the children to come were devoted to Yahweh (Gen 28:13-15).
- c. Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen 32:11, 24-30) and prevailing is a significant moment in his life, for his name is changed to Israel. As Stephen Dempster says, this means that he "will be God's conquering warrior in the earth." Such a name change verifies that victory of the serpent will come through the one who is named Israel.
- d. The stories of the preservation of Jacob and his children (Gen 34-35) drive home one of the main themes of the narrative: the preservation of Jacob's offspring is not due to human ingenuity or even human virtue. Only God's covenant promise can explain why this small family escaped disaster after disaster and was preserved intact.

5. JUDAH AND JOSEPH

- a. The story of Joseph dominates Gen 37-50, though the account of Judah bearing children through Tamar is inset into the narrative (Gen 38). Why is this strange story included in the narrative? If we consider the entire narrative of Genesis, we find a significant clue in 49:8-10.
- b. How does the story of Gen 38 relate to the promise of future rule in Gen 49?
 - i. From Judah will come the ruler who will defeat the Lord's enemies. The promise that the offspring of the woman will triumph over the serpent will be obtained through the family of Judah.
 - ii. The birth of Perez and Zerah is significant because the promises made to Abraham will finally be fulfilled through Judah's descendants.
- c. We turn to the Joseph narrative, which encompasses Gen 37-50. The treachery of Joseph's brothers reached its apex when they sold him into Egypt and lied to their father about his death.
- d. In the midst of Joseph's sufferings, the theme that the Lord was with him is underscored, whether he was in Potiphar's house or in the prison (Gen 39:2-3,23).
- e. Joseph's story is full of human interest, but what is its role in terms of the purpose of Genesis?
 - i. Joseph himself declared the purpose in the dramatic scene where he disclosed his identity to his brothers (Gen 45:5-8).
 - ii. Joseph did not minimize the evil his brothers inflicted upon him (Gen 50:20), but he saw the larger purposes of God in the events that transpired.
 - iii. The Lord sovereignly regulated circumstances so that Joseph would be a ruler in Egypt, and thus Jacob's family was sustained in Egypt during the famine so that a remnant would continue to exist (Gen 45:11).

- iv. At the same time, the promise of offspring was being fulfilled, for now there were seventy persons in Jacob's family (Gen 46:6-27).
- f. Israel's population was growing, and they were safe in Egypt, but they were in the wrong place. They were destined for the land of Canaan. It was there that the kingdom would be established, but the land was not to be theirs yet. Hence, Jacob insisted that Joseph bury him in Canaan rather than Egypt (47:29-31; 50:5-13).
- g. God's justice must be preserved, and evicting the Canaanites from their land was not yet fitting. The Canaanites would not be removed from the land for four generations, since their iniquity was not yet complete (Gen 15:16).
- h. Genesis concludes with Joseph's death in Egypt, before which he reminded Israel of the promise that they would inherit the land promised to the patriarchs, and instructed them to bring him to Canaan in the future (Gen 50:24-26).

So Genesis ends with Israel in the wrong place. The kingdom is the Lord's, but Egypt was not where they were supposed to be. The offspring of Abraham were scarcely as many as the stars. They did not live in the land of Canaan, and worldwide blessing was not even close. Still, the family of the patriarchs survived and was even beginning to thrive. The Lord had preserved them even though they were small and weak, even while they were sojourners in the land promised to them (Ps 105:11-15). He had showered His grace on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by making a covenant with them and showing them grace again and again. The preservation of the offspring clearly was the Lord's work, for Abraham's family survived despite barrenness, sin, stupidity, squabbles, and famine. Genesis teaches that the kingdom will come, for ultimately it depends upon the Lord. It will be realized through His promise rather than human virtue.