

LECTURE 3: GENESIS
“The God Who Creates and Blesses”
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I. Introduction

A. Orienting Data

1. *Content:* Description of creation and God’s intention for life; stories of the original blessing, human disobedience and its consequences, God’s choice of Abraham and his offspring as a means to restore blessing (the opening of the story of redemption)
2. *Historical Coverage:* From creation (the “beginning”) to the death of Joseph (1800 B.C.?)
3. *Author and date:* anonymous, likely Moses during wilderness sojourn
4. *Emphases:*
 - a. God as the creator and sustainer of all things
 - b. God’s kingdom-building plan through a community of image-bearers
 - c. The nature and consequences of human disobedience
 - d. Hope in alignment with God’s plan to restore blessing through covenant after the curse

B. Advice for Reading Genesis

1. Use Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a lens for understanding God’s purpose and humanity’s purpose in God’s world.
2. Keep in mind the major plot: God’s intervention in the history of human fallenness by providing a means for restored blessing (Gen 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).
3. Keep in mind the several sub-plots:
 - a. Adamic-Noahic covenant (Gen. 1–2; ch. 9) + Abrahamic covenant (12:2–7; 15:1–21; 17:3–8).

- b. God's kingdom expands through a community of kingdom families (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:4–25).
- c. Promise of a special “offspring/seed” who would conquer the enemies of God—War of Judgment/Holy War motif (Gen. 3:14–15; 22:17; 26:3–4)—and restore blessing to the whole world (12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; cf. Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:16, 29), thus making Abraham a father of a multitude of nations (17:4–6; cf. 13:16; 15:6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14; 32:12).
- d. Faith in the promise of God is foundational for relationship with him (Gen. 15:6; 22:12; cf. 12:1–3).
- e. God is always faithful to his promise despite the ups and downs of life.

II. Preface: The Original Plan for Universal Blessing (Gen. 1:1–2:3)

A. God and Creation: NT Perspectives

- Rom. 11:36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.
- 1 Cor. 8:6. Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
- Col. 1:16. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
- Rev. 4:11. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

B. The Israelite Context and Significance of Genesis 1

1. Because no human was present at the creation of the world, Genesis 1 comes to us through a distinct form of special revelation. God may have disclosed this revelation very early, or he may have given it directly to Moses, perhaps on Mt. Sinai during the 6+1 days of tabernacle revelation (Exod 24:15; cf. the 6+1 speeches in Exod 25–31). Regardless, because the Bible's historical account that ends in Revelation begins in Genesis 2:4, marking Genesis 1:1–2:3 a preface to the whole.
2. We must ask, therefore, why Moses felt compelled to front the main narrative with this preface. His audience were those who had sinned (e.g., the golden calf episode [Exod 32–24] or the rebellion at Kadesh [Num 13–14]) and who were reminded of sin's consequence through 38 years of wilderness punishment. It is these people to whom Genesis 1 is first revealed as Bible.
3. I propose that there must be more than chronology or science at stake here. Genesis 1:1–2:3 is designed for a people asking not, “How did God create everything?” but, “How can I live and not die?” To this group, the Bible's opening chapter speaks a worldview-shaping message.

C. Gen. 1:1–2:3 as Introductory to Scripture. The historical narrative that dominates Genesis–Kings begins in Gen. 2:4. This makes Gen. 1:1–2:3 introductory and raises the question why it fronts Genesis, the Pentateuch, the OT, and Bible as a whole.

1. Gen. 1:1–2:3 is clearly not a first-hand, eye-witness account; rather, the week was disclosed through special revelation that was well-established in Israel's tradition (Exod. 16:22–30) even before God revealed the Ten Words at Mount Sinai (20:8–11).
2. There seems to be an intentional parallel with the building instructions of the tabernacle in Exodus, for the 6+1 pattern is seen in each. In Gen. 1:1–2:3, the 6+1 pattern reveals God's forming that which lacked shape and filling that which was empty (Gen. 1:2), climaxing on the sixth day in his creation of image bearers

whose mission was to display God's greatness in the world (1:26–28) and all pushing to the ultimate goal of God's sovereign rest over all, wherein his entire world was surrendered to him and at peace with him and one another. In Exodus, the tabernacle building instructions are given over six days, the last of which shows the equipping of two humans to oversee the project (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1); the seventh day then discloses God's purpose for Sabbath (31:12). These parallels do not by nature require that the former was crafted to image the latter, though the presence of this connection (along with numerous other parallels; see the *lecture notes*) suggests that Israel would have seen God's creating of the heavens and earth as the establishment of a cosmic temple.

3. The makeup and experience of the original audience on Gen 1:1–2:3 as we presently have it would have been post-fall and, in its present form, post-golden calf and perhaps wilderness rebellion. This suggests that the rhetorical purpose of Gen. 1:1–2:3 is more than to clarify origins or chronology (though not less). Life and death is at stake, and these verses become one of the most foundational worldview shaping texts in all the Bible, answering at least in part, all the major worldview questions: Who is God? What is valuable? Where are we? Who are we? What is wrong with the world? What is the solution? Gen. 1:1–2:3 tells the reader not only what happened but how things are supposed to be.

D. Literary Artistry and Structure in Gen. 1:1–2:3 (*See Figs. 3.1–3.2 below):

1. Genesis 1:1–2:3 reveals a high-level of artistry and beauty, but elevated style does not by nature mean a-historical (e.g., Exod. 14–15, where the parting of the Red Sea is described first through narrative and then through song; Judg. 4–5, where the death of Sisera is described in the same pattern).
2. The phrase “formless and void” (or “uninhabitable and uninhabited”) in Genesis 1:2 appears to provide an intentional structuring pattern for the first six days, days 1–3 including God's giving shape to that which was formless and days 4–6 including God's filling that which was empty (see Fig. 3.1 below).
3. Genesis 1 uses the explicit subject “God” in nearly every clause, the purpose of which is clearly rhetorical as it was unnecessary for the grammar. A proper view of the world demands keeping God as the center.
4. The chapter is dominated by multiples of the number 7, showing a high-level of intentional crafting: 7 day structure; “God” (*ʿlōhîm*) = 35x; “Earth” (*ʿereṣ*) = 21x; “Heavens” (*šāmayim*) + “firmament/dome” (*rāqîaʿ*) + “separation” (*maḥdîl*) = 21x; “Good/beautiful” (*tôb*) = 7x
5. Day 6 alone includes the definite article, thus drawing attention to the day humanity was created (“a first day, a second day, a third day ... *the* sixth day”). The same emphasis is made by including *very* before “good” only in 1:31.
6. The seven days show an incomplete but repetitive narrative pattern (see Fig. 3.2).
 - a. The pattern:
 - i. Report of Divine Creative Utterance (“And God said...”)
 - ii. Ending formula for Divine Creative Utterance (“And it was so...”)
 - iii. Report of Divine Creative Act (“And God made...”)
 - iv. Report of Divine Shaping Act (“And God did...”)
 - v. Name-giving formula (“And God called...”)
 - vi. Ending formula for Divine Act (“And God saw that it was good”)

- vii. Report of Divine Blessing Utterance (“And God blessed ... saying”)
- viii. Ending formula for the day (“And there was evening, and there was morning”)
- b. Inconsistencies in the Pattern:
 - i. Inconsistent placement of Ending Formula for Creative Utterance

<u>Consistent</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
1:3 (Day 1)	1:6–8 (Day 2) (after fulfillment)
1:9–10 (Day 3/Act 1)	1:20–23 (Day 5) (absent)
1:11–13 (Day 3 / Act 2)	1:29 (Day 6 / Act 2) (after food granted)
1:14–19 (Day 4)	
1:24–25 (Day 6 / Act 1)	
 - ii. Divine Act in 1st Day is not creative (cf. Rev 21:23), and no report of Divine Act in Day 3, Acts 1–2 (earth does “act” in 1:12)
 - iii. No Naming Formulae in Acts 4–8
 - iv. No ending formula in Day 5; ending formula for Divine Act in Day 6, Act 2 pertains to all creation (1:31)
 - v. Divine Blessing is pronounced in Day 5 and Day 6, Act 2 (also Day 7)
 - vi. Ending formulae for Days 1–5 are indefinite (“a second day”), but definite for Day 6 (“the sixth day”); no ending formula for Day 7

Fig. 3.1. Narrative Structure of the Creative Acts in Genesis 1:1–2:3

FORMLESS (1:2) > FORM <i>Uninhabitable > Inhabitable</i>	VOID (1:2) > CONTENT ¹ <i>Uninhabited > Inhabited</i>
Day 1/Act 1: Light = “Day / Darkness = “Night” (1:3–5)	Day 4/Act 5: Luminaries (1:14–19)
Day 2/Act 2: Expanse = “Sky” / Water under sky = “ <u>Seas</u> ” ² (1:6–8)	Day 5/Act 6: Sea creatures and flying creatures (1:20–23)
Day 3/Act 3: Appearance of dry land = “Land/Earth” / gathering of waters under sky = “Seas” [1:9–10] Day 3/Act 4: Earth sprouts vegetation [1:11–12] (1:9–13)	Day 6/Act 7: Land creatures [1:24–25] Day 6/Act 8: ³ Mankind [1:26–30] (1:24–31)
Day 7: Sovereign Rest ⁴ (2:1–3)	

¹ Along with clear 6 + 1 pattern, the first six days of the creation week may be structured to answer the dilemma of Gen 1:2 – “the earth was formless and void.” Seen in this way, the first half of the week takes what is formless and gives it form, whereas the second half fills the emptiness with content that is directly related to the form of the corresponding day. The echo of “formless” in Deut 32:10 (where the “wilderness” through which God sustained Israel is described) suggests the translation “uninhabitable” (cf. Jer 4:23).

² While distinguished in day 2, the “waters under the sky” are named “seas” in day 3 (1:10).

³ Focus is drawn to the sixth day in general and the creation of mankind (Act 8) in particular for the following reasons: (1) In the Hebrew text, day 6 alone has the definite article attached to number in the ending formula (1:31): “the sixth day” vs. “a second day, a third day, a fourth day, etc.”; (2) only after mankind is created does God declare what he has made “very good” (1:30); (3) only mankind is said to be created “in the image of God” (1:26–27); (4) the creation of mankind is the eighth (not seventh!) act of God in the creation week, which draws attention to its significance (cf. David as the eighth son of Jesse [1 Sam 16:10–11]; Amos’ placing Israel as the eighth nation under God’s wrath, after Aram, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah [Amos 2:6–16])

⁴ This is not the rest of laziness but the rest of a king who has definitively established his kingdom and now can sit on his throne and rule, for all is at peace (see Ps. 139:7–8, 13–14). Day 7 becomes the goal of the creation week, clarifying the ideal reality toward which all was created and still is headed (cf. Heb 4:1–13; Rom 8:18–25).

Fig. 3.2. Narrative Elements in Genesis 1:1–2:3

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3		Day 4	Day 5	Day 6		Day 7
	<i>Act 1</i>	<i>Act 2</i>	<i>Act 3</i>	<i>Act 4</i>	<i>Act 5</i>	<i>Act 6</i>	<i>Act 7</i>	<i>Act 8</i>	<i>Rest</i>
1. Report of Divine Creative Utterance (“And God said, ‘Let ...’”)	1:3	1:6	1:9	1:11	1:14	1:20	1:24	1:26	
2. Ending Formula for Divine Creative Utterance (“And it was so”)	1:3	<u>1:7</u> ⁵	1:9	1:11	1:15		1:24	<u>1:30</u> ⁶	2:1?
3. Report of Divine Creative Act (“And God made/ <u>created</u> ”)		1:7		<u>1:12</u> ⁷	1:16	<u>1:21</u>	1:25	<u>1:27</u>	
4. Report of Divine Shaping Act (“And God did [something]”)	1:4				1:17				2:2
5. Name-giving Formula (“And God called”)	<u>1:5</u> ⁸	1:8	1:10						
6. Ending Formula for Divine Act (“And God saw that it was good”)	1:4		1:10	1:12	1:18	1:21	1:25	<u>1:31</u> ⁹	
7. Report of Divine Blessing Utterance (“And God blessed ... saying”)						1:22		1:28	2:3
8. Report of Divine Utterance (“And God said”)								1:1:29–30	
9. Ending Formula for the Day (“And there was evening and morning”)	1:5	1:8		1:13	1:19	1:23		<u>1:31</u> ¹⁰	

NOTE: *Italics* means the element is peculiar in some way (always footnoted); underlining means the element is placed out of order from the common pattern.

E. Different Interpretations of Gen 1:1–2:3 from the Perspective of History and Science

1. *24 Hour Mature Earth View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing in six successive calendar days.
2. *Day-Age View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing in a chronological progression of ages spanning an indefinite period of time.

⁵ Placed after 3.

⁶ Placed after 8.

⁷ “The earth brought forth” (rather than God but) in accordance with his creative utterance in 1:9.

⁸ Placed after 6.

⁹ Placed just before 9 with full declaration, “It was *very* good.”

¹⁰ Only ending formula with definite article attached to the number: “*the* sixth day” vs. “a second day, a third day, a fourth day, etc.”

3. *Framework View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing, but Genesis 1:1–2:3 portrays this move of God through a literary, temporal framework and topical arrangement that may or may not have anything to do with actual chronology.
4. *Non-material, Functional View*: In Genesis 1:1–2:3, God is not creating the material universe but is instead giving functions to already existing matter over six successive days (John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*).
5. *Promised Land View*: Genesis 1:1 speaks of God creating the universe out of nothing, but Genesis 1:2–2:4 testify to his preparation of the Promised Land/Garden of Eden for humanity (John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*).

THINK!

Stake out your position on creation's origins, including the meaning of the days of creation in Genesis 1, the possibility of evolution, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the age of the earth, and any other related issues. While Genesis addresses larger issues of God's purpose in creation and the realities of sin and redemption, what does it say and what does it require and not require regarding our beliefs in origins? (After wrestling on your own, read "Creationism and the Age of the Earth" in A.3.1 in the Appendix for DeRouchie's take on the matter.)

F. An Overview of Gen 1:1–2:3

1. Gen. 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (ESV).
 - a. *Time marker*: "In the beginning"
 - b. *Sole actor*: The Trinitarian Creator: God the father creates by his word ("Let there be...") and Spirit ("hovering over the waters").
 - c. *Distinctive divine act*: "to create" (bookended with 2:1)
 - d. *Object*: "the heavens and the earth"—a merism for the whole created realm: unseen heavens (where God and angels dwell), seen heavens (atmosphere and space), and earth (our planet) (see Psalm 148 where all three are linked with "heaven and earth")
 - e. *Traditional Interpretations: Is this a Summary or the start of a Sequence?*
 - i. Option 1: Sequence
 - (1) Gen. 1:1 is the first event in the creation week. The rest of the chapter *follows* this action.
 - (2) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. *Then* he formed and filled it..."
 - (3) Strength: It makes absolutely clear that God created everything out of nothing.
 - (a) Heb 11:3. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
 - (b) Rev 4:11. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.
 - (4) Weakness: The grammatical syntax (see below) makes this view highly unlikely. Specifically, the fact that Gen 1:1 is a merely a prepositional phrase ("in a/the beginning of ...") identifies that it is dependent on what follows and does not stand independent as the start of a sequence.

- ii. Option 2: Summary
 - (1) Gen. 1:1 is a statement that is then unpacked.
 - (2) “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And this is how he did it...”
 - (3) Strength: It keeps all of creation at “the beginning” and in contrast to “the end” or “latter days.”
 - (4) Weakness: Again, because Gen 1:1 is dependent on the context that follows, with the main verb not coming until 1:3 (see below), the verb itself is not a “title” for 1:1–2:3. That stated,
- f. *Overview of the Syntax:*¹¹
 - i. Treating Gen 1:1 as a “title” is grammatically unlikely. The prepositional and construct nature of בראשית (“in a/the beginning of”) establishes that all of 1:1 is dependent on and provides the Topic for what follows. (I agree with Robert Holmstedt that the fact that ראשית is in construct identifies that what directly follows in 1:1 is an unmarked relative clause, which the context supports reading as specific and definable and thus definite.) And because 1:2 includes three nominal, non-verb-first clauses that add information on הארץ (“the earth”), all of 1:2 is parenthetical, thus identifying that the ויאמר (“and he said”) in 1:3 signals the start of the first main clause. My translation and structural analysis would be as follows:

In the beginning that [in which] God created the heavens and the earth, while the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, then God said....

- ii. Holmstedt is correct that the nature of ראשית is not an absolute beginning but one specific to the context of Gen 1:1. That stated, the fact that “the heavens and the earth” appear to be a merism for the universe as both the visible and invisible created realm (see the unpacking in Ps 148 that “the heavens” include both angelic beings and the luminaries and that the “the earth” includes all physical features and beings on our planet; cf. Col 1:16), the “beginning” takes on a more absolute sense, and thus בראשית can stand as a natural contrast to the common phrase באחרית הימים (“in the end of days”; cf. Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29; etc.). That stated, I think we have two possible and legitimate readings of 1:1:
 - (1) “In the beginning of God’s creating the heavens and the earth, while...” The “beginning” here would include all of Gen 1:1–2:3 and imply that God continues to this day to create all things

¹¹ In what follows, I interact with reflections on Gen 1:1–3 from Dr. Robert Holmstedt: (1) <https://ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2011/11/11/genesis-1-hebrew-grammar-translation/>; (2) <https://ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/genesis-1-1-and-topic-fronting-before-a-wayyiqtol/>.

- moment by moment (see texts like Isa 45:7 and Eccl 11:5; cf. Heb 1:3). Thus, God continues to birth and sustain all things (the heavens and the earth), but Gen 1:1–2:3 unpacks all that happened at “the beginning” of his creative acts.
- (2) “In the beginning in which God created the heavens and the earth, while....” Here “the beginning” is more restrictive making God’s creative work more fixed and accomplished; “the beginning” would still cover Gen 1:1–2:3, but the emphasis would not be on a progressive creation.
 - iii. From the perspective of Gen 1:1–2:3, day 1 is the start of God’s work week and the start of what God did in the beginning. As such, I don’t think the context suggest we are to understand anything but God before day 1. This means that the three elements described in 1:2 were all part of day 1.
2. Gen. 1:2–3. ““The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.”
 - a. *Creation was a process*: Focus here is on unmet potential. The start of Day 1 included an undifferentiated mass.
 - b. *“Formless and void”*: Uninhabitable and uninhabited; lacking clear shape and distinction of the parts (land and water, sky and earth).
 - c. Verse 2 describes the state of the earth at the start of Day 1 (when God initially declared matter into existence), but it’s verse 3 that describes the primary creative action of God on this day—he said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” God’s Spirit was already “hovering” over the waters, but in v. 3 this Spirit began to burn with glowing, life-giving power. Significantly, Deut 32:11 supplies the only other use of this verb in the Pentateuch (“hover/flutter”), and in the latter text it refers to the pillar of *fire* by night and cloud by day. As Israel moved through the wilderness out of Egypt and en-route to the Promised Land, the glory cloud cut through the darkness with light, illuminating their path and reminding them that God was in control (Exod 13:21–22; 14:19–20, 24; 24:16–17; 40:38; Num 9:16–17; Deut 1:33; 5:22).
 3. The Creation Week
 - a. Days 1–3 = The formless takes shape
 - i. Day 1 (vv. 2–5):
 - (1) God creates light
 - (2) God separates light and dark/day and night
 - ii. Day 2 (vv. 6–8):
 - (1) God creates the expanse (“heavens” in 1:8 = the earth’s atmosphere + outer space as part of the “heavens” in 1:1)
 - (2) God separates waters above and below
 - iii. Day 3 (vv. 9–13):
 - (1) Creation of land and vegetation
 - (2) God separates land and seas
 - b. Days 4–6 = The Void Becomes Filled

- i. Day 4 (vv. 14–19):
 - (1) God creates luminaries for the heavens (2 greater lights and the stars)
 - (2) God places and delegates luminaries for signs and to rule over day and night, to separate light from darkness and day from night, and to distinguish seasons, days, years.
- ii. Day 5 (vv. 20–23)
 - (1) God creates air and sea creatures
 - (2) God delegates them to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the seas and land.
- iii. Day 6 (vv. 24–31)
 - (1) God creates land creatures and mankind
 - (2) God delegates land creatures to fill the land and mankind to fill the land and rule over the creatures of the sea, sky, and land.
- iv. Day 7: God’s sovereign rest

G. The Message of Gen 1:1–2:3

1. *God as the Source and Goal of All Things*
 - a. The opening statement (Gen. 1:1) affirms that the universe is not eternal but has its origin from the one true God; nothing exists that he did not create. God is over all luminaries, water, and living things; polytheism, pantheism, and naturalism have no place in this world.
 - b. God’s declaration that all was (very) good (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) implies an ultimate, objective standard of value. One personal being alone determines what is good and evil, right and wrong; there is no dualism or polytheism.
 - c. God creates his world with order and structure, pointing to the fixed and unaltering nature of his commitment to his people (Jer. 31:35–37; 33:20–21, 25–26) and of his written word (Matt. 5:18); the luminaries are “signs” in this sense (cf. Gen. 1:14).
 - d. At the climax of his creation, God creates mankind in “his image,” giving them authority to rule over and subdue creation and by this to “image” to the world the one with ultimate dominion—God himself (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8); mankind is the key means by which God will expand his kingdom.
 - e. The use of the explicit subject “God” throughout Gen. 1:1–2:3 places proper stress on him as the source of all things and the one to which all is to point: “*God* created, *God* said, *God* made, etc.; as humans experience life in this world, they are to be directed back to God.
 - f. “7” is the number of perfection in the Bible:
 - i. 7 day structure
 - ii. “God” (*ʾēlōhîm*) = 35x
 - iii. “Earth” (*ʾerets*) = 21x
 - iv. “Heavens” (*šāmayim*) + “firmament/dome” (*rāqîaʿ*) + “separation” (*maḇdîl*) = 21x
 - v. “Good/beautiful” (*tôb*) = 7x

- g. The call to “multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule” is framed in the context of a divine blessing, which means God himself will ultimately be the one to fulfill his kingdom building expansion, and he will do it through a community of kingdom families; the commission is ultimately promise.
 - h. The divine rest of the 7th day provides the goal to which all creation moves—God existing at peace with his world (cf. Exod. 20:11; Heb. 3–4). The rest here is not of laziness but of sovereignty, wherein God the Creator, having established the sacred space of his kingdom, sits enthroned at peace with what he has made (cf. Ps. 132:7–8, 13–14). While the fall did not disrupt God’s right and sovereignty over all, it did disrupt the world’s peace with God. The goal of creation, therefore, becomes seeing sovereign rest realized again on a global scale—a reality accomplished in Christ (Matt. 11:28–29; Heb. 4:8–11).
 - i. Conclusion: Human life is carried out in God’s world, and every experience within this world is to direct us back to him as the great provider and sustainer of life.
2. *Excursus: Why Elohim and not Yahweh in Genesis 1?*
- a. Elohim is a challenging title in many ways.
 - i. It is applied both to the supreme true God over all (Gen. 5:22; Ps. 42:3) but also to false deities (Exod. 12:12), to their images (Deut. 7:25), and to angelic beings (Ps. 8:6) (and even metaphorically to Moses [Exod 4:16; 7:1] and the king [Ps 45:7]).
 - ii. While the full term is found nowhere outside the Bible, it is an expanded form of the common Semitic noun for deity (El) used in many places throughout the ancient world.
 - iii. Its spelling includes the masculine plural noun ending, but it usually takes singular verbs because it is usually applied to a single divine being, most commonly Yahweh but not exclusively (see 1 Kgs 11:33).
 - b. Rather than viewing the “plural” ending as a “plural of majesty” (so Joüon-Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §136*d*), I am more drawn to the think that the plural is used to intensify, absolutize, and/or exclude, expressing a shorthand for “God of gods” (so Fretheim, *NIDOTTE* 1:405–406). I am cautious to see in the plural a direct reference to the Trinity, but its use does make the later explicit Trinitarian descriptions quite natural.
 - c. As for meaning, it is the most common and generic word for “god.”
 - i. It is often used right alongside Yahweh, but because it is directly related to term for “god” used by non-Israelites, its use in Scripture may have an apologetic, polemical, or missional purpose—that is, “the real God of the universe is the one worshipped by Israel” or “you say you worship a god, but I worship the God of gods” (see Deut 10:17).
 - ii. It seems best to define Elohim as “God” rather than to add some qualifier like “creator God” or the like, for as the most universal term for God it includes all other expressions of the divine character. However, as the most general, universal term for God, it is uniquely suited to capture God’s mission heart for all nations of the earth.

- iii. It seems likely that Elohim rather than Yahweh is used in Genesis 1 *so that* Israel will grow to see that their God is the God of the world; the title “Yahweh Elohim” is then used in Genesis 2 to identify the universal God with Israel’s personal God.
3. *Humans Created in the Image of God*
- a. Biblical synthesis:
- i. Mankind was created in God’s image, according to his likeness, which appears to imply both function and ontology. Specifically, the terms point to divine royal sonship, bearing kinship, priestly, and royal overtones. Like a son born into royalty who bears identity, relationship, responsibility, and knowledge, all humans bear the capacity and responsibility to represent, reflect, and resemble God in some ways, which results in their ruling creation and relating to God and others.
 - Gen. 1:26. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
 - Gen. 5:1–3. This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.
 - ii. God’s commission was for humanity to multiply the representation, reflection, and resemblance of God through the entire globe.
 - Gen. 1:28. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
 - iii. The knowledge of God’s pleasures and values (e.g., good and evil) is a likeness that people gain through obedience or disobedience.
 - Gen 2:16–17. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
 - Gen 3:5. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
 - Gen 3:22. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.”
 - iv. After the fall, we all remain in the image of God, distorted as it may be, and the charge remains to display God’s supremacy in our lives.
 - Gen. 9:6. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.
 - Jas. 3:9. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.
 - Matt. 22:17–20. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

- v. When united to Adam, our original covenant representative, we bore his image.
 - 1 Cor. 15:49a. We have borne the image of the man of dust.
- vi. Though we are *in* the image of God, Jesus *is* the image of God.
 - Col. 1:15. [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God.
 - 2 Cor. 4:4. Christ ... is the image of God.
 - Heb. 1:3. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
 - John 1:18. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.
 - John 14:9. Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?”
- vii. When we become united with Christ, our new covenant head, our goal is to be conformed and transformed into his image, which includes growth in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge.
 - Rom. 8:29. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.
 - 2 Cor. 3:18. Beholding the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the image from one degree of glory to another.
 - Eph. 4:21–24. You ... were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old man, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
 - Col. 3:10. [We] have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
- viii. When Christ returns, we will fully and completely reflect the image of Christ.
 - 1 Cor. 15:49. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.
 - 1 John 3:2. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Fig. 3.4. The Image of God: Four Views

View	Description
Substantive	Qualities humans share with God (Who we are in essence – e.g., spirit, intellect, emotions, will, conscience, etc.)
Functional	Exercising dominion like God (What we do – see Gen 1:26, 28; 2:15)
Relational	Social beings relating to God and others (How we relate – see Gen 1:27)
Multi-Faceted (DeRouchie)	Resembling, reflecting, and representing God’s supremacy in all areas of life (our makeup, actions, interactions—telescopes, not microscopes)

b. Ancient Near Eastern Context

i. Mankind as images of the gods

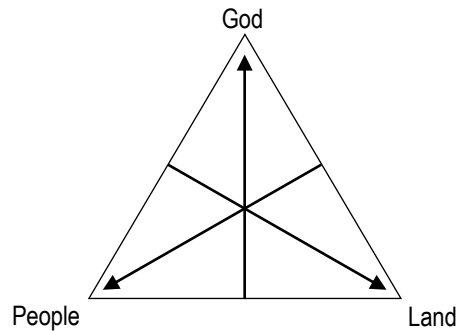
- Instruction of Merikare (Egypt). Well tended mankind—god’s cattle, he made sky and earth for their sake, he subdued the water monster, he made breath for their noses to live. They are his images, who came from his body, he shrines in the sky for their sake; he made for them plants and cattle, fowl and fish to feed them. (M. Lechtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1.106)

- ii. Kings as images of the gods
 - Esarhaddon Text 1 (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). A freeman is as the shadow of a god, the slave is as the shadow of a freeman, but the king, he is like the very **image** (Akk. *mujjulu*) of god.
 - Esarhaddon Text 2 (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). The father of the king, my lord, was the very **image** (Akk. *šalmu* = Heb. *šlm*) of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very **image** (*šalmu*) of Bel.
- iii. Priests as images of the gods
 - An Exorcism Text (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). The exorcism is the exorcism of Marduk; the priest is the **image** (Akk. *šalmu* = Heb. *šlm*) of Marduk.
- iv. Kings make images/statutes of themselves
 - The Tell Fekheriye Inscription (Old Aramaic, ca. 3rd quarter of ninth cent. B.C.). The **image** (Aram. *dmwt* = Heb. *dmwt*) of Hadad-yith>i which he has set up before Hadad of Sikan, regulator of the waters of heaven and earth, who rains down abundance, who gives pasture and watering-places to all lands, who gives rest and vessels of food to all the gods, his brothers, regulator of all rivers, who enriches all lands, the merciful god.... The **statue** (Aram. *šlm* = Heb. *šlm*) of Hadad-yith> I, king of Guzan and of Sikan and of Azran, for exalting and continuing his throne.... this **image** (*dmwt*) he made better than before. In the presence of Hadad, he has set up his **statue** (*šlm*).... (CS 2:153–54).
- v. Other related texts from Mesopotamia:
 - Enki, Ninmakh, and the Creation of Humankind (Sumerian). O my mother, the being whom you named is there: associate the image[?] of the gods with him, mix the nucleus of clay above the primal ocean. The gods and princely figures[?] will thicken the clay, but you must give life to the limbs. (W. Beyerlin, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 77)
 - Atrahasis Epic (Akkadian, ca. 1635 B.C.). *Ea spoke to the gods*: Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present—Let her create a mortal man so that he may bear the yoke, [the work of Ellil], let man bear the load of the gods. (SBV iv; Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, 14)
 - Enuma Elish / Epic of Creation (Akkadian, ca. 1100 B.C.). *Marduk addresses Ea*: Let me put blood together, and make bones too. Let me set up primeval man: Man shall be his name. Let me create a primeval man. The work of the gods shall be imposed (on him), and so they shall be at leisure. (VI:2–8; S. Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, 261; cf. *ANET*, 68)
- vi. Significance. The significance of persons or objects as *images* of a god or king was in the way they pointed to that which they represented.
- c. Theological implications of being image bearers:
 - i. Humans are called to image God, reflecting or magnifying his supremacy in all areas of life (our makeup, actions, interactions).
 - ii. Humans hold a special place in God’s creation; as the pinnacle of God’s creative acts, we are designed to be the key instruments through which God is exalted on the earth.
 - iii. Humans are social beings, created to express God’s supremacy in community.
 - iv. Humans are on mission to reflect God as glorious all the time and in every way (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31); sin occurs when we fail to glorify God in this way (Rom. 3:23).
 - v. At the heart of what it means to be human is surrender and trust: Humans image God when he is shown to be the king of our decisions, intentions, relationships, reactions, and words.

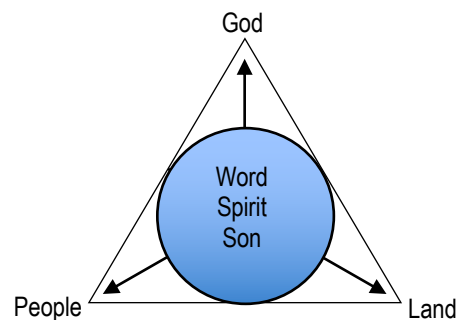
4. *The Land as the Context for Divine-Human Relationship*
- a. The earth's purpose:
 - i. *A Pointer*. To display God's glory in a way that directs humans back to God. Every facet of God's world testifies to the wonder of the Creator *God*, radiating his excellence and calling for praise (cf. Isa. 6:3; Ps. 19:1–6).
 - Isa. 6:3. Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.
 - Ps. 19:1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
 - ii. *A Context*. Through the space it provides and the food it produces (1:28–29), it plays a key role in the God-glorifying mission of humanity; without the earth, mankind cannot fulfill its mission.
 - b. The implication for humanity:
 - i. *Gratitude*. Humans should be grateful, knowing that the very context of life and all provision for life is a gift of God.
 - ii. *Stewardship*.
 - (1) Humans must not destroy or exploit the environment but must maintain it in such a way that the context for relationship with God can be maintained and that God's image can be displayed throughout the world from generation to generation.
 - (2) God calls an ever-expanding community of kingdom families to oversee and care for the earth, all the while inter-relating in such a way that the lordship of God is treasured and displayed. Men and women together are to “have dominion over” the various creatures of the sea, sky, and dry land (1:26, 28)—a responsibility that includes distinct roles and is clarified later as a leadership of service and guardianship, of provision (“work it”) and protection (“keep it”) (2:15, 18).

H. The Covenant Triangle

1. Genesis 1:1–2:3 discloses an interrelationship between the supremacy of God over all things, his passion to relate with a people, and the context wherein this relationship is enjoyed. This symbiotic relationship exists throughout every stage in redemptive history.
2. The general pattern is as follows: When the people delight in the Lord and surrender to his ways, the land flourishes, supplying human need and security. When God upholds the environment through productivity and protection, people are satisfied. And when people live God's way in his world, the Lord is glorified. However, when any side of the “covenant triangle” is broken, the whole relationship crumbles.

Fig. 3.5. Inter-relationship within the Covenant Triangle

3. In addition the way God maintains or oversees this covenantal triangle is through a combination of his Word, his Spirit, and his “Son.”

Fig. 3.6. Maintenance of the Covenant Triangle

- a. **God’s Word.** By God’s Word all things in the universe are upheld (Heb. 1:3). His Word is powerful, never returning empty and always accomplishing what it sets forth to do (Isa. 55:11). God’s Word creates what it commands, whether light in space and time (Gen. 1:3) or spiritual sight in a blinded heart (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. Deut. 29:4).

The Lord spoke his Word through the prophets (Deut. 18:18; 2 Peter 1:21), who in turn wrote down those words in the language of the people, thus securing a lasting guide and witness in what we now call the Old Testament (Deut. 31:26–29; 2 Kgs. 2:3; 23:3; Dan. 9:11). This written, canonical text was then to be copied (Deut. 17:18; Josh. 8:32), studied or meditated on (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:3; Neh. 8:13), and taught by faithful followers from generation to generation, be they priests, prophets, princes, parents, or the like (Lev. 10:10–11; Deut. 18:18; 31:9–13; 33:10; Ezek. 22:26; Mal. 2:7; Ps. 78:5–8; Neh. 8:8). God promised to look favorably upon all who tremble at his Word (Isa. 66:2). Heeding his Word sustained life, but rejecting God’s Word would result in death (Deut. 32:46–47; Jer. 14:14–15; Ps. 19:7–11).

In the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), God spoke again, now through Jesus, his eternal Word (John 1:1; Heb 1:1), who called his disciples to obey his

teachings (Matt. 28:20). He also promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would recall for them all he taught (John 14:26; 16:12–13). Then these apostles, empowered by the Spirit of Christ in them, spread the teaching of Jesus through what we now call the New Testament (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 3).

- b. **God's Spirit.** Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit is God's active presence in space and time. Often it manifested itself visibly as a thunderstorm filled with darkness, cloud, fire, smoke, wind, and thunder (see Isa. 63:11; Hag. 2:5; Neh. 9:20). Through such a theophany, God created the universe (Gen. 1:2), vowed unbreakable promises to Abra(ha)m (Gen. 15:17–18), dwelt in the midst of Israel (Exod. 13:21–22; 40:34–38), gave his Law (Exod. 19:16; Deut. 5:22), destroyed rebels (Lev. 10:2; Num. 16:35), and encountered his prophets (1 Kgs. 19:11–12; Ezek. 1:4).

God's Spirit often "came upon" or "filled" select individuals for specific tasks. At times this appears to have been empowerment for a limited duration, as with the craftsmen for the Tabernacle (Exod. 31:3; 35:31), some prophets (Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 2 Kgs. 2:15; 2 Chr. 15:1–7; 20:14–17), and the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6). Other times, as with some of Israel's leaders, the empowerment appears to have been more long-term (Num. 11:17, 25; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13), except in the case of Saul, where God removed his Spirit, resulting in the king's ruin (1 Sam. 16:14; cf. Ps. 51:11).

God's indwelling presence distinguished Old Testament saints from the rebel majority (Num. 14:24; 27:18; Deut. 34:9), and in anticipation of Pentecost, Moses longed for the day when Yahweh would put his Spirit on all his people (Num. 11:29; cf. Acts 2:1–21). Moses also declared that God's presence alone was what set Israel apart from the nations (Exod. 33:16; Deut. 4:7), and he was convinced that recalling this manifest glory was a key means for generating the fear that leads to holiness (Deut. 4:9–10).

In the age of restoration, the entire covenant community would readily identify with Yahweh and enjoy the indwelling Spirit, who would bring righteousness and peace and enable sustained surrender to God and his ways (Isa. 32:15–18; 44:1–5; Ezek. 36:23, 27; 37:26–28; Joel 2:28–29). This Spirit is nothing less than the new covenant Spirit of Christ, who regenerates, empowers, and sustains (John 3:8; 6:63; Rom. 8:9–14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8). The Spirit, therefore, is portrayed as vitally important for maintaining the covenant triangle and enabling the display of God's greatness for which man was created.

- c. **God's Son.** Genesis 5:1, 3 compare God's creating Adam in his likeness with the way Adam "fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." Just as Seth bore his father's image, so too Adam, as the "son of God" (Luke 3:38), was in the likeness of his "Father," being created with a unique capacity to display God's glory and being charged to raise up offspring who would continue this mission in the next generation (Gen. 1:26–28; cf. Deut. 6:7, 20–25; Ps. 78:4–8). Adam's role was that of a priest-

king, who was called to represent God's leadership and direct others to God's supremacy on earth (Gen 1:28; 2:15). While Adam failed miserably at his task, this nevertheless was the responsibility of a royal son, and it was carried on throughout the Old Testament, specifically through the line of promise.

By setting Israel apart for himself, God became Israel's "father" and they his "firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22–23; Deut. 32:6), and the nation was to represent God as royal priests in the world (Exod. 19:5–6; Deut. 4:5–8). Ultimately, the nation failed in this mission, substantially because their leaders continued to rebel.

However, amid the darkness, the Lord raised up King David and promised that his offspring would be the royal "Son" of God, whose inheritance would be an eternal dynasty with worldwide governance (2 Sam. 7:13–14; Ps. 2:7–8). This latter application recalled the earlier promises from Genesis of a male, royal offspring of the woman and offspring of Abraham who would destroy evil and establish peace throughout the world (Gen. 3:15; 22:17b–18; 24:60; 49:8–10). This royal son would image his "Father" rightly and perfectly and thereby serve as a channel of blessing to the nations.

As the ultimate fulfillment of the ever-narrowing trajectory set with Adam (universal), Israel (national), and David (individual), Jesus was considered "the Son of the Most High" and "the Son of God," who would enjoy "the throne of David his father" and "reign over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1:32–33, 35; cf. 3:22). His own ancestry was linked to "Adam, the son of God" (3:38), and through his perfect reflection of his Father's glory and by his representation of his spiritual offspring, he would maintain the new covenant triangle forever (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:15).

The Word, Spirit, and Son are the glue that holds covenant relationships together. As Old Testament history showed, when God's Word was ignored, or when his Spirit was not present or feared, or when the "Son" failed to represent his "Father" well, the glue for holding the covenant triangle together is absent, God's people fail in their mission, and the three-part relationship deteriorates. The following figures show the development of the God-people-land relationship throughout redemptive history.

Fig. 1.5. The God-People-Land Relationship in Redemptive History

<p>1. Adamic/Noahic Covenant</p> <p><i>Gen. 1:27–28.</i> So God created man in his own image ...; male and female he created them.... And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."</p> <p><i>Gen. 9:1, 9–10.</i> Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.... Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you.</p>	<p>2. Abrahamic Covenant & Israel's Mission</p> <p><i>Gen. 12:1–3.</i> Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.</p>
<p>3. Mosaic-Davidic Covenants & Israel's Mission</p> <p><i>Exod. 19:4–6.</i> You yourselves have seen what I did not the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.</p> <p><i>2 Sam. 7:12–14.</i> I will raise up your offspring after you.... He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.</p> <p><i>Ps. 2:7–8.</i> Yahweh said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."</p>	<p>4. New Covenant Fulfillment</p> <p><i>Rom. 8:3–4.</i> God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.</p> <p><i>Gal. 3:13–14, 24–26.</i> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith..... The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.</p>

I. Summary: The Questions of Life and the Old Testament Worldview¹²

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is indeed a worldview shaping text that calls readers to reorient their core commitments about the basic constitution of reality. Through answering major questions of life, the text calls not only for right beliefs but also proper affections and lifestyle in light of who God is and why he does what he does. A person who reads the Bible's preface rightly will be forced out of the status quo into a radical lifestyle that cherishes mercy and treasures all God is for us, ultimately in Jesus Christ. What follows is a summary of the major truths taught in Genesis 1:1–2:3.

1. **Who or what governs reality?** Genesis 1:1–2:3 teaches that there is only one God from whom, through whom, and to whom everything visible and invisible exists. This implies that he alone is the supreme Savior, Sovereign, and Satisfier of mankind. Peace will only be truly enjoyed in this world when God's supremacy over all things is cherished.
2. **Who are we?** Humans are the climax of God's creation, designed to represent, reflect, and resemble God on the earth. For sinners longing to live, this clarification of humanity's purpose should motivate a new passion for God-oriented surrender, for helping others to find joy in God's supremacy, and for guarding against self-exaltation.
3. **Where are we?** The earth is the Lord's and provides the context for those in this present age to enjoy relationship with the Creator. Because it provides a means for sustenance and a setting for lasting enjoyment of God, humans must maintain it with care.
4. **What is valuable in this world?** Because God is preeminent over all things, true value is only understood in relation to him. That which displays his worth and affirms his supremacy is what is good.
5. **What has gone wrong in this world?** Every reader should recognize how far humanity has "fallen short" from this ideal of Genesis 1:1–2:3. Rather than living for the glory of God, Adam and all who sinned in him (Rom. 5:12) have exalted self over God and loved things other than God not for his sake (1:21; 3:23). If rest and life, joy and blessing are experienced when God's supremacy is celebrated, chaos and death, discontentment and curse are what is characteristic of this world apart from God. Because any offense against an infinitely glorious God would demand an equally infinite punishment, our sin is the greatest problem in this world.

¹² For a similar list of worldview questions (2, 3, 5, 6), see Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 35; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 123; J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 11; C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 18. N. T. Wright (123 n. 6) notes that in Vatican II, the Roman Catholics suggested the following questions were common to all humans: What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? What is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanations, which embraces our entire existence, from which we taken our origin and towards which we tend? For more on the latter discussion, see Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publishers, 1975), 738.

6. **What is the remedy?** Is there any hope for sinful humanity? Every reader of Genesis 1:1–2:3 has been and continues to be part of the age of curse. As such, the portrait of the original creation must be seen not simply as a record of what was but as an ideal goal to be pursued. Humanity’s purpose is bound up in replacing lives of self-rule and destruction with radical God-exalting, passion-filled surrender and in helping others live for this same goal. But how, once the relationship with God was breached, could mankind again enjoy relationship with its Creator? The very presence of Genesis 1 at the front of the Bible answers, “Amazing Grace!” And the rest of Scripture, beginning with Genesis 2:4, clarifies God’s *program of redemption*, by which he purposed to restore kingdom-order on a universal scale through a series of covenants climaxing in the person of Jesus and overflowing in new creation.

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7. The Aftermath of the Flood: Fall and Dispersion (10:1–11:9)	54

III. The Structure and Message of Genesis (For more, see DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis,” *JETS* 56.2 [2013]: 219–47).

A. The Organizational Function of the *Toledot* Formula. The structure of Genesis is best determined by an alignment of form and content features, only the latter of which are followed in most surveys of the issue. Recognizable are the 10(11) *toledot* (“generations”) cycles, five of which lack a connector (i.e., they are asyndetic) and five of which are fronted by a *waw* conjunction (“and”), suggesting that the latter are intentionally linked to the book's sections that precede. The result is five distinct units in the book (i–v), and the most significant feature is that the Shem *toledot* is viewed not as a tag on the end of the primeval history but rather an intentionally placed genealogy pointing *forward* in the narrative to get us to Abraham.

Fig. 3.1. Genesis at a Glance

		<i>toledot</i> Structure	Genre	Outline
		Preface. Biblical Worldview Foundations (1:1–2:3)		I. Preface. <i>The Blessing-Commission</i> : Humanity's Productive Kingdom-Purpose as God-Imagers (1:1–2:3) II. <i>The Need for Blessing</i> : Humanity's Perversion & the Merciful Kingdom Promise of a Curse-Overcoming Seed (2:4–4:26) III. <i>The Hope for Blessing</i> : Humanity's Merciful Preservation & Provision for Kingdom Blessing (5:1–50:26) A. <i>The Missional Blessing Renewed</i> (5:1–11:9) 1. The Perpetuation of Kingdom Hope from Adam to Noah in the Context of Threat (5:1–6:8) 2. The Promised Line's Protection & the Merciful Restoration of Humanity's Kingdom Purpose in the Context of Judgment (6:9–11:9) B. <i>The Agency for Blessing Declared</i> (11:10–50:26) 1. The Perpetuation of Kingdom Hope from Shem to Terah & the Merciful Provision for Universal Kingdom Blessing through Abraham & His Seed (11:10–37:1) 2. The Promised Line's Preservation & the Developing Kingdom Hope for a Royal Deliverer (37:2–50:26)
1	i	These are the <i>toledot</i> of the H and E (2:4–4:26)	N (+GL/S)	
2A	ii	This is the book of the <i>toledot</i> of Adam (5:1–6:8)	GL (+N)	
	iii	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah (6:9–9:29) And these are the <i>toledot</i> of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)	N GS (+N)	
2B	iv	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Shem (11:10–11:26) And these are the <i>toledot</i> of Terah (11:27–25:11) And these are the <i>toledot</i> of Ishmael (25:12–18) And these are the <i>toledot</i> of Isaac (25:19–35:29) And these are the <i>toledot</i> of Esau (36:1–8; 36:9–37:1)	GL N (+GS) GS N GS (+N+GS)	
		v	These are the <i>toledot</i> of Jacob (37:2–50:26)	N (+GS+N)
		KEY: N = Narrative; GL = Linear Genealogy; GS = Segmented Genealogy		
		Main Theme		
		The means by which God's blessing-commission of kingdom advancement will be fulfilled in a cursed and perverted world is through an ever-expanding God-oriented, hope-filled, mission-minded community, climaxing in a single king in the line of promise who will perfectly reflect, resemble, and represent God and who will definitively overcome all evil, thus restoring right order to God's kingdom for the fame of his name.		

- B. The Parallel, Introductory Function of the Linear Genealogies.** Furthermore, a genealogical genre parallel between chs. 5 and 11 (the book's only linear genealogies, both addressing the line-of-promise) sets up two major units post-fall. As such, after the theological introduction to the book (1:1–2:3), we have the Garden episode (1), which clarifies both how life should be and why life is wrong. The rest of the book then clarifies the sustained need for universal blessing and the preservation of creation through judgment (2A) and the divine provision for the universal blessing (2B). These major units are highlighted on the basis of genre and content, whereas the individual section divisions and the units they fall under are distinguished by grammatical form (*and* vs. lack of it).
- C. The Main Theme:** The bulk of the literary weight in Genesis is given to the large unit from 11:10–37:1 that opens with the *toledot* of Shem and addresses the agency by which God's global kingdom purposes will be realized. I summarize the main theme of the book as follows: *Despite mankind's losing the blessing of eternally reigning over a very good world under God as his image bearers and spreading God's heavenly kingdom to the ends of the earth, Yahweh will restore this blessing to all the nations when they place their faith in the victorious, royal seed of the woman, who will descend from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah and who will crush the serpent and claim all lands.*

IV. The Need for Blessing: Humanity's Perversion and the Merciful Kingdom Promise of a Curse-Overcoming Seed (Genesis 2:4–4:26)

A. Introduction:

1. Humanity in Gen. 1:1–2:23: The call to be an ever-expanding community of God-entranced families imaging God.
 - Gen. 1:26–28. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion...” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion...”
2. At the end of Gen. 1:1–2:3, what is clear is that males and females are:
 - a. Equal in their opportunity to relate to God;
 - b. Equal in their call to rule over God's world;
 - c. Equal in their responsibility to image God in ever-increasing ways on a global scale;
 - d. Equal in their dependence on God to fulfill the mission;
 - e. Distinct in their gender;
 - f. Distinct in the role they will play in being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth with God's image.

B. The Ideal Kingdom Family in the Sacred Space of God (Gen. 2:4–25)

1. Introduction:
 - a. The context is pre-fall and paradigmatic.
 - i. Stress on the pre-fall reality is set (1) by the stress in Gen 2:5–7 that man's role as a ground worker among the wilderness plants of the field had not yet been established (see Gen 3:23) and (2) by the narrative itself, Genesis 3 coming after Genesis 2.
 - ii. That the material provides a pattern for later kingdom relationships is clear from the information found in the text itself and from the use of Genesis 2 later in Scripture. What God calls for of the first couple in many respects remains constant as a creation ordinance and is thus applicable throughout the age of the first creation in the kingdom community in general and in marriage in particular.
 - b. Marriage is the *Deed of God*: As is evident through Genesis 2, God as the initiator, creator, and guide of the kingdom family—“What . . . God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9).
 - c. Marriage is about the *Display of God*: Couples image God in a unique way.
 - Eph. 5:31–32. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
 - (1) “Mystery”: something that has not been fully disclosed but now is being revealed in a greater way.
 - (2) The mystery of marriage is that since the beginning of creation (Mark 10:6) the institution has been a model of a greater, more ultimate relationship—i.e., a picture or symbol of the relationship between Christ and his church

Fig. 3.7. The Mystery of Marriage as the Display of God

Ultimate Relationship: Christ (head) + church = one body
 Model Relationship: Husband (head) + wife = one flesh

2. Marriage as the display of God's tenacious covenant love with his people
 - a. The man's function (2:15): "to work it and keep it"
 - i. Outside Genesis, these terms are used together only in relation to the Levites roles as *servants* and *guardians* in the tabernacle:
 - Num. 3:4, 7–8. But Nadab and Abihu died before Yahweh when they offered unauthorized fire before Yahweh in the wilderness of Sinai... They [the Levites] shall keep guard over him [Aaron] and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. (See also Num. 3:4, 7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14.)
 - Gen. 3:23–24. Therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
 - ii. Several inter-textual parallels suggest that Adam bore a priestly role, serving as overseer of God's sacred space, the Garden of Eden being portrayed as his sanctuary/temple/palace on earth.
 - (1) Yahweh God walks in Eden as he later does in the tabernacle (Gen. 3:8; cf. Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14[H15]; 2 Sam. 7:6–7)
 - (2) Eden and the later sanctuaries are entered from the east and guarded by cherubim (Gen. 3:24; cf. Exod. 26:22; 27:13; 38:13; 1 Kgs. 6:23–29)
 - (3) The tabernacle lamp stand's almond-tree appearance possibly symbolizes the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22; cf. Exod. 25:31–35; 34:17–24), and its seven lights may point to the seven days of creation (Exod. 25:31–40).
 - (4) The pair of Hebrew verbs in God's command to the man to "work/serve" and to "keep/guard" the Garden (2:15; 3:23–24) are only used in combination elsewhere in the Pentateuch of the duties of the Levites in the sanctuary (cf. Num. 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6)
 - (5) The river flowing from Eden (Gen. 2:10) is echoed in Ezek. 47:1–12, which envisages a river flowing from a future Jerusalem temple and bringing life to the Dead Sea.
 - (6) Gold, onyx, and other precious stones (Gen. 2:11–12) are used extensively to decorate the later sanctuaries and priestly garments (Exod. 25:7, 11, 17, 31, 35; 27:48–50; 28:9–12, 17, 20–21; 31:5; 35:9, 27, 33; 38:24; 39:6, 7, 10, 13–14; 1 Kgs. 6:20–22, 28, 30, 32; 2 Chr. 3:5–7, 10). Gold in particular was associated with the divine presence.
 - (7) The descriptions of the tabernacle and Solomon's temple are filled with garden imagery reminiscent of Eden (gourds, flowers,

pomegranates, lilies, seas, oxen, lions, wreaths, clay) (Exod. 25:31–36; 28:33–34; 37:17–22; 39:24–26; 1 Kgs. 6:18, 29, 32, 35; 7:18–20, 22–26, 29–30, 36, 39, 42, 44, 46, 49; cf. Jer. 52:22–23; 2 Chr. 3–4).

- (8) The 6+1 pattern of the creation appears to be modeled in the tabernacle instructions, where God initiates the building with seven speeches (paralleling the seven days), each beginning with “Yahweh said to Moses” (25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12). The sixth speech sets apart two humans to oversee the building project (30:1–11), and the seventh calls Israel to keep the Sabbath (31:12–17).

iii. Interpretation of Adam’s role in Gen 2:15:

- (1) The activity:
- “Work” = Stewardship and provision; the leader as servant (unburdened “work,” cf. 3:17–19)
 - “Keep” = Guardianship and protection; the leader as caretaker and watchman (cf. 3:24)
- (2) The object = *the land*. As the couple would multiply, subdue, and have dominion, Adam would operate as the primary agent for serving and guarding the land, expanding the garden and extending God’s image. The sphere of care and oversight would include the plants, animals, and his family.

Fig. 3.8. Examples of Adam’s Role as Primary Provider and Protector

	Physical	Spiritual
Provider	Primary responsibility in labor for food, shelter, etc.	Primary responsibility for family instruction and worship.
Protector	Primary responsibility for ensuring wellbeing of family and dwelling.	Primary responsibility for guarding God’s word and standing against negative influences.

- b. The wife’s function (2:18): to serve as a helper corresponding to the husband.
- The wife is called to stand alongside her husband to assist and enable him in his call as the primary provider and protector.
 - To help is not derogatory, for this role is most commonly associated with Yahweh in the OT.
 - Ps. 115:9–11. O Israel, trust in Yahweh! He is their *help* and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in Yahweh! He is their *help* and their shield. You who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh! He is their *help* and their shield.”
 - Ps. 121:1–2. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my *help* come? My *help* comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth.
- c. Adam’s function clarified: love his wife as his own body with a shift of primary covenant loyalty from parents to spouse (2:23–24)
- As is clear from the inference in 2:24, 2:23 marks the first wedding vows. More than a mere observation, these words provide a declaration from the man, the covenant head, to Yahweh (note he speaks of his wife in 3rd person “this”) that he would love his wife as

he loves himself: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (cf. Eph. 5:28).

ii. Covenant commitment seen in:

- (1) “Bone and flesh” (v. 23): new covenant family created (see 2 Sam. 5:1)
- (2) Naming (v. 23): new covenant partner (see 2 Kgs. 23:34; 24:17)
- (3) “Cleaving” (v. 24): new covenant commitment (see Gen. 34:3; cf. Ps. 45:10–12)

d. Roles summarized:

	Nature	Function
Husband	Head of Wife (Eph 5:23)	Provide, Protect, Love (Gen 2:17; Eph 5:25, 28, 33)
Wife	Glory of Husband (1 Cor 11:7)	Help, Submit, Respect (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22, 33)

“Headship is the divine calling of a husband to Christ-like servant leadership—protection and provision—in the home. Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership and to help carry it through according to her gifts.” (John Piper)

C. The Kingdom Family Warped: Reflections on the Fall in View of the Ideal (Genesis 3):

1. The serpent’s goal and scheme: Role reversal (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14)
2. The man and woman’s actions:
 - a. The woman was deceived (Gen. 3:1–6; cf. 1 John 2:15–17) and led her husband, who was with her, into sin (Gen. 3:6); the man was passive, failing to protect his wife and to stand against the God-denying force of the serpent.
 - b. Rather than seeking justification from God, the man began to justify himself and abusively and selfishly pointed the blame on his wife, declaring her guilt and sentencing her to death (3:12; cf. 2:17).
 - c. The woman recognized the serpent’s deception (3:13).
3. The Judgment against the Woman/Wife (3:16)
 - a. Summary:
 - i. Pain in childbirth, the one area that the woman stands fully distinct from the man with respect to abilities; it targets the very means by which gospel hope will come and triumph (Gen 3:15 – hope will rise through judgment).
 - ii. Marital conflict and its resulting communal strife: Like the way sin desired to destroy Cain (Gen. 4:7), a wife’s desire will be to overpower her husband, but he will rule over her (3:16; see Song 7:11 for curse reversal).
 - b. Both judgments confront the wife’s responsibility as “helper.”

4. The Judgment against the Man/Husband (3:17–19)
 - a. Summary:
 - i. The reason for judgment emphasized (3:17): failure to love through servant-hearted leadership (no protection but rather passive following).
 - ii. Burdensome life and toilsome work (3:17–18)
 - iii. Deterioration of the body and of creation (3:19)
 - Rom. 8:18–25. ²⁰The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
 - 2 Cor. 4:16. Though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed day by day.
 - Rev. 22:1–3. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.
 - b. All target the man's responsibility as steward and leader
5. Synthesis of the Roles of Men and Women
 - a. Growing up in a world that often had a low view of women, the Bible stresses the dignity and purpose of women and emphasizes the responsibility of a man to treat a lady with honor and care, nurture and respect.
 - b. Husbands and wives are equal in nature and purpose and have nearly all the same abilities, but they do have different roles.
 - c. Both roles are sacrificial, self-giving, and other-exalting.
 - i. Headship is never domineering, manipulative, coercive, passive, or destructive; rather it is protective, caring, nurturing, intentional, and supportive; the husband is the leader in the home, serving as the primary provider and protector, both physically and spiritually.
 - ii. Helper-ship is never domineering, manipulative, coercive, passive, or destructive; rather it is characterized by honoring and respecting one's husband, by a heart of service, and by a genuine contribution to the two-person team that provides balance to the husband's strengths and weaknesses.

D. The Nature of Sin, the First Gospel, and the Investiture and Exile of Mankind (Genesis 3)

1. The Setting and Promise
 - a. Two trees:
 - i. The tree of life (2:9), the eating of which was related to eternal life (3:22, 24; cf. Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).
 - ii. The tree of the knowledge related to good and evil (2:9, 17), suggesting the acquisition of *wisdom* and god-likeness (3:5–6, 22).
 - b. The command: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge related to good and evil (2:16–17; 3:5).

- c. The consequence:
- i. Of disobedience: death (2:17), leading to a shameful knowledge of good and evil gained the wrong way (3:22);
 - ii. Of obedience (implied): life sustained, not gained (though likely escalated), and a knowledge of good and evil acquired in God's time and way (see 3:22).
2. The Test or Evidence of Human Inability: The Tree of Knowledge
- a. Central Texts in the Immediate Context:
 - Gen. 2:17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.
 - Gen. 3:5. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
 - Gen. 3:22. Then Yahweh God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."
 - b. Question: Is the "knowledge" pertaining to good and evil something mankind was supposed to have in time, or is it a knowledge only God was to have (3:5, 22)?
 - i. Kings are called upon to make judicial decisions regarding right and wrong, under the guidance of God; they are to know good and evil, but only as God defines it.
 - (1) Key texts:
 - 2 Sam. 14:17, 20. And your servant thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest,' for my lord the king is like the angel of God *to discern good and evil*. Yahweh your God be with you!...But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth.
 - 1 Kgs. 3:9. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may *discern between good and evil*, for who is able to govern this your great people?
 - (2) Conclusion: Israel's kings discern good and evil, right and wrong, but they do so solely with God's help *through* the Word (see Deut. 17:18–20).
 - ii. Young children have no knowledge of good or evil and thus are fully dependent on those older for discernment.
 - (1) Key texts:
 - Deut. 1:39. And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have *no knowledge of good or evil*, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.
 - Isa. 7:15–16. He shall eat curds and honey *when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good*. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.
 - (2) Conclusion: At least after the fall, young children cannot distinguish good and evil, but adults can. Gaining the ability to choose the right from the wrong does not appear to be a bad thing but is expected to come with maturity.
 - iii. There is a point at which the elderly fail to appreciate fully what others consider good and evil.

- 2 Sam. 19:35[36]. I am this day eighty years old. *Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not* [lit., between good to evil]? Can you servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?
- iv. Those who mature under God are to distinguish good from evil and to choose good as defined by God.
- (1) Key texts:
- Jer. 4: 22. “For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. *They are ‘wise’ in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.*”
 - Heb. 5:13–14. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice *to distinguish good from evil.*
 - Rom. 16:19–20. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be *wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.* The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
- (2) Conclusion: God’s people are to be characterized by a wisdom that knows and does what is good in light of their close association with God.
- v. Synthesis:
- (1) Knowledge of good and evil involves discernment and value assessment, whether moral, aesthetic, sensual, etc.
- (2) At the highest level, within the context of the created world, God alone bears the right to determine what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what is beautiful and what is not. He is the ultimate standard upon which good and evil is weighed.
- (3) Like children, Adam and Eve did not know the difference between good and evil before the fall, though the way the language is used elsewhere suggests that they were in time to gain such knowledge. Through the tree, they were to learn that good is related to what God says to do and evil to what he does not permit.
- (4) Like the rulers of old who stood as representatives of God to the people, Adam and Eve (and all humans that follow) were to submit to God’s leadership, aligning all knowledge of right and wrong to God’s directives.
- c. Defining sin in light of the fall: Any motivation, action, or thought that fails to align with God’s definition of what is good; failure to trust God’s timing and way.
- Rom. 14:23. Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.
 - 1 John 3:4. Everyone who make a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.
 - Jas. 4:17. Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
3. The Serpent, His Curse, and the First Gospel (3:1–19)
- a. “The serpent’s” identity:
- i. The serpent personifies sin, death, and hostility to God and is related to what is evil rather than to what is wise and good.

- Rom. 16:19–20. I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
- ii. He was created by God.
- Gen. 3:1. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field *that Yahweh God had made*.
 - Col. 1:16. For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (cf. Col. 2:15; Eph. 6:12).
- iii. The book of Revelation asserts that the serpent is the devil, whom God will destroy along with all evil powers.
- Rev. 12:1–4, 9, 13, 17. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.... ⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.... ¹³And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.... ¹⁷Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.
- iv. Revelation appears to build off of OT texts that link evil with a dragon-like figure and that themselves at least parallel similar views from the ancient world (as noted by R. Averbeck):
- Isa. 27:1. In that day Yahweh with his hand and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan (Heb. *lwytn* = Ug. *ltn*) the fleeing (Heb. *brh* = Ug. *brh*) serpent, Leviathan the twisting (Heb. *qlltwn* [only here in OT] = Ug. *>qltr*) serpent, and he will slay the dragon (Heb. *tnyn*) that is in the sea (Heb. *ywm*; cf. Ug. god *yamm*).
 - Ps. 74:12–14. Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. ¹³You divided the sea by your might; your broke the heads of the sea monsters (Heb. *tnynym*; cf. singular *tnyn* in Isa 27:1) on the waters. ¹⁴You crushed (Heb. *ršš*) the heads (Heb. *ršš*) of Leviathan (Heb. *lwytn*); you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
 - The Baal Epic (Ugaritic).
ktmΔβ.ltn.b@n.br' When you smote Lôtan, the fleeing serpent
tkly.b@n.>qltrn.[-] finish off the twisted serpent
jlyf.d.;b>t.rajm the tyrant with seven heads.
- b. The curse against the serpent and the first gospel (3:14–15):
- i. Genesis 3:14 suggests that the judgment on Satan, ultimately brought about by Christ, is due to what he did in deceiving the first couple: “Because you have done this. . . .” (NOTE: In contrast to popular opinion, Satan’s “fall” is most likely *not* described in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, for these texts find their primary referent in the kings of Babylon and Tyre, respectively, and they portray them as following in the steps of *Adam*, not Satan.)

- ii. Identity of the “Seed of the Serpent”: Human offspring who are spiritually linked with the serpent, characterized by hostility toward God and his kingdom building efforts.
- (1) The curse is not against snakes but against demonic power and evil that pervades and influences this world.
 - (2) The rest of Genesis distinguishes two human family trees, one characterized by the honor of God and hope in God’s promise and the other characterized by hostility toward God and his kingdom-building plan. This distinction works alongside the genealogical-*toledot* structure of the book to suggest that the primary line makes up the descendants of the *woman*, from which the offspring of promise will come, whereas the secondary group makes up the offspring of the serpent.
 - (a) The primary human line of promise is highlighted in the narratives and signaled through narrated *linear genealogies*: A gave birth to B, B gave birth to C, C gave birth to D, etc.; cf. 5:1–32; 11:10–26).
 - (b) The secondary human line of antagonists is usually highlighted through discontinuous *segmented genealogies*: A gave birth to B, C, and D; B gave birth to E, F, and G; C gave birth to H, I, J; D gave birth to K, L, and M; cf. 10:1; 2:12; 36:1, 9). This group marks the ultimate mission field to which Israel is called by God to serve.
 - (3) The NT suggests humans are either children of God or children of the devil.
 - Matt 13:37–39. [Jesus] answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. *The weeds are the sons of the evil one*, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels.”
 - Matt 23:15, 33. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much *a child of hell* as yourselves. . . . ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?
 - John 8:33, 44. They answered [Jesus], “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’ . . . ⁴⁴[Jesus answered,] “*You are of your father the devil*, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and his nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”
 - Acts 13:8–10. But Elymas the magician . . . opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him, ¹⁰ and said, “*You son of the devil*, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?”
 - 1 John 3:8–11. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it

is evident *who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil*: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

- iii. The “seed of the woman” and the first gospel (3:15)
 - (1) *In the wake of humanity’s fall, God declared the first good news even before his judgment of the woman and man:*
 - (a) The offspring of the woman would one day bring a death-blow against the serpent (“bruise your head”) while sustaining injury to himself (“bruise his heel”) (cf. Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 20:1–3, 10).
 - (b) To sustain personal injury identifies his substitutionary suffering, for one able to overcome the accusations and threats and abuses of the serpent justly must be able to stand guiltless in the power of God. To bring a death-blow to the serpent means that the claims of death held by the serpent will be removed. It means that the one who has the power of death will be disarmed. It means that the curse of sin and the darkness it brought has a terminus in the blessing of the dawn. It means that light will snuff out the night and that new creational life will grow through the ashes of judgment.
 - (c) “‘But what does it all mean?’ asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer. ‘It means,’ said Aslan, ‘that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know: Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.’” (C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, ch. 15)
 - (d) “When Adam sinned, he stood ashamed, afraid, trembling, as one ready to perish forever under the severe displeasure of God. Death was what he deserved, and he fully expected the sentence to be immediately carried out. In this state, the Lord Christ in the promise comes to him, and says, ‘Poor creature! How terrible is your condition! How deformed you are now! What has become of the beauty, the glory of that image of God in which you were created? See how you have taken upon yourself the monstrous shape and image of Satan? And yet your present sorrow, your physical return to dust and darkness, is in no way to be compared with what is to follow. Eternal distress lies before you. But now, look up and behold me, and you will have a glimpse of what infinite wisdom, love and grace have purposed for you. Do not

continue to hide from me. I will take your place. I will bear your guilt and suffer that punishment which would sink you eternally into the hidden depths of hell. I will pay for what I never took. I will be made a curse for you so that you may be eternally blessed.” (John Owen, *The Glory of Christ* [Banner of Truth Trust, 1994], 60–61)

- (2) *Identity of the seed*: an individual, male, royal descendant of the woman
 - (a) The explicit 3ms pronoun “he” and 3ms pronominal suffix “his” in the Hebrew text point to a single, male descendant.
 - (i) When the collective singular noun “seed,” “denotes a specific descendant, it appears with singular verb inflections, adjectives, and pronouns”; in contrast, when the co-referent is plural, it uses plural inflections, adjectives, and pronouns (see J. Collins, “A Syntactical Note [Genesis 3:15]” *TynBul* 140 [1997]: 139–48; J. S. DeRouchie and J. C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 [2010]: 36–48).
 - (ii) Genesis 17:9 provides an example where the co-referent is plural, and the text uses plural pronouns: “And God said, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout *their* generations.’”
 - (b) The LXX translator appears to have interpreted it as an individual, for he used the ms pronoun (*autos*), rather than the neuter.
 - (c) Eve appears to be hoping for the promised offspring when Cain is born. This hope is rekindled then with Seth, while Cain is portrayed as being separated from the offspring of the woman.
 - Gen. 4:1, 25. Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.” . . . ²⁵And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another *offspring* instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”
 - (d) Noah’s father Lamech appears to be hoping for this male descendant, for when Noah is born he declares: “Out of the ground that Yahweh has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands” (Gen. 5:29).
- (3) *Further support for a Messianic reading of Genesis 3:15*
 - (a) God promises Abraham (and others) that kings would come from him and that, while he would have many offspring, a single, male offspring of promise would overpower his enemies and serve as the channel of blessing to all the

nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2; 17:6; 22:17b–18; 24:60; 35:11)

- Gen. 22:17–18. I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of *his* enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.
- (b) God promises that this king would be one of Jacob’s sons from the tribe of Judah, from line of David, and he affirms that he would defeat his enemies and mediate blessing.
- Gen. 49:8, 10. Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you....¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute come to him [[or “until he comes to whom it belongs”]]; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
 - Num. 24:17, 19. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth....¹⁹And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of the cities!
 - 2 Sam. 7:12–13. When your days [David] are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
 - Ps. 72:1, 4, 9, 17. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ...⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and *crush the oppressor*....⁹May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies, *lick the dust!* ...¹⁷May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! *May people be blessed in him*, all nations call him blessed!
- (c) Luke explicitly links the Genesis promises to Abraham with the hope of the Davidic Messiah and Isaiah’s Messianic Servant.
- Luke 1:68–75. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
 - Acts 3:25–26. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”²⁶ God, having raised up his servant [Jesus], sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of your from your wickedness.
- (d) Paul too saw Genesis’ promises as being mediated through Messiah Jesus, the seed of Abraham.

- Gal. 3:8, 14, 16, 29. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ... ¹⁴In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham ... [has] come to the Gentiles.... ¹⁶Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.... ²⁹And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.
4. Mankind’s Investiture and Exile (3:20–24)
 - a. By naming his wife “Eve,” Adam is most likely expressing faith in God’s promises—both to judge and to bless.
 - i. Adam recognizes that Eve will be “the mother of all the *living*” (3:20), which is directly against the curse that “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely *die*” (2:17).
 - ii. Eve’s standing as the mother of *all the living* is not a testimony that she would be the mother of all humanity, for the distinction was already made that there will be an *offspring of the serpent* (i.e., those associated with death) and an *offspring of the woman* (i.e., one who will bring life). This opposition marks two different groups, some associated with the death of curse and others associated with the prize of life.
 - iii. For Eve to be the mother of *all* the living identifies not only hope in the fact that she will generate not only a full line of those living (as opposed to those who are dead) but also the recognition that the righteous act of the single offspring will benefit many more. Coming from Eve will be an entire line of those identified with this coming victorious one who will, in turn, profit from his victory.
 - iv. But they will still rise up in a world filled with others will are part of the walking dead—who will, like their father the devil, stand in opposition to the offspring of the woman and the generations associated with him. “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
 - b. In response to Adam’s faith, God now re-invests him, identifying his future eternal inheritance among the living. The shift from nakedness to clothing parallels humanity’s move from ignorance (developmental childhood) to wisdom (developmental adulthood) or lack of knowledge to knowledge. The clothing, therefore, appears to suggest maturity beyond infancy and likely even endowment with royal privilege (see W. N. Wilder, “Illumination and Investiture: the Royal Significance of the Tree of Wisdom in Genesis 3,” *WTJ* 68 [2006]: 51–69).
 - i. There is no reason to think that clothing was not part of God’s original intention for humanity. Nakedness without shame (Gen. 2:25) likely

- points more to the first couples' immaturity rather than to their blamelessness. (Children feel no shame at their nakedness, but only because their eyes have not been opened to their need for clothing.)
- ii. Adam and Eve's clothing is likely a means for royal honor and proper reverence in the presence of God—much like the priestly garments, which were “for glory and for beauty” (Exod. 28:2, 40, 42).
- (1) Throughout Scripture, as in the ancient Near East, clothing accompanies rulership and inheritance (cf. Joseph [Gen. 37:3–4; 41:42]; Samson [Judg. 14:12–19]; Jonathan, son of Saul [1 Sam. 18:4]; Jehoiachim [Jer. 22:24]; Jehoiachin [2 Kgs. 25:29]; Daniel [Dan. 5:29]; Joshua, the high priest [Zech. 3:3–7]; Zerubbabel [Hag. 2:23]; and Mordecai [Esth. 6:6–11; 8:2, 8]; the prodigal son [Luke 15:22]).
 - (2) Throughout Scripture, nakedness, apart from the marriage bed, is always a shameful, undesirable state.
 - Lev. 18:6. None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am Yahweh.
 - Isa. 47:3. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.
 - Nah. 3:5. Behold, I am against you, declares Yahweh of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdom at your shame.
 - Hab. 2:15–16. Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!
¹⁶You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in Yahweh's right hand will around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!
 - Rev. 16:15. Blessed is the one who says awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!
- iii. In the ancient world, both kings and idols alike, as images of the gods, were expected to be clothed as a sign and mark of their royal authority.
- Jer. 10:3–15 summarized. One begins with the wooden core of the statue (v. 3), plates it then with gold or silver (vv. 4a, 9a, 14), attaches it to its base (v. 4b), and then, finally, clothes the image in fine garments (v. 9b): “They are the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the goldsmith; their clothing is violet and purpose; they are all the work of skilled men.”
 - Ezek. 16 summarized. God clothed his bride in royal adornments (vv. 10–12), but she removed them and placed them on idolatrous pseudo-images of god instead (vv. 17–18): “And [you] made images of men, and with them played the whore. ¹⁸And you took your embroidered garments to cover *them*.”
 - Isa. 44 summarized. Whereas Israel engaged in idolatry, *forming* (*ysr*) idols that were ultimately worthless (v. 9), God had *formed* (*ysr*) Israel in his image, and he would not forget them: “Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I *formed* you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.”
- iv. Because the ancients believed kings were images of the gods, they were expected to be clothed with the glory and majesty of God. In Wilder's words, “The completion and fulfillment of their rulership demands investiture” (63). But Adam and Eve did not pass their “test,” seeking knowledge prematurely, and they therefore failed to receive the kind of divine investiture that would have been theirs otherwise.

- v. The amazing grace of the passage is that, in spite of Adam and Eve's sin, God does not cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden naked but instead clothes them with garments, symbolizing their receipt of a small token of their inheritance as children of God (Gen. 3:21). The use of animal skins also likely suggests that the blessing from God only came through substitutionary sacrifice. It seems that their investiture was much less than the royal and glorious event that it "could have been" had they obeyed, and it therefore anticipates the day when the last Adam, serving as a royal priest (Exod 19:16) and through his own obedience, secures for all in him the glory and righteousness of God.
- 1 Cor. 15:53. This perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.
 - 2 Cor. 5:4. While we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
 - Rev. 3:5. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.
- c. "Death" as judgment for sin:
- i. Adam and Eve's "death" is most directly *exile* from God's life-giving presence, both physically and spiritually (Gen. 3:23–24)—a death that ultimately results in greater sin and destructive behavior, working through Cain and climaxing in the need for the flood. Sin, therefore, does not simply deserve judgment—it is judgment. In the words of Paul, "God gave them up . . ." (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).
 - ii. Death was also seen in God's subjecting creation "to frustration" and into a "bondage to corruption" (Rom. 8:20–21). What was natural and ordered became twisted, so that storms could be destructive and cells could become cancerous. This "death" judgment appears to have impacted all creation in light of the curse brought on land animals (Gen. 3:14) and the thorns and thistles brought forth from the earth (3:18).
 - iii. The result was that death also included physical deterioration, as is clear from the judgment on Adam that his earthly toil would ultimately end in his return to the ground as dust (Gen. 3:19) and from the statement that the first couple were separated from eternal life (3:22, 24).
 - iv. The new creation in Christ answers each of these results of the curse:
 - (1) While death reigned over all in Adam, life comes to those in Christ (Rom. 5:17). Though believers still battle sin, our once "debased mind" (1:28) is now being renewed (12:2), as God "gives us up" to obedience, having freed us from slavery to sin (6:17) and giving us the gift of eternal life (6:23).
 - (2) While Christians still get cancer and other diseases in this cursed age, we rest in the promise of "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23), and "though our outer self is wasting away, our

inner man is being renewed day by day” as we await “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:16–17).

- (3) While those in Christ still die physically, the sting of death has been removed (2 Cor. 15:55–57), and physical death becomes the means to glorification in the presence of God. What hope we have that “to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21), that “to depart” is to “be with Christ” (1:23), and that to “be away from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).
- d. The hope of life: Significantly, Adam names his wife Eve, which means “mother of all the living.” This name is one of amazing hope, for Adam was convinced both from the gospel promise of Gen 3:15 regarding the offspring of the woman and the curse of painful birth in Gen 3:16 that life would rise out of judgment. Eve’s name is likely not referring to all humans who would come from her. As stated in Gen 3:15, some of her children would be considered *not* her offspring but offspring of the devil. She is the mother of the living—those who, by following the promised offspring deliverer would be ransomed from the serpent’s death line and grow up in the line of those hoping in the offspring deliverer.

E. Mankind’s Corruption and the Preservation of a Remnant (4:1–26)

1. Eve’s profession in 4:1 bears a sense of hope in echo of 3:15. She is looking for the offspring deliverer and thinks that Cain is it.
2. Cain carries the line of curse (4:16–24).
3. Seth gives hope for blessing, calling attention once again to the promise of a conquering offspring in the place of Abel (4:25–26).
 - a. Use of the divine name in the narrative:
 - i. “God”: Gen. 1:1–2:3
 - ii. “Yahweh God”: 2:4–3:24
 - iii. “Yahweh”: 4:1–26, except v. 25
 - iv. “God”: 4:25, with apparent focus on the Creator’s blessing (cf. 1:28).
 - b. Echoes of 4:26: “At that time people began to call upon the name of Yahweh.”
 - Joel 2:31–32. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh shall be saved.
 - Acts 2:21, 38–39. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”
 - Rom. 10:12–13. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

V. The Hope for Blessing: The Missional Blessing Renewed (5:1–11:9)

A. Structure:

1. 5:1–6:8: Whereas the last unit ended with an extended history of the “line of destruction” (4:1–24) and a small comment on the “line of promise” (4:25–26), this section focuses principally on the line of promise through an extended linear

genealogy from Adam to Noah (5:1–32); brief comment is then made regarding the vast scope of the line of destruction and God’s wrath against the world (6:1–7). The final word, however, is hope (the mention of Noah’s favor with God, 6:8), just as was the case with both previous sections (2:1–3; 4:25–26).

2. 6:9–11:9:
 - a. 6:9–9:29: This extended narrative highlights the wickedness of all terrestrial life seen in violence (mankind, animals, and birds), God’s global judgment and gracious preservation of a remnant on the ark, God’s gracious covenant renewal with creation through Noah in spite of the sustained wickedness of mankind, and the setting apart of Shem as the line through whom the promise of Genesis 3:15 will continue.
 - b. 10:1–11:9: An extended segmented genealogy and narrative overviewing the growth and separation of the seventy nations following the Tower of Babel, all in order to highlight the need for divine blessing and the mission field to which God’s people will ultimately be called to reach.

B. The Perpetuation of Kingdom Hope from Adam through Noah in the Context of Threat (5:1–6:8)

1. An Unbroken Line of Faithful (Gen 5). Genesis 5 is dominated by a linear, apparently unbroken genealogy that carries the promised line descendant by descendant from Adam to Noah.
 - a. The previous unit ended by shifting focus away from the seed of the serpent in Cain to the offspring of promise in Seth (4:26): “To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of Yahweh.” This sets the stage for the linear genealogy of ch. 5, which only highlights how the Messianic hope was preserved from generation to generation.
 - b. “Image and likeness” language is shown to point to “sonship,” Adam of God and Seth of Adam (5:1–3; cf. Luke 3:38). In some way, image-ness relates to family resemblance.
 - c. Little commentary is offered through the genealogy, suggesting that the point is to move us to Noah. Focus is brought to the 7th and 10th generations by the comment that “Enoch walked with God” (5:22, 24), and in Lamech’s declaration at the birth of Noah (5:29): “Out of the ground that Yahweh has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.” The messianic hope, therefore, was passed on through the generations.
 - d. Because the only extended ages in the Bible are connected to the line of promise in Genesis’ linear genealogies, it is possible that *only* the righteous remnant were living long, perhaps as a prophetic sign of the miracle of *life* that Yahweh alone could provide. In this view, old age would bear a missiological purpose until God raised up Abraham, through whom the messianic mission to the nations gained greater focus.
 - e. The fact that every generation (except Enoch) *died* stresses the permanent hold of the curse on humanity. God’s promise in 2:17 is proving true, and the weight of this curse is highlighted in Lamech’s final cry for relief (5:29).

- f. The linear genealogy ends segmented, highlighting that Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32). The arrangement highlights Shem, even though the genealogy in Genesis 10 suggests that Japheth may have been the oldest. The mention that the “youngest son” uncovered Noah’s nakedness (9:24) probably points to Canaan as the youngest (grandson) in the household rather than to Ham as the youngest.
2. Narrative on the Line of Destruction (6:1–8):
- a. 6:1–4: This text is notoriously difficult. Who are the “sons of God” who took the “daughters of man” as their wives? Who are the Nephilim? Why is this information given at this point in the narrative?
- i. The “sons of gods/God”:
- (1) *Ancient kings who marry commoners.*
 - (a) Some believe that we have here a stress on man-centered kingdoms producing “the men of renown.” In this reading, the “sons of gods/God” are royal figures (comparable to the Davidic king being called God’s “son,” 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7) and the “daughters of men” are any women.
 - (b) The sin may thus have been polygamy and/or a failure to exalt God through the household. However, we never see the phrase “sons of god” in the plural ever designating human kings.
 - (2) *The godly line that intermarries with pagans.*
 - (a) Genesis focuses highly on genealogy, distinguishing the line hoping in the “offspring” promise (Gen 3:15 + the linear genealogies) from the rebel line identified as “offspring” of the serpent. Coming at the climax of the 10-person linear genealogy from Adam to Noah in Genesis 5, the “sons of god” could easily be seen as the line of the faithful remnant that married the “daughters of men.”
 - (b) However, if they were godly, would they really be intermarrying with pagans?
 - (c) Furthermore, why would the *human* remnant be dissociated from “men,” for they were themselves hoping in the “offspring of the woman,” who was named “the mother of all the living” (Gen 3:15, 20)?
 - (3) *Angels who intermarry with humans.*
 - (a) It is noteworthy that the phrase “sons of gods/God” in the plural is only used of angels throughout the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; see also Ps. 29:1; Dan. 3:25; cf. Deut. 32:8), though believers are regarded by this language in the NT (Matt. 5:9; Luke 20:36; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26).
 - (b) Furthermore, it seems likely that both 2 Pet. 2:4–5 and Jude 6–7 are pointing to this text and referring to the sinful cohabitation of fallen angels with humans. 2 Pet 2:4–5 associate an angelic rebellion with the days of Noah (just as the sin’s of Sodom and Gomorrah are then associated with

the days of Lot in vv. 6–7). Jude 6–8 detail that this fall related to *sexual immorality!*

- (i) 2 Pet. 2:4–5. For if God did not spare **angels** when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved **Noah**, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;
 - (ii) Jude 6–8: And the **angels** who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, **which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire**, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.
- (c) Certainly Moses and Israel had a framework for the angelic (see Deut 32:8, 43; cf. 32:16–17), and because he authored Genesis we need to read that book through the lens of what follows. Furthermore, having introduced the creation of *all* things in heaven and earth in Gen 1:1 (the heavenly realm of which was understood to include the angels, Ps 148) and having introduced the serpent in Gen 3, it is not beyond possibility that the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 could point to the angels and not to the godly line from Adam to Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Many like Meredith Kline argue that the divine plural “us” in texts like Gen 1:26 and 3:22 points to God *and his angelic* court, which adds support to the possibility that “the sons of god” in 6:1–4 could refer to *angels*.
- (d) Jesus states that “angels in heaven do not marry” (Mark 12:25), but this does not restrict the possibility that fallen angels on earth could not. We see angelic beings portrayed as males (e.g., Michael, Jude 9) and *called* women (Zech 5:9), which suggests that angels too have distinct sexes/genders and that there are features on angelic beings that help us distinguish the two.
- (4) Regardless of how one understands the unions, the offspring were still considered human (Gen. 6:3–4), and it is this human population whose wickedness “was great on the earth,” and whose “every intention of the thoughts of his hearts was only evil continually” (6:5).

- ii. The Nephilim:
- (1) The meaning of Nephilim is difficult; it is related to the participial form of the verb *npl* ‘to fall’ and thus on the surface appears to mean “fallen ones.” This would suggest that we are perhaps to read them negatively—as self-made “men of renown.” However, the phrase translated “men of renown” actually says “the men of *the* name,” which, in light of Gen. 4:26 (“At that time people began to call on the name of Yahweh”) could mean that the Nephilim were God-seekers, perhaps even those listed in the linear genealogy of ch. 5 and thus in the line of Noah.
 - (2) While some perceive the Nephilim to be the result of the unnatural unions cited above, the text itself renders this unlikely, for the Nephilim appear to have already been on the earth when the marriages happened and they continued to be afterward, which probably means not that they outlived the flood but that they lived through the period of the unnatural unions (Gen. 6:4). Furthermore, because the Nephilim are the subject of the first clause in 6:4 and because the offspring of the unnatural unions are only part of the subordinate clause, the explication statement regarding “the mighty men who were of old, the men of the name” at the end of the verse most likely refers to the Nephilim and not the offspring.
 - (3) Num. 13:22, 28, 33 identifies the giant figures in Canaan as the Nephilim, but the text may be corrupt at this point. If Moses is intentionally linking the Nephilim of Canaan to the Nephilim of Genesis 6, it would mean either that the term is just general for “great men of stature or renown” or that this particular group of individuals somehow lived through the flood, perhaps being identified with Noah’s family.
 - (4) What appears clear is that the narrator does not want the reader to blame the flood on the Nephilim. They were not the focus of the problem, but the corruption related to mankind’s perversions was.
 - (5) Intriguingly, if the ancient Nephilim from the days of Noah are indeed connected in some way to the Nephilim of Canaan (even analogically), Moses may have been combatting those in his day that were asserting the Nephilim were non-human and thus superior to humans. His point here in relation to Numbers would be to stress that the Nephilim were *not* the offspring of these angelic-human relations but were mere humans alive before and during the days of Noah, yet who also died under God’s able judgment. It could also mean that the Nephilim were linked with Noah and/or one or more of his sons (see the connection of Gen 6:5 and 8:21), for the Nephilim continued through the global flood and through the Tower of Babel event. Israel should not fear the Nephilim in Canaan, for as in the days of the flood, he

was able to put an end to all evil. They needed only to believe (Num. 14:11).

- b. 6:5–7: God is grieved at the wickedness of mankind, and the rebel majority are consigned to destruction by flood.
 - c. 6:8: The last word is one of hope—the lone remnant member is Noah, who “found favor/grace in the eyes of Yahweh.” Significantly, this statement of Noah finding grace *precedes* the statement of his righteousness (6:9), thus clarifying how it was that he stood out from his peers—it was all by grace. This is supported by the reaffirmation of mankind’s complete wickedness after the flood—that is, the flood judgment did not alter humanity’s hearts (8:21). This too suggests that Noah’s “righteousness” is declarative and enjoyed by faith.
3. Moses’s Intention? Why would Moses recount these events for the benefit of the Israelites who have so recently become a people under God?
 - a. Center-stage are themes of failure to keep Yahweh foremost in one’s affections and of moral rebellion and its resulting divine punishment.
 - b. As with the flood generation, the Canaanites in Israel’s day are being dispossessed because of misplaced affections and moral rebellion; it is “because of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is driving them out before you” (Deut. 9:4).
 - c. If Israel forgets Yahweh like the flood generation and like the Canaanites they are dispossessing, God will judge them as well (Deut. 8:19–20): “And if you forget Yahweh your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that Yahweh makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of Yahweh your God (cf. Lev. 18:24–25).

C. The Promised Line’s Protection and the Merciful Restoration of Humanity’s Kingdom Purpose in the Context of Judgment (6:9–11:9)

1. The Flood Judgment Anticipated (6:1–7:5):
 - a. The setting and its message for Israel (6:9–12)
 - i. Noah is righteous and blameless and walks with God (6:9–10; cf. 7:1 with 15:6 and 17:1–2)—statements only understood rightly in light of the “grace” of God mentioned in 6:8. This stress highlights that Noah had a long-relationship with God before the Lord ever established his covenant with him.
 - ii. The earth is corrupt due to the violence of “all flesh” (Gen 6:11–13), which appears not only to point to human sin but also to the ravenous and predatorial nature of beasts and birds (see 6:19–20; 7:21). SIDE NOTE: If the violence of animals that is being judged refers to any type of ravenous or predatory activity, this text would serve as a caution to old-earthers, whose models require millions of years of animal suffering and death disassociated from the curse, as if animal violence is not worthy of a curse. However, it is possible that the violence being condemned is specifically violence done *against*

- mankind, and therefore pre-fall animal violence would not by nature be a problem.
- iii. God later stressed that Israel (the original audience of the written account of Genesis 6 in its present context) was not receiving the land because of their righteousness, for they were stubborn, but because of the wickedness of the nations they were disinheriting (Deut. 9:4–6). As such, Israel would likely have been forced to identify themselves with the world that was being destroyed rather than with Noah, who “walked with God” and “was a righteous man, blameless in his generation” (Gen. 6:9). Furthermore, as highlighted, the apparent disassociation of the Nephilim from the cause of the flood in 6:1–4 may have cautioned Israel from pointing to the giants as those who caused their wilderness judgment.
 - b. The divine response (6:13–22)
 - i. Divine promise and command (6:13–21)
 - (1) Prediction judgment (6:13)
 - (2) Commands for Noah to build the ark (6:14–16)
 - (3) Promise of deliverance and covenant through judgment (6:17–21)
 - ii. Noah’s obedience (6:22; cf. 12:1–4)
2. Biblical Evidence for a *Global*, not Regional, Flood and Why Its Important:
- a. Because the flood is targeted against the “corruption” and “violence” of “all flesh” (6:12–13), and because “all flesh” in the context appears to include not only mankind but also the land animals and birds (6:19–20; 7:21), the judgment would need to cover all the earth’s dry ground to destroy all terrestrial life, save those on the ark.
 - b. That Yahweh intended to destroy all the birds (save those on the ark) is highlighted from the very fact that the text highlights numerous times that a remnant of every kind of bird to be on the ark and that all the rest of the birds died. Birds could easily fly to higher ground if the flood was regional; however, if indeed “the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered” (7:19), the birds would need to be preserved.
 - i. God set forth to “blot out...man and animals and creeping things and *birds of the heavens*” (6:7).
 - ii. “Every living thing of all flesh” was to be preserved—“two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you” (6:19). These included “the birds according to their kinds” (6:20).
 - iii. Noah was instructed to bring “seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of the earth” (7:3). Why would the ark be needed as a sanctuary if there was indeed regions on the planet that had not been affected by the flood; the birds could have flown there.
 - iv. Noah heeded God, taking onto the ark even “birds” (7:8)—“every bird, according to its kind” (7:14).
 - v. “And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.... He

blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.” (7:21, 23).

- c. A more narrow perspective from Noah’s viewpoint only ensues in 8:5; prior to this the language of the narrative is global.
 - d. Importance? The biblical text’s stress on the global nature of the flood that kills every terrestrial being is designed to highlight (1) how the deluge was a complete de-creation and (2) how the Noahic covenant marks a full-blown recreation on a global scale. What God is doing with Noah is truly a renewal of what he started, and Noah is indeed a second Adam.
3. Structure and Chronology of the Flood Narrative and Purpose of the Flood (7:5–24) (adapted from William D. Barrick, “Noah’s Flood and Its Geological Implications,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thayne H. Ury [Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008], 251–81):
- a. Structure and chronology
 - i. Introduction (7:6–10)
 - ii. Section 1 (7:11–18): Days 1–40—the ark floats after 40 days of water (fountains of great deep + torrential rains) (7:12, 17)
 - iii. Section 2 (7:19–8:4): Days 1–150—all living things outside the ark are destroyed (7:19–23)
 - Day 150 the waters begin to subside as fountains of the deep and torrential rains are shut up (7:24–8:3).
 - Day 151 the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat (8:4)
 - iv. Section 3 (8:5–12): Days 151–305 (165 days): restore the earth to a livable condition (cf. 1:2–19)—Commencement of subsiding waters; ark grounded; raven and dove released; dove does not return
 - v. Conclusion (8:13–14): Days 306–371 (56 additional days): Ground surface free of excess water; exit from the ark
 - vi. NOTE:
 - (1) *Question*: How many days were Noah and his family on the ark prior to the waters? Genesis 7:7 and 10 seem to indicate that they were aboard for a week before the waters erupted, but v. 12 seems to tell us they entered the same day the deluge began.
 - (2) *Answer*: A natural harmonization is that God’s “seven days” prediction (v. 4) marks the initiation of getting all the animals on the ark, which would have required Noah and his family going on (and off) to situate all the creatures. “After seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth. . . . [And] On the on the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark [for the last time].” Thus Noah and his family did enter the ark seven days prior to the waters, but the door wasn’t shut until the seventh day, so they were free to come and go. On the seventh day they (again entered) for the last time before the waters erupted.

- b. Purpose of the flood (1 year and 11 days [371 days] based upon a 360-day year [12 lunar months x 30 days/month])
 - i. Days 1–150: global cataclysmic judgment (days 1–40 get the ark to float)
 - ii. Days 151–371 (221 additional days): cleansing and reconstruction (165 days of restoration + 56 days of drying and exit)
4. The Noahic Covenant as a Context for Redemption (8:20–22)
 - a. The end of the *toledot* of Adam highlighted both the innate wickedness of mankind (Gen 6:5) and the preceding grace that overcame Noah’s rebellious heart (6:8). It is this context of grace that explains how the *toledot* of Noah could open by elevating Noah as righteous, blameless, and walking with God (6:9). What made Noah different than the rest of his generation was decisively caused by divine grace.
 - Gen. 6:5, 8–9. Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . .⁸ But Noah found favor/grace in the eyes of Yahweh. ⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.
 - b. That Noah and his family were *not* any different from the rest of humanity apart from divine grace is highlighted just after the flood in 8:21 when God almost repeats verbatim the truths of 6:5. Only Noah and his family were alive, yet of them the same could be said that was proclaimed of the flood generation.
 - Gen. 8:20–22. Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took some of every clean animal and some over every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when Yahweh smelled the pleasing aroma, Yahweh said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”
 - c. The reason why Yahweh promises to never again curse the ground on account of man is *because* man’s heart is evil (Gen 8:21). The logic is strange, implying something like: I will not curse you, because you deserve to be cursed. I suggest that the argument works only in light of redemptive history, where God’s recognizes that, because of mankind’s innate sinfulness, the only way his redemptive-kingdom purposes through the male deliverer of Gen 3:15 will be accomplished is if he withholds judgment until the days of the redeemer. The Noahic covenant, therefore, plays a massive role in providing a context for God’s redemptive purposes to be carried out.
 - d. The Noahic covenant also highlights that physical salvation is not enough to change the human heart. What a powerful message for the rebel majority of Israel to hear, who had just been delivered through the exodus! The only hope of internal salvation comes by grace alone in the curse-withholding God alone. How could he justly bestow such mercy? The sacrificial burnt offering likely provides an intentional pointer to the answer. Significantly, before the flood waters started, Yahweh instructed Noah to bring extra clean animals (7:2–3). That is, even in bringing the flood and in preserving Noah

and his family, Yahweh knew that a sacrifice would be needed. “Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (8:20). This burnt offering clarifies how Yahweh could justly bestow wickedness-overcoming saving grace on Noah (6:8) and, as we shall now see, how he could even bestow common grace on the world (8:21).

- e. What Yahweh promises through the Noahic covenant is often referred to as common grace: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (8:22). Significantly, within the context, Yahweh’s gracious bestowment of promise is a response to a sin sacrifice: “And when Yahweh smelled the pleasing aroma, Yahweh said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of man’” (8:21). The proper response to common grace is honor and thanksgiving (Rom 1:21). Indeed, God’s revealed purpose in giving rains fruitful seasons and in satisfying hearts with food and gladness is that they may serve as a witness to him (Acts 14:16–17) and ultimately lead people to repentance: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4). God’s “forbearance” was manifest in his passing over the sins of the redeemed prior to Christ (3:25), and his “patience” was seen in his enduring tolerance of “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” (9:22). All these are “kindnesses” being spurned by Paul’s audience, and so he writes, “But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (2:5). Failing to give thanks to God and to honor God is a direct affront against blood-bought grace and will stand as “exhibit A” in the final courtroom of God that the wickedness of man was indeed as it appeared. Thus Paul urges the church, “Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off” (11:22).

5. The Noahic Covenant with Creation Unpacked (9:1–17)

- Gen. 6:18–21. But I will *establish* my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.”
 - Gen. 9:9–11. Behold, I *establish* my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I *establish* my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.
- a. Terminology:
- i. “To cut / make a covenant” (*kārat b’rît*) = idiomatic, common Hebrew expression for making or initiating a covenant relationship (e.g., Gen. 15:18; Exod. 24:8; Deut. 5:2–3), though it may also be able to mean

- “renew” an existing covenant relationship but in a way that distinguishes it from what precedes (Exod. 34:10; Deut. 29:1).
- ii. “To give / make a covenant” (*nātan bʿrît*) = alternate Hebrew expression for making or initiating something new in a covenant relationship (e.g., Gen. 9:12; 17:2; Num. 25:12).
 - iii. “To maintain a covenant” (*hʿqîm bʿrît*) = lit. “he affirms/upholds/makes stand a covenant”; elsewhere it is used for ratifying pre-existing “oaths” (Gen. 26:3), “vows” (Num. 30:14), a sworn or promised “word” (Deut. 9:5; 2 Sam. 7:25), “words/promises” (Neh. 9:8), and “intentions/threats” (Jer. 30:24). When used with covenants, it appears to contrast with the two above, pointing to the maintenance, confirmation, or establishment of a covenant already created.
 - (1) It is used of people fulfilling their covenant obligations (2 Kgs. 23:3; Jer. 34:18) and also of God affirming his covenant:
 - (a) With Noah, his offspring, and all other flesh (Gen. 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17) and
 - (b) With Abraham and his offspring (Gen 17:7, 19, 21; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 8:18*), whether realized as:
 - (i) The Mosaic covenant’s nation of Israel (Lev. 26:9) or
 - (ii) The multi-ethnic remnant community of the new covenant (Ezek. 16:60, 62).
 - (2) Outside Genesis 6 and 9 (and possibly Exod. 6:4), the most questionable texts is Ezekiel 16:60, 62: “I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will *establish* for you and everlasting covenant.... I will *establish* my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am Yahweh.”
 - (a) Is the new covenant a totally new relationship or a fulfillment/confirmation of a previous relationship—i.e., the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 16:8 and Lev. 26:42; but see also 26:45)? If *hʿqîm bʿrît* means affirm, the (new) everlasting covenant is here shown to have an organic connection, likely through fulfillment, of the Abrahamic covenant.
 - (b) Elsewhere Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, uses *kārat* for the *new* covenant (34:25; 37:26; cf. Jer. 31:31–33; 32:40). Significantly, the “new” covenant stands in contrast to the “old” Mosaic administration, replacing and superceding it, whereas it stands as the affirmation of the Abrahamic promises.
 - (3) Genesis 17 suggests that Abraham’s fatherhood of the nations stands in distinction to his covenant with Abraham and his offspring, though established by means of it (see the discussion of Genesis 17 below).

- b. Covenant *affirmation* with Noah?
 - i. The covenant relationship includes not only Noah but also his offspring, which suggests maintenance or confirmation of the covenant from generation to generation.
 - ii. The covenant extends to “every living creature,” with Noah as the covenant head.
 - iii. The covenant language employs *h^aqîm b^erît*, which likely suggests that what God is doing through Noah with all creation is keeping or affirming a previous covenant established at creation through Adam.
 - iv. Noah is, therefore, a second (not the *last*) Adam, with a similar call of imaging God through the oversight of God’s world. The flood is de-creation, whereas what God does through Noah and his family afterward is recreation.

Fig. 3.9. A Comparison between the First and Second Creation Accounts

<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation started in watery chaos (Gen. 1:2; 7:17–24) • Presence of Spirit/wind at creation (Gen. 1:2; 8:1) • Image of God and stewards of creation (Gen. 1:26–27; 7:1–3; 9:6) • Animals “after their kind” and concern for “offspring” (Gen. 1:21–22, 24, 28; 3:15; 7:2–3, 13–14) • Blessing / command for fruitfulness given (Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7) • Gardens as primary area of caretaking (Gen. 2:15; 9:20) • Plants connected with a fall (Gen. 2:9, 16–17; 9:20) • Sins of consumption related to nakedness (Gen. 2:25; 3:6–7; 9:21–25) • Knowledge of offense (Gen. 3:7, 22; 9:24) • Pronouncement of judgment (Gen 3:14–19; 9:25–27) • Foods designated (Gen 1:29–30; 2:16; 9:3–4) • Original family includes father, mother, and three sons (Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Seth vs. Noah, his wife, Ham, Shem, Japheth) (Gen. 4:1–2, 25; 6:10; 7:13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear is explicitly introduced as part of humanity’s dominion (Gen. 9:2). • Animal life is explicitly sanctioned as food (Gen. 9:3; cf. 1:29). • Dominion mandate explicitly includes the defense of the sanctity of life (Gen. 9:6). • The permanence of the new order is guaranteed by explicit covenant promises marked by the covenant sign of the rainbow (Gen. 9:12–17). • While life goes on, the decreasing longevity of life shown in the genealogy of Genesis 11 suggests that a major change has happened in the world.

Fig. 3.10. Divine Commitment and Human Obligation in the Covenant with Creation

	<i>Adamic Covenant</i>	<i>Noahic Covenant</i>
Stipulations (couched as blessings)	God’s blessing of the sea and sky creatures as, “Be fruitful” (Gen. 1:22); God’s blessing-commission of humanity to “Be fruitful ... and subdue” the earth (1:28); man/husband was to serve and guard the garden (2:15); “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (2:16–17); wife was to help man succeed in the kingdom building endeavor (2:18)	“Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9); build the ark! (6:14; cf. v. 22); enter the ark and take animals! (7:1–2; cf. v. 5); leave the ark! (8:16–17; cf. v. 18); God’s blessing-commission of Noah and his sons to “Be fruitful...” (9:1, 7); you can eat both plant and beast, so long as you drain the blood (9:3–4); require a reckoning for homicide tit for tat (9:5–6); assumed reaffirmation of calls to subdue, have dominion, serve and guard
Oath / Promises (of Blessing & Curse)	<i>Blessings:</i> Vegetation as food for humanity and other living creatures (Gen. 1:29–30; 2:9); promise	“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night,

	of a male descendant who would destroy evil (3:15); implicit oath in God's "blessing" of sea and sky creatures (Gen. 1:22) and of humanity (1:28). <u>Curses</u> : "in the day that you of it you shall surely die" (2:17); pain in childbirth and friction in the marital relationship (2:16); the corruption of the created order, toil in work, and decay of human body (3:17–19)	shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22); "I establish my covenant with you and with your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you" (9:9–10); "never again shall flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood" (9:11); implicit oath in "blessing" of humanity (9:1); death highlighted both in the call to capital punishment and in its presence after the flood
Ceremonies or Oath Signs	The luminaries as "signs" (Gen. 1:14); marriage as a covenant (2:22–25); investiture of Adam and Eve (3:21)	Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:20–21); the rainbow as a "sign of the covenant" (9:12–17)

c. Important later biblical echoes of the Covenant with Creation:

- i. In Gen. 1:14–18, God placed lights in the heavens, "the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" and "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years." Thus the luminaries, while governing a sphere different from that given to humanity, find their revealed purpose in relation to the earthly sphere wherein God's kingdom purposes will be manifest—their constancy in fulfilling their intended role will help keep all in the original creation working according to its intended goal. The surety of this expression of the covenant with creation is used to establish lasting confidence in God's faithfulness to the kingdom promises given to David (Jer. 33:19–26).
 - Jer. 33:19–26. The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: ²⁰ "Thus says Yahweh: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹ then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me."

²³ The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: ²⁴ "Have you not observed that these people are saying, 'Yahweh has rejected the two clans that he chose'? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight. ²⁵ Thus says Yahweh: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, ²⁶ then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them."
- ii. The pervasive perversion of all the world in violence against the creation covenant has resulted in the curse of all (Isa. 24:4–6).
 - Isa. 24:4–6. The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. ⁵The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the *everlasting covenant*. ⁶Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.
- iii. As unwavering as God's promise to creation to never again destroy the world with a flood is God's (new) covenant commitment to establish lasting peace (Isa. 54:9–10).
 - Isa. 54:9–10. This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry

with you, and will not rebuke you. ¹⁰For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed.

iv. In the days of Hosea and Isaiah, the people of Israel, “like Adam, have transgressed the covenant” (Hos. 6:7), thus securing a lasting punishment akin to Adam’s (Isa. 43:26–27).

- Hos. 6:7. But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.
- Isa. 43:26–27. Put me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be provided right. ²⁷*Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me.* ²⁸Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling.

In light of the adverbial “there” in the second half of Hos 6:7, many emend the text read “in/at Adam,” suggesting a rebellion of Israel at the first town they reached after crossing into the Promised Land (Josh. 3:16). However, the OT never speaks of any disobedience “at Adam” and the locative adverb can be more general, referring to circumstances—e.g., “From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel: there they have continued” (Hos 9:9). What *is* clear in the OT is the rebellion of the first man as representative human. Furthermore, in light of the echo of Exod 19:6 in God’s rejection of Israel as his “priest” in Hos. 4:4–6, it seems possible that the prophet was intentionally building a link between the failed priestly roles of both Adam and Israel. In the words of John Davies: “If Hosea has a part of his shared presupposition pool with his readers the story of Genesis 2, with Adam as the idyllic priest-king (cf. Ezek. 28:12–15; Jub. 4:23–26), together with the notion that Israel at Sinai was constituted as the new humanity, the true successors of Adam (cf. 4 Ezra 3.3–36; 6.53–59; 2 Bar. 14.17–19), then it makes sense to compare the breach of the Sinai covenant (e.g., Hos 4.1, 2) with the rebellion in the garden (Gen. 3; cf. Ezek. 28:16–17)” (*Royal Priesthood*, 202–203). The fact that Isaiah, ministering at the same time, appears to be well aware of the creation covenant further supports this view.

v. The new covenant is a new creation covenant, portrayed in terms reminiscent of the original creation covenant (Hos. 2:16–18).

- Hos. 2:16–18. And in that day, declares Yahweh, you will call me “My Husband,” and no longer will you call me “My Baal.” ¹⁷And I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. ¹⁸And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

vi. The commitment of God to his creation is used by Christ to clarify how he is the culmination or apex of all OT hopes and types (Matt. 5:17–18).

- Matt. 5:17–18. Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

- vii. The universal flood judgment in Noah's day will be matched by a universal fire judgment at the end of the age (2 Pet. 3:5–7).
 - 2 Peter 3:5–7. For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.
6. The Curse of Canaan and the Blessing of Yahweh Through the Exaltation of Shem for the Sake of the Nations (9:18–29).
- a. Ham's shame and the curse of Canaan:
 - i. Noah becomes drunk, and Ham "saw the nakedness of his father" (9:21–22). Three elements suggest that Canaan, not his father Ham, may have performed the original sin:
 - (1) Ham is introduced as "Ham, the father of Canaan" (9:22; cf. v. 18), an added phrase that sets the reader up for what follows.
 - (2) After he awakes, Noah knows what his *youngest son* had done. Every time Noah's three sons are mentioned, Ham is always listed second (5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1). This includes the ordering of the genealogies in the Table of Nations, which are listed in reverse order (ch. 10). What this means is that Ham was *not* Noah's youngest immediate son.
 - (3) Upon his awareness of the sin that his *youngest son* did against him, Noah cursed *Canaan* (9:25), which likely means that the youngest male member of Noah's household was his *grandson* Canaan, son of Ham, who intentionally sinned in relation to his grandfather's nakedness.
 - (4) The positing of "Ham, the father of Canaan" seeing Noah's nakedness (9:22) would then be a declaration of guilt through headship.
 - ii. The nature of the curse against Canaan is that he will serve his brothers. This could mean that he will serve Cush, Egypt, and Put (10:6); however, if they are listed in birth order, as seems likely, his other immediate brothers would not yet be born. As such, the "brothers" to which Noah most likely refers are Shem and Japheth, his uncles, brothers of Ham.
 - iii. A further element is that mention of Canaan's sin and curse anticipates the later sin and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (ch. 19), which are associated with Canaan (10:19).
 - b. Blessing Yahweh and Shem's exaltation for the sake of the nations.
 - i. Directly following Noah's "cursed be Canaan" is a new speech that opens, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem" (9:26). The Lord is directly associated with Shem in a way distinct from his brothers. We then hear, "Let Canaan be his servant." This fulfills the curse stated in 9:25 with the first of the two brothers.
 - ii. 9:27 includes a question of pronominal referent that alters the meaning of the verse significantly depending on one's interpretation. We read,

“May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” Walter Kaiser reads the 3ms “him” as a reference to *God*, and he offers the following five arguments (*The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 44–45):

- (1) Hebrew presumes the subject of one clause will carry over to the next if no new explicit subject is present.
 - (2) Kaiser sees 7 lines of Hebrew poetry in 9:25–27, with v. 25 addressing only Cain, v. 26 addressing Cain and Shem, and v. 27 addressing Cain, Shem, and Japheth. Reading “him” in v. 27 as referring to Japheth would break the expanding structure.
 - (3) Shem is clearly being distinguished from his brothers in v. 26 and the greater context, but including Japheth as the referent to “him” in v. 27 would make Shem subordinate to Japheth, which doesn’t fit the context.
 - (4) Since Yahweh clearly links himself with v. 26, it makes sense that he would say that he will make his abode on earth among the Semites in v. 27.
 - (5) The most natural reading of Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem is that Japheth would in some way conquer his brother. However, this would humiliate Shem, leaving him no better off than Canaan.
- iii. Kaiser’s argument is appealing and is supported by many early Jewish interpreters (e.g., *Jub.* 7:12, 19; also *Gen. Rab.* 36.8 and *Tgs. Onq., Neof.*). However, the following observations suggest the 3ms “him” of v. 27 does indeed refer to Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem.
- (1) Kaiser’s assertion that the subject of a previous clause remains the subject of the next where no explicit subject is used is *not* always true, specifically when a direct object or object of a preposition ends the previous clause. Kaiser himself recognizes this in his reading of Gen 15:6, where he reads, “And he [Abram] believed in Yahweh, and he [Yahweh] credited it to him righteousness.” In his reading of Gen 15:6 Kaiser’s does *not* follow his own argument for reading 9:27.
 - (2) While I like the implications of Kaiser’s approach, I think the truth of his claims hold *within Genesis* even if 9:27 does not support it. Shem’s priority is stressed in the fact that his *toledot* (11:10–26) introduces the patriarchal cycles that dominate the book. Furthermore, within this unit God promises “I will be with you” (e.g., 26:3; 28:15; 31:3; cf. 39:2, 21). That is, 9:26 distinctively identifies Yahweh with Shem, and then the rest of Genesis sets the offspring of Shem apart as those who will enjoy God’s presence and serve as agents of his blessing. Kaiser’s reading of 9:27 is not needed to make this point.
 - (3) 9:25 says Canaan will serve *his brothers* (pl). 9:26 highlights his service *to Shem*, and we then expect 9:27 to highlight his

service to *Japheth*, a reading that is only possible if the “him” of 9:27 refers to Japheth and not Yahweh.

- (4) We must ask, What does it mean that Japheth would “dwell in the tents of Shem.” Kaiser suggests it means that Japheth would somehow conquer his brothers. Many other scholars, however, see this as an emphasis that, while Canaan will serve both brothers, both Canaan and Japheth will in some way serve Shem. Japheth’s dwelling in his brother’s tents points not to Japheth’s domination but to his incorporation, with Shem serving as the central agent of global blessing and the reversal of the curse. 9:27 anticipates the ingrafting of the Gentiles into the single people of God.
 - (5) Finally, Genesis is much more focused on the blessing of God to the nations than God’s presence in their midst. Exodus picks up the latter theme fully, but not Genesis. In this light, and in light of the arguments above, I think the evidence favors reading 9:27 as addressing Japheth’s dwelling in Shem’s tents. The verse then serves as one more text elevating Shem (and ultimately Abraham/Israel) as the channel through whom God will shape a global people for himself.
7. The Aftermath of the Flood: Fall and Dispersion (10:1–11:9)
- a. “70” nations/families that need God’s blessing (segmented genealogy in Genesis 10)—focus is in detailing Israel’s mission field.
 - b. The narrative affirms God’s assertion that mankind’s sinful nature before the flood (6:4) was not altered through the flood (8:21). Humanity is driven toward self-rule and self-exaltation as opposed to God-rule and God-exaltation (11:4).
 - Gen. 11:4. Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and *let us make a name for ourselves*, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.
 - c. The Punishment and Anticipated Blessing: The Tower of Babel
 - i. God desires a unified community of kingdom families, but unity is dangerous where there is a state of rebellion.
 - ii. Foreign languages are usually a sign of judgment in Scripture:
 - (1) God promises that Israel will hear foreign tongues as a signal of divine judgment if/when they turn from him (Deut. 28:49).
 - (2) Because Israel has rejected the clear message of God’s prophet, he will now “speak” to them in the language of Assyria—that is, bring on them Assyrian captivity (Isa. 28:11–13).
 - (3) Jeremiah makes a similar prophecy about Babylon (Jer. 5:15).
 - (4) Speaking of the wicked, the psalmist pleads that God would “divide their tongues,” disarming the unity of hostility and bringing judgment (Ps 55:9).
 - (5) The psalmist also speaks of the Egyptian bondage as a place where “a people of strange language” were in control (Ps 114:1).
 - (6) Paul’s censure of the gift of tongues without interpretation in 1 Cor. 14:20–25 appears to grow from his conviction that the

gathered community is to be a place where outsiders hear the terms of peace and message of hope rather than the sound of judgment. Note how he quotes from Isa. 28:11–13 (with an echo of Deut 28:49).

- iii. Zephaniah anticipated a day when Babel would be reversed in the sense that a unified remnant from all the peoples of the world would be preserved through judgment who would together call on the name of Yahweh (Zeph 3:9–10).
 - Zeph 3:9–10. For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of Yahweh and serve him with one accord. ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.
- iv. The cross of Christ is the focus point of God’s ultimate judgment, and by it restoration blessings are made possible on a worldwide scope, the fulfillment of Zephaniah’s prophecy. Humanity begins to be reunified in Christ, and the first signal of such unity is the overcoming of the language barrier at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–8). What is clear is that regardless of what was spoken, a unified message of the good news of the reign of God in Christ was heard and understood by all Jews present. The ultimate result was the reestablishment of unity among the true humanity of God (i.e., the reversal of Babel) (Acts 2:42–47), but not a unity around a single language. Instead, the gospel worked in the context of the ever-present reminder of the curse.
- v. In this day, the end times or “last hour” has been inaugurated (1 John 2:19) and with it localized manifestations of the anti-Christ’s work, whether through false teaching or persecution. The day will come, however, where the tribulation will become great and global (Matt 24:21; Rev 2:22; 7:14), when Babel(on) will rise again and the God-hostility will be almost universal, only to be destroyed by the return of the Lamb King (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Those identified with Babylon bear the mark of the beast’s name (Rev 13:16–17; 14:11), but the small remnant of those faithful to God bear the name of the Lamb and of the Father on their foreheads (14:1; cf. 3:12; 22:4).
- vi. As a fulfillment of Gen. 12:3 (“and in you [Abram] all the families of the earth shall be blessed”), Rev. 7:9–10 points to the completion of God’s unified community—men and women from “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” declaring in unified voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Significantly, the overthrow of Babel(on) does not include the return to a single language. Rather than a unified language there will be a unified song of praise to the Lamb, but the use of multiple languages will provide an ever-present reminder of past sin and amazing mercy.

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VI. The Agency for Blessing: Humanity's Provision—An Overview (11:10–50:26)

- A. 11:10–37:1.** God's purposes did not end with global confusion and disunity. Instead through the chaos he preserved a righteous remnant 9 (or 10) generations from Seth to Terah, father of Abraham (11:10–11:26). More specifically, out of the 70 families/nations that sprung forth following the Tower of Babel, God set his affection on one man and his family and promised that through him the global curse would be reversed with blessing. Following the linear genealogy in 11:10–26, the narrative portions (11:27–25:11; 25:19–35:29) highlight the covenant promises of land, offspring, and blessing that God gave Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and some of the failures and victories of faith associated with them. The segmented genealogies with minimum narrative that are interspersed in the unit (25:12–18; 36:1–8; 36:9–37:1) help carry the main narrative along by filling in gaps for the reader, especially related to Israel's geo-political place in the Promised Land. Not only do they disclose where Israel's neighbors came from, they provide a lasting reminder to Israel of their mission field.

B. 37:2–50:26. This last section of Genesis details God’s purposefulness and faithfulness in preserving through further trials and character failures both the sons of Israel and the offspring promise. First, Judah’s failure to perform the right of levirate marriage with his daughter-in-law Tamar, matched with his loose sexual life, result in the preservation of Judah’s line through Tamar. Then through the sins of Joseph’s brothers, Joseph is imprisoned in Egypt, only in time to be raised to second leader of the realm. Yahweh was at work, as Joseph himself declared to his brothers: “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (50:20; cf. 45:5). The unit ends with anticipation of promise fulfillment, which it highlights in two ways: (1) through Jacob’s blessing of his sons, where the significance of the Judah–Tamar episode is clarified as Judah is elevated as the tribe through whom the future royal deliverer would come (49:8–10) and (2) through Joseph’s faith-filled request that his bones be buried in the Promised Land when God would fulfill his promise (50:24–25; cf. Josh 24:32).

VII. The Agency of Blessing, Part 1—The Line of Promise in Canaan (11:10–37:1)

A. Key Developments and Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant Materials:

1. Key developments: Abra(ha)m’s call (Gen. 12:1–9) > formalizing the covenant (15:1–21) > confirming the covenant (17:1–27) > the test of covenant loyalty (22:1–19)
2. Key promises:
 - a. General *blessing* to Patriarchs:
 - i. Abraham: Gen 12:2; 22:17; 24:1
 - ii. Sarah: 17:16
 - iii. Isaac: 25:11; 26:3, 12, 24, 29
 - iv. Jacob: 27:27–29; 28:3–4; 32:29; 48:3;
 - v. Joseph: 48:16, 20 (through Ephraim and Manasseh); 49:25–26
 - b. Descendants (Progeny)
 - i. Patriarchs into great nation:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen 12:2; 18:18
 - (2) Jacob: 35:11; 46:3
 - ii. Numerous offspring:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen 15:5; 17:2, 6; 22:17
 - (2) Isaac: 26:4, 24
 - (3) Jacob: 28:3, 14; 32:12; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4
 - (4) Joseph: 41:52; 48:16 (with Ephraim)
 - iii. Kings:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen 17:6
 - (2) Sarah: 17:16
 - (3) Rebekah: 25:23
 - (4) Jacob: 35:11
 - (5) Judah: 49:10
 - c. Land (Property):
 - i. Abraham: Gen 12:1, 7; 13:14–17; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 24:7
 - ii. Isaac: 26:3–4

- iii. Jacob: 28:4, 13, 15; 31:3, 13; 35:12; 48:4 (J), 21–22 (J+Joseph)
[[fulfillment: Gen 23:17–20 (A); 33:19 (J); 48:21–22 (J+Joseph); 49:29–32 (J)]]
- d. Agent of Blessing and Curse
 - i. Bless those who bless you:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen 12:3
 - (2) Jacob: 27:29
 - ii. Curse / judge enemies:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen. 12:3
 - (2) Abraham’s offspring: **22:17b** (individual male anticipated; cf. **3:15**)
 - (3) Rebekah’s offspring: **24:60** (individual male anticipated)
 - iii. Channel of blessing to the world’s families/nations:
 - (1) “Families of the ground”
 - (a) Through Abraham: Gen 12:3
 - (b) Through Jacob and his offspring: 28:14
 - (2) “Nations of the earth”
 - (a) Through Abraham: 18:18
 - (b) Through Abraham’s offspring: **22:18** (individual male anticipated)
 - (c) Through Isaac’s offspring: 26:4
 - iv. Royal influence over many nations:
 - (1) Abraham: Gen 17:4–6
 - (2) Sarah: 17:16
 - (3) Jacob: 35:11 (cf. 48:19)
- e. Divine Presence:
 - i. Shem: Gen 9:27
 - ii. Isaac: 26:3
 - iii. Jacob: 28:15, 20; 31:3, 5, 42; 46:4
 - iv. Joseph: 39:2–3, 21, 23; 48:21

B. Divine Promise, Human Obedience, and Global Blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (12:1–3)

1. The Setting of God’s Call and Promises to Abraham:
 - a. General:
 - i. *Mankind’s core purpose: worship and missions.* God’s original commission was that humanity would “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion” as his image-bearers, thus displaying God’s supremacy on a global scale (Gen. 1:28).
 - ii. *The problem and the hope: rebellion and curse overcome by promise.* Genesis 3 recounted a universal problem of human rebellion against God and its global impact—namely, the whole world under a curse. This is the original audience of Genesis 1—a fallen people unable to image God rightly. Hope existed, however, in the fact that the fulfillment of mankind’s purpose was framed in the context of a “blessing” (1:28), which stressed that through a dependent people God himself would accomplish such a bountiful display of his greatness.

- iii. *Two lines of descent: chosen and rejected.* Since the promise in Gen 3:15 that a male descendant of the woman would one day put a death-blow to the evil one, the reader has traced God’s preservation of this hope through 10 generations from Adam to Noah and another 9 generations from Shem to Terah, father of Abra(ha)m. Lasting salvation and, by implication, the fulfillment of the great commission hinges on the offspring of promise and the male deliverer that will rise from it.
 - b. Specific.
 - i. *Messianic and missiological expectation are high by 12:1–3.* The hope of the world and the proper imaging of God are hinging on the preservation of the promised line and the coming male conqueror.
 - ii. *A new threat: offspring and land will take a miracle.* God promises the patriarch Abra(ha)m that he would become “a great nation” (12:1), that through him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:3), and that both he and his offspring would be given the Promised Land as the context for God’s kingdom-building work (12:1, 7). The challenge is two-fold, stressing that both progeny and property and the global reversal of the curse would take a miracle: (1) That Abra(ha)m’s wife “Sarai was barren; she had no child” (11:30) is a massive threat to the promise; all the world’s hopes hinge on her pregnancy; (2) while mighty as a family, Abra(ha)m is still landless going to a place where he has no claim on any turf. How will he acquire the land?
 - iii. *The curse as a backdrop to the promises given to Abraham.* The land, offspring, and divine blessing promises in Gen 12:1–3 provide *direct responses* to the judgments issued in Gen 3:14–19 and thus show that God is at work in special way, reversing the curse (cf. James Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *TynBul* 58.2 [2007]: 253–73):
 - (1) The pain in childbirth (3:16) will give rise to a nation (12:2) from whom will come the curse-overcoming deliverer (22:17b–18);
 - (2) The cursed ground that sucks away life (3:17–19) will become the realm of a kingdom where lasting relationship with God will be enjoyed (12:7; 15:7);
 - (3) The overall curse will be reversed by blessing as God’s people enjoy God’s favor and thus fulfill their mission (12:3; cf. 1:28; 6:8).
- 2. General Observations from the Command-Promise Structure of Abra(ha)m’s Call in Genesis 12:1–3. The ESV reads: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

- a. The text is dominated by divine promise: nationhood, blessing, fame, agency of blessing (12:2–3). God is main mover in this text.
- b. The whole text is driven by blessing and is thus about the overcoming of the curse. The five-fold uses of *blessing* may intentionally contrast with the five *curse*s in Gen 2:4–11:9 (3:14, passive against the serpent; 3:17, passive against the ground; 4:11, passive against Cain; 5:29, active against the ground; 9:25, passive against Canaan). Up until Genesis 12, the world has experienced increased deprivation and loss. The divine blessing that is promised, therefore, suggests a reconstituting of a right relationship within the God-people-land relationship at a global scale.
- c. An overview of the two-stage manifestation of the Abrahamic covenant:
 - i. The text has two main units, each introduced by imperatives (“go” and “be a blessing”) followed by chains of *weyiqtol* verbs, which, when following command forms, usually express purpose (= “so that”).

Fig. 3.10. The Command-Promise Structure of Genesis 12:1–3

12:1a	Go to the land that I will show you (command)	
12:2a	so that I may (promise) make you into a great nation,	Offspring & Land (see Gen. 15)
b	<u>bless</u> you,	
c	and make your name great;	
d	and (there) be a <u>blessing</u> (command)	
12:3a	so that I may (promise) <u>bless</u> those who <u>bless</u> you	Divine Blessing (see Gen. 17)
b	(and the one who curses you I will curse)	
c	and so that in you all the families of the earth may be <u>blessed</u> .	

- ii. Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* notes that when two imperatives are linked (via *waw* 'and'), “the first imperative . . . contains a condition, while the second declares the consequence which the fulfillment of the condition will involve. The imperative is used for this declaration, since the consequence is . . . intended or desired by the speaker” (GKC §110.2[a]). What is missing from this description, however, is the fact that while the second imperative is a consequence of the first, it is nevertheless a command that must be obeyed; the consequential nature does not force the loss of the imperatival force.
- iii. We see this exact same pattern in Gen 17:1–2, and there the ESV translates the text as I am proposing: “Walk before me [Impv] and be blameless [“and” + Impv], that I may make [*weyiqtol*] my covenant between me and you.” I propose that they should have translated Gen 12:1–3 in the same way. Other examples include 1 Kgs. 22:12; 2 Kgs. 5:13; Jer. 6:16; Isa. 36:16, 45:22; Amos 5:4, 6; Ps. 37:27; Job 2:9; Prov. 3:3, 4:4, 7:2; 2 Chr. 20:20).
- iv. In Gen 12:1–3, unit 1 addresses the promises of nationhood and land, whereas unit 2 addresses the promises of divine blessing. I will argue below that each of these units represents two stages in redemptive

history—the first related to nationhood as fulfilled in the *Mosaic covenant* and the second related to global blessing as fulfilled in the *new covenant* through the promised royal deliverer.

- d. Abram is charged to “be a blessing” (Gen 12:2). The obedience to this command will flow from having received blessing from God (12:2c), and the result will be that the nations will participate in the blessing from God that he himself has enjoyed (12:3ac). His “being a blessing,” therefore, most likely points to his dependent, God-imaging, wherein by his character and behavior and witness he directs others to God, in whom ultimate blessing is found. The charge is for Abram (or the one whom he represents) to serve as a channel, conduit, or steward of grace. Having received it (12:1–2), he is commissioned to pass it on to the nations (12:3; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10).
- e. In Gen 12:3, the initial promises of blessing and curse are matched contrastively by the reversal of word-order in the second line: Verb[x] + [x]Verb. It seems likely that the placement of the curse in the second line, along with the switch from plural ‘those’ in the blessing line to singular ‘the one’ in the curse line together highlight that blessing is the principal element in the promise. Comparably, Rom. 9:22–24 makes clear that God’s cursing is a means for highlighting his grace to those he has blessed: “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”
- f. The identification of Abraham’s future with *nationhood* is striking, for this geo-political term is substantially associated with Israel’s neighbors throughout the OT, whereas the more familial term *people* is more commonly used for Israel. Also significant is that in Gen. 12:3 and 28:14 (which form an inclusio or bookend around Abraham’s life), the neighbors are *not* called “nations” but “families/clans,” thus linking the mission of Israel to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, where the world’s peoples are portrayed as spreading “each with his own language, by their *clan*, in their nations” (10:32; cf. vv. 5, 18, 20, 31). In this light, Peter Gentry has insightfully suggested, “The author’s choice of terms [between “nations” vs. “family”] emphasises that the family of Abram is a real kingdom with eternal power and significance while the so-called kingdoms of this world are of no lasting power or significance” (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 244). Abram was thus truly anticipating “the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10)—a city or kingdom unlike Babel (Babylon), for it will never be destroyed.
- g. The climactic promise that will be realized when Abra(ha)m is a blessing is that all the world will enjoy blessing, their curse apparently being reversed (12:3). There is question regarding how best to translate the various statements regarding Abram serves as a channel of blessing.
 - i. Overview of the texts:

- (1) With the Niphal, which could be passive (“be blessed”), middle (“win/find blessing”), or reflexive (“bless themselves”):
 - Gen. 12:3 (ESV). I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth *shall be blessed*.
 - Gen. 18:18 (ESV). . . . seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth *shall be blessed* in him?
 - Gen. 28:14 (ESV). Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth *be blessed*.
 - (2) With the Hithpael, which is by nature some type of reflexive but could also be passive:
 - Gen. 22:17b–18 (ESV). . . . And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring *shall* all the nations of the earth *be blessed*, because you have obeyed my voice.
 - Gen. 26:4 (ESV). I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth *shall be blessed*,
 - Ps. 72:17 (ESV). May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people *be blessed* in him, all nations call him blessed!
 - Jer. 4:2 (ESV). and if you swear, ‘As the LORD lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations *shall bless themselves* in him, and in him shall they glory.”
- ii. Some observations that help us discern the authorial intent behind the shifts:
- (1) The very fact that the authors of these texts had a choice to make between the Niphal and Hithpael and purposed to distinguish them suggests that there is some intentional meaning difference that is being highlighted between the texts.
 - (2) While difficult to assess whether it is significant or not, the two texts including “family of the ground” rather than “nations of the earth” both use the Niphal (Gen. 12:3; 28:14).
 - (3) P. R. Williamson has proposed that the Niphal texts imply a less direct situation wherein the one through whom the nations will enjoy blessing is Abraham or Israel in general, whereas in all the Hithpael texts the agency of blessing is more personal, whether the specific messianic, royal “seed” (Gen. 22:17b–18; 26:4; Ps. 72:17) or Yahweh himself as the decisive source of blessing (Jer. 4:2) (*Sealed with an Oath*, 80–81). This observation is likely true, so long as one recognizes the parallel structure between Gen. 22:17b–18 (cf. 26:60) and 26:4 and reads the *singular, male* “seed” into the ambiguous, contextually-determined use of “seed” in 26:4.
 - (4) W. Dumbrell argues for the middle use of the Niphal (“they will find blessing”), partly because “such a sense would also be more congruent with the general Old Testament position on mission, whereby the nations are consistently presented as seekers, coming into a reconstituted Israel” (*Creation and Covenant*, 71; followed by Williamson). However, this view does not carefully

assess the narrative context of Genesis for clues (see below), and it assumes that Israel’s mission to the nations could truly be carried out without their meeting the command “be a blessing” that is highlighted in Gen. 12:2. That is, the discourse grammar of Genesis 12 suggests that the nations will only enjoy divine blessing when Abraham (and his offspring) are a blessing—something that only happens perfectly in the person of Christ. It is this redemptive-historical framework that better explains the way “missions” is seen in the Old Testament story.

Transformation did not happen on a global scale (Deut 4:5–8) because Israel was not fulfilling its God-given call to God-exalting surrender (Ps. 2).

- (5) Calling into question the use of the Niphal as middle or either the Niphal or Hithpael as a general reflexive, Chee-Chiew Lee has made the helpful contextual observation (“ברוך in Genesis 35:11 and the Abrahamic Promise of Blessing for the Nations,” *JETS* 52/3 [2009] 472): “The patriarchal narrative repeatedly portrays how other people are blessed or cursed by God on account of Abraham and his descendants (examples include Abimelech, Laban, Potiphar, Pharaoh, and Egypt). Furthermore, Laban declared himself as blessed by God due to Jacob (Gen 30:27). Nowhere in the narrative do we see people actively seeking blessing for themselves by their association with Abraham or invoking his name as a formula and paradigm of blessing as a middle or direct reflexive reading would entail.” Therefore, Lee concludes that the Niphal forms are just passive (“they shall be blessed”) and the Hithpael forms are estimative-declarative (“they shall consider/declare themselves as blessed”).¹³
 - (6) Why would all the directly messianic expressions include the Hithpael and have people “declaring themselves as blessed” in him? Perhaps the text is highlighting how all who enjoy the blessing of God will truly recognize and declare that this blessing has come *through* Christ alone. It may also relate to the confessional nature of identification with Christ, much like Paul stresses the need to “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9).
3. The Two-Stage Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - a. The two imperatives (Go! ... And [there] be a blessing!) suggest two stages in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant—nationhood, a name, and blessing linked with the Mosaic covenant era and blessing and curse-

¹³ Cf. Benjamin Noonan (“Abraham, Blessing, and the Nations: A Reexamination of the Niphal and Hitpael of ברוך in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *Hebrew Studies* 51 [2010] 73–93), who argues that there is no evidence from other languages related to Hebrew to support the view of Keith N. Grünenberg (*Abraham, Blessing, and the Nations: A Philological and Exegetical Study of Genesis 12:3 in Its Narrative Context* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003]) that the Hithpael of *brk* functions as a “speech action middle” meaning “utter blessing.” Instead, the declarative-estimative function found in the base form, the Piel, is most natural.

overcoming related to the new covenant era. Genesis itself strongly supports this view.

- b. First, in Gen 15 Abram is promised specific geo-political turf, which is connected directly to his nationhood: “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’” (Gen 15:18). Genesis 17 then builds upon this image by linking circumcision to the one people with whom Yahweh establishes an everlasting covenant: “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God” (17:7–8).
- i. Here the full territory of what will become Israelite sovereignty (from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates) is compared with the immediate region of Israelite occupation and kingdom (the land of Canaan). The distinction is between the suzerain-vassal realm and the specific land associate with the twelve tribes and kingdom of Israel.
 - ii. The OT signals the fulfillment of the promise of Canaan during the days of Joshua (Josh 21:43–45; cf. 11:23), but it is not until the days of David and Solomon that Israel controls the entire realm from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (2 Sam 7:1). Using language that alludes to the Abrahamic stage 1 promises, Yahweh tells David that during his lifetime all his enemies will be put down and he will enjoy a great name and peace (2 Sam 7:1, 9–11), then in the days of Solomon we are told that his kingdom stretched to the very reaches promised Abraham (1 Kgs 4:20–21).
 - Josh. 21:43–45. Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. ⁴⁴ And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵ Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.
 - 2 Sam. 7:9–11. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.
 - 1Kings 4:20–21. Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. ²¹ Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.
 - iii. With the territory God promised Abraham coming to realization in the days of David, the reader very well could have thought David was the one through whom the world would be blessed. However, the narrator of Samuel–Kings goes out of his way to identify that David would *not* be the ultimate serpent slayer and that someone greater than him—one

of his sons—would be the one whose throne would never end (see 2 Sam 7:12–16).

- 2 Sam. 7:12–16. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.
- c. Second, we must consider stage 2:
- i. Gen 12:2–3 make the blessing reaching the nations contingent on someone who represents Abraham being a blessing, living in accordance with God’s ways in counter to the ways of the serpent.
 - ii. The very frame of the call to “be a blessing in order that others would be blessed” gives clarity to the outworking of the earlier declaration against the serpent that an offspring of the woman would strike his head (3:15). God would overcome curse and bring blessing through a male deliverer.
 - Gen 3:15. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
 - iii. Gen 15 opens with Abram anticipating fulfillment of this offspring promise and yet realizing his wife’s barrenness (11:30). Yahweh’s promise that Abram’s offspring would multiply like the stars (15:5) grows out of his recognition that God had not given him an individual offspring or heir (15:2–3) and out of Yahweh’s assertion that his heir would come from his own loins (15:4).
 - Gen. 15:2–5. But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”
 - iv. Gen 17 contrasts Abraham’s fatherhood of a single covenant nation (17:7–8) and the day when he will become “a father of a multitude of nations” (17:4–6). Abraham’s fatherhood of a multitude looks beyond the age of the Mosaic covenant to when those from the nations will come under the sovereignty represented by Abraham without becoming part of the single nation. Certainly Abraham’s father of a multitude of nations relates to the promise of blessing to all the families/nations of the earth in 12:3.
 - Gen. 17:4–8. Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I

- will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.
- v. The timing and means of this shift from Abraham's fatherhood from a single nation to a multitude is then clarified in 22:17–18, where we learn that the overcoming of enemy gates and blessing reaching the nations will happen through a single, male offspring of Abraham. This shift to kingdom expansion and global blessing is further anticipated in God's promise to Isaac that the promise *land* (singular) would become *lands* (plural) in days to come (26:3–4). Only in the days of this unique offspring, whom Paul identifies as Christ (Gal 3:16), would stage 2 of the Abrahamic covenant find fulfillment and Abraham's fatherhood go global. This assumes a massive redemptive-historical shift beyond the Mosaic covenant into the new.
- Gen. 22:17–18. I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.
 - Gen. 26:3–4. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.⁴ I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.
 - Gal. 3:16. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.
- vi. At the end of Genesis we learn that this male deliverer will be a king in the line of Judah (49:8–10). During the Mosaic covenant, Israel's hope would look ahead, and they would plant themselves on the land, awaiting the day when the royal redeemer would rise, overcome enemy gates, bring blessing to the world, and by this establish a global kingdom.
- Gen. 49:8–10. Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you.⁹ Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
- d. Two Stages or Two Covenants?
- i. Paul Williamson has argued that Genesis 15 points to a temporal, unilateral/unconditional, and national covenant, whereas Genesis 17 addresses a second eternal, bilateral/conditional, and international covenant (see *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 212–14; idem, *Sealed with an Oath*, 84–91).
 - ii. In contrast, I believe that Genesis 15 and 17 address two distinct stages in a single Abrahamic covenant.
 - (1) Both texts address "seed," "land," and God-dependence.
 - (2) Only when read together do we gain the two halves of the Gen 12:1–3 schema: *Going* to the land will result in nationhood, and *being a blessing* will overcome the curse and bless all families of the earth.

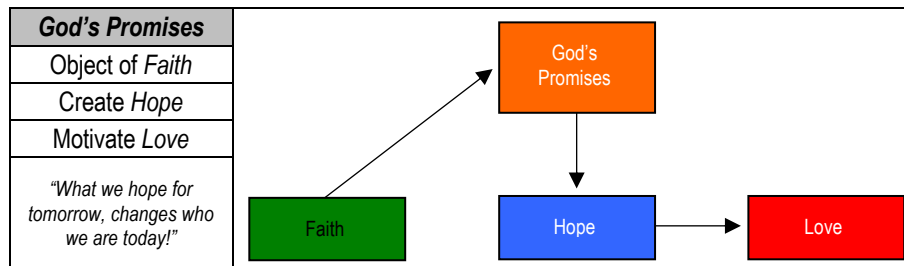
- (3) Gen 15:9–18 highlights the perpetual, binding nature of the divine promise of nationhood, which is then picked up again in 17:8 and fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant. In contrast, the call to walk with God blamelessly (17:1–2) stresses the need for Abraham’s “seed” to remain loyal to the covenant in order to ultimately generate a worldwide community under the patriarch’s fatherly headship (17:4–6, fulfilled in the new covenant through Christ).
- (4) Importantly, Gen 17:7 uses the language of God’s “establishing” his covenant, which by nature suggests a fulfillment of a previously created relationship (see the discussion of the language of covenant making in notes on the Noahic covenant). This suggests that the material in Gen 17 is building upon and organically related to the material in Gen 15, rather than distinct from it.
4. Abraham’s Enjoyment of Unconditional and Conditional Unmeritorious Grace
- a. The command-promise structure of Gen 12:1–3 suggests that the fulfillment of God’s promises were contingent on Abraham’s obedience. Ultimately, this means that the nationhood, blessing, and a great name would only be enjoyed by Abraham if he *went* to the Promised Land; and within this Land context, all the families of the earth would be blessed only if he *was a blessing*. How are we to understand the relationship of divine commitment and human responsibility in God’s covenant with Abraham? The short answer is that faith and the obedience that flows from it are God-enabled human responses to God’s covenant initiating and sustaining grace.
- b. Conditional grace in the Abrahamic Cycle:
- Gen. 12:1–3. Go forth [*divine command//human responsibility*] from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you, so that I may [*divine promise*] make you a great nation, and so that I may bless you, and so that I may make your name great. And so, be a blessing [*divine command//human responsibility*], so that I may [*divine promise*] bless those who bless you, (and the one who curses you I will curse), and so that in you all the families of the earth may be blessed. (DeRouchie’s translation)
 - Gen. 17:1–2. “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless [*human obedience*], that I may [*divine promise*] make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”
 - Gen. 18:19. “For I have chosen [lit., known] him [Abraham], that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of Yahweh by doing righteousness and justice [*human obedience*], so that [*divine promise*] Yahweh may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”
 - Gen. 22:1–2, 16–18. After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” . . . ¹⁶And [Yahweh] said, “By myself I have sworn, declares Yahweh, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son [*human obedience*], ¹⁷I will [*divine promise*] surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. ¹⁸And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

- Gen. 26:2–5. And Yahweh appeared to him [Isaac] and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed [*divine promise*], because Abraham obeyed [*human obedience*] my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”
- c. The mandatory obedience of the covenant was only possible by grace.
 - i. The original blessing-commission showed that the ever-increasing display or imaging of God on a global scale would only happen as a result of divine blessing (Gen. 1:28), and Noah’s walking with God, blamelessness, and righteousness was only enjoyed as a fruit of divine favor or grace (6:8–9; cf. 8:21).
 - ii. We must consider what could have compelled an idol worshipper (Josh. 24:2) to leave all the comforts of home in Mesopotamia to follow God’s kingdom call to a foreign land. Stephen tells us that Abra(ha)m was called by “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2) into a life of radical dependence and trust overflowing in obedience.
 - iii. For Abra(ha)m, there must have been something so compelling about the promise maker and the promises that motivated him to move. That is, *the promise maker must have been fully believable and the promises truly desirable*. “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).
 - iv. Abra(ha)m’s necessary obedience was, therefore, an obedience springing from faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), which itself was God-generated (6:17; 12:3) through the means of his believability and the promises’ desirability. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb. 11:8).
 - v. God’s relationship with Abra(ha)m would be one of divine commitment and human obligation, at the heart of which would be Abra(ha)m’s life of surrender, dependence, and faith in response to and in the hope of God’s promise and faithfulness.
 - d. Faith, hope, and love are the divinely-enabled human responses to God’s covenant initiating and sustaining grace.
 - i. God’s promises are the object of faith; God’s promises create hope; God’s promises motivate love. “He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that *through them* you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Pet. 1:4).
 - ii. What we hope for in the future influences how we live in the present; what we hope for tomorrow, changes who we are today.

“O love that ever burnest and art never quenched! O Charity, my God, enkindle me! Though commandest continuence. *Grant what thou commandest and command what thou wilt.*”

—St. Augustine, *Confessions* (A.D. 396–430)

Fig. 3.11. The Relationship of Faith, Hope, and Love to God's Promises



5. Excursus on *Conditional Grace* and the Place of Faith (partially adapted from John Piper, "Unmerited, Conditional Future Grace," in *Future Grace*, 227–259)
- a. Conditional promises do not necessarily nullify the gracious nature of what is promised. Some imperfect parallels:
 - i. "If you are on the plane, you will go to Chicago." Explanation: We have to be on the plane to get to Chicago, but if someone else buys our ticket and carries us on, our getting to Chicago was accomplished solely by trusting the pilots and the plane to get us to our destination; we did not in any way earn or merit our trip.
 - ii. "If you graduate, I will pay off your loans." Explanation: The promise to pay was freely given, not earned, and the gracious, believable, and desirable promise would serve as motivation for your completion of school; the condition is met only by a readiness to receive (defined as being a college graduate).
 - b. While electing grace (Eph. 1:4–5; Rom. 9:11) and regenerating grace (Ezek. 36:26; 1 Cor. 1:23–24; 2 Cor. 4:4–6; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 16:14; Rom. 8:30; Eph. 2:8–9; Phil. 1:29) are *unconditional*, a number of other graces are *conditioned* on faith in Christ and love for others:
 - i. Faith is a condition for justification (John 3:16; Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:24), sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13), and glorification (Col. 1:22–23).
 - ii. There are a number of other manifestations of faith as a condition, all expressions of dependence and neediness, of receiving rather than giving, of turning away from self to all that God is for us in Jesus:
 - (1) *Loving God and his Son* (Exod. 20:5–6; Ps. 119:132; Matt. 10:37; John 14:21; Rom. 8:28 contrast Matt. 7:22–23; 1 Cor. 2:9–10; 16:22; Eph. 6:24; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 2:5)
 - (2) *Humility* (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5)
 - (3) *Drawing near to God* (Jer. 29:13; 2 Chr. 30:9; Matt. 6:33; Jam. 4:8 contrast Luke 13:3)
 - (4) *Crying out for grace* (Isa. 30:19; Ps. 86:3)
 - (5) *Fearing God* (Pss. 31:19; 33:18; 34:7, 9; 61:5; 85:9; 103:11, 13; 115:13; 145:19; 147:11; Luke 1:50)
 - (6) *Delighting in God* (Ps. 37:4; cf. Neh. 1:11)
 - (7) *Hoping in God* (Ps. 31:24; 33:18, 22)
 - (8) *Taking refuge in God* (2 Sam. 22:31; Nah. 1:7; Pss. 2:12; 16:1; 31:19; 34:22; 37:39; 57:1)

- (9) *Waiting for God* (Isa. 64:4; Pss. 25:3; 37:9; 147:11; Lam. 3:25)
- (10) *Trusting in God* (Isa. 7:9; 28:16; Pss. 22:4; 32:10; 37:5; 84:12; 86:2; Prov. 3:5–6; 2 Chr. 13:18; 14:11; 20:20)
- (11) *Keeping the covenant* (Pss. 25:10; 103:17–18)
 - (a) Covenant keepers” are:
 - (i) Sinners who recognize their sinfulness and seek forgiveness from God (Ps. 25:8, 11, 18);
 - (ii) Sinners who are humble and therefore receive guidance (Ps. 25:9);
 - (iii) Sinners who keep the covenant and therefore enjoy Yahweh’s lovingkindness and truth (25:10);
 - (iv) Sinners who fear Yahweh and therefore receive his instruction (25:12);
 - (v) Sinners who take refuge in Yahweh and therefore know God’s protection (25:20);
 - (vi) Sinners who wait for God and are preserved by their “integrity and uprightness” (25:21).

Almost all future blessings of the Christian life are conditional on covenant-keeping.... I say “almost” because at the deepest root of our lives, the grace to keep us seeking God is an unconditional work of God causing us to endure to the end and be saved. When we are about to forsake the faith, the last decisive impulse that turns our hearts back to God is the ongoing keeping power of God. It is *conditional* in the sense that God is committed to do it only in those who are justified by faith. But it is *unconditional* in the sense that the ongoing pursuit of God depends ultimately on God’s keeping power, not vice versa. God has committed himself to supply the elect with the grace to seek God in prayer, which brings down the additional grace to meet the condition of faith, that brings down the additional grace to meet the condition of holiness, that brings the additional grace of final glory.

—John Piper, *Future Grace*, ch. 19, p. 248 and ch. 19, n. 2., p. 412

- (b) The new covenant is filled with warnings against those who fail to keep the covenant (Matt. 6:15; 25:31–46; Luke 6:20–26; Rom. 8:13; 11:22; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:4, 19–21; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:3; 6:4–6; 10:26–31; 12:15; Rev. 22:19) and thus prove that they were never truly a part (1 Cor. 11:19; Heb. 3:14; 1 John 2:19).
- iii. A final group of conditions are *not* expressions of faith but are additions to faith, flowing from it and summarized in the call to love others:
 - (1) The conditions:
 - (a) The future grace of inheriting eternal life is given only to those who have “good deeds” in this life (John 5:28–29; cf. Gal. 5:21).
 - (b) Only the “doers of the law ... will be justified” (Rom. 2:13), and “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jam. 2:24).
 - (c) Only those who “love the brothers” know God and have passed into life (1 John 3:14; 4:8).
 - (d) Only those who forgive others will be forgiven by God (Matt. 6:14–15).

- (e) Without holiness, “no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).
- (2) Love for others is the essence of holiness (1 Thess. 3:12–13), the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10), and the summary of all that is required of the believer: “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Cor. 16:14). It is expressed in our forgiving others (1 Cor. 13:5), and in the final judgment, our love of others will provide the *proof*, not the ground, that we have truly received the life-transforming work of Christ by faith alone.
- iv. Faith in Christ and love for others are the conditions and together make up *the commandment* (1 John 3:23). Faith and love work hand-in-hand through the new covenant (Eph. 1:5; Col. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13; Philemon 5), the former arising first and then producing the latter: “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6) and “the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). Faith in God is the root; love for others is the fruit.
- c. In the Bible, conditional grace is still free and unmerited.
 - i. It is free and unmerited because Yahweh was not obligated to make promises; they came as a gift.
 - ii. It is free and unmerited because faith—trusting all God is for us in Jesus—is the primary condition that must be met, which places all focus on God and not us and “calls attention to God’s free bounty and our helpless need” (Piper, *Future Grace*, 235). “Without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6).
 - iii. It is also free and unmerited because both faith and the love through which it works are ultimately gifts of God (Gen. 6:8), created by the power of God. He creates in us new desires by disclosing his believability and the desirability of the promises—“for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Knowing the promise maker and cherishing the promises are the means of grace by which God creates faith, which then produces the holiness, without which no one can see God.

2 Peter 1:3–5, 7–8. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us *his precious and very great promises*, so that *through them* you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this reason, make every effort to *supplement your faith with ... love*. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- iv. “It is possible—indeed necessary—to bank on the promises of future grace *before* we are transformed into the kind of people who love others. We do not have to perform, before faith, what faith is meant to perform” (*Future Grace*, 256).

6. Christ, the Ultimate Offspring of Abraham and Channel of Blessing to the World (see DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise?” *SBJT* 14.3 [2010]: 36–48).
- a. Abra(ha)m needed to be a blessing for the world to be blessed through him: “And you shall be a blessing so that . . . in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (12:2–3).
 - b. Elsewhere in Genesis and in echo of 3:15, it is one of Abra(ha)m’s male descendants, a king born as his offspring in his likeness, who would serve as the agent of blessing to the world. The promise is passed on from Abraham to Rebekah (Isaac’s wife), to Judah (Jacob’s son).
 - Gen. 22:17b–18. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.
 - Gen. 24:60. Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!
 - Gen. 49:8, 10. Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. . . .¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
 - c. Drawing attention away from Abraham onto his offspring enforces what the narrative shows to be true—i.e., while Abraham himself was faithful, he was not perfectly faithful, for he regularly failed to believe and obey. Therefore, neither he nor anyone else in the OT period fulfilled perfectly the call to stand counter to the curse by “being a blessing.” We must look ahead to the one whose obedience of faith will be perfect and who will in turn be the channel of blessing to the world.
 - d. The NT views Jesus as the fulfillment of these OT Messianic hopes:
 - Luke 1:68–75. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
 - Acts 3:24–26. And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”
 - Gal. 3:8, 14, 16, 29. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” . . .¹⁴ In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [has] come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. . . .¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. . . .²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.
 - e. The most foundational reason God was justified in being gracious to Abra(ha)m, a sinner, was because *Christ* would ultimately come as Abraham’s own representative; Christ would receive God’s wrath toward

Abraham, and God would impute Christ's righteousness to Abra(ha)m in light of his faith (Rom. 3:23–26).

C. The Covenant Formalized (Gen. 15)

1. Part 1: The Promise of an Heir (Offspring) (Gen. 15:1–6; cf. 3:15; 22:17b–18; 24:60)
 - a. Links with Gen 14 (Kuruvilla, *A Theological Commentary for Preachers*, 188):
 - i. The verb “go out, bring out” (Hiphil of יצא) (14:8, 17–18; 15:4–5, 7, 14)
 - ii. The noun “possessions” (רכוש) (14:11–12, 14, 21; 15:14)
 - iii. The root שלם (“peace”): “king of Salem/Peace” (14:8); “complete” (שָׁלַם) (15:16)
 - iv. The root צדק (“righteous”): “Melchizedek/King of Righteousness” (14:18); “righteousness” (צִדְקָה)
 - v. The root מגן: “hand over” (מָגַן) (14:20); “shield” (מָגֵן) (15:1)
 - vi. The notion of recompense for effort (14:22–23; 15:1).
 - b. Structure:
 - i. Yahweh's promise of protection and provision (15:1)
 - ii. Abra(ha)m's complaint and question (15:2–3)
 - iii. Yahweh's revelation and confirmation of the promise (15:4–5)
 - iv. Abra(ha)m's belief as righteousness (15:6)
 - c. The setting for the declaration of justifying faith:
 - i. In Gen 15:2–3, Abram raises two related issues that control 15:1–6 as a whole: offspring and inheritance. God's earlier promises to Abram of nationhood (Gen 12:2) and of the multiplication of his “offspring” (13:15–16) already suggested that the patriarch's “offspring” would also be the “offspring” of the woman (3:15), the one who would resolve the conflict with the serpent and the one whom Paul identifies as the Christ (Gal 3:16; 4:4). With this, the selected line of offspring in the genealogies of Genesis 5:1–42 and 11:10–32 link the choice of Abram to Adam and Eve, and this connection must inform our reading of Gen 15:1–6.
 - ii. From Gen 3:15 forward, the book directly associates the promise of a single, male “offspring” deliverer with a global problem of curse due to human rebellion, the reality of which colors every narrative that follows. Sarah's barrenness (11:30) and Abram's lack of son/heir (15:2–3) are directly related to his life under curse.
 - iii. As noted above, Gen 12:1–3 use two separate imperatives (“Go” in 12:1a; “And be a blessing” in 12:2d) to create two eras of promise associated with Abram's inheritance: stage-one included an earthly kingdom associated with one people in the promised land (12:1–2c) (fulfilled, I believe, in the Mosaic covenant); stage-two entailed a multi-ethnic, global kingdom associated with the reversal of Babel (see “families” in 10:32 and 12:3) and with God's blessing rather than curse (12:2d–3) (fulfilled ultimately in the new covenant through Christ; cf. 22:18). When Abram stresses that he has neither offspring

- nor biological heir (15:3), we must place both realities within the book's vision of global reconciliation with God.
- iv. God's renaming of Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude") reaffirms, now in paternal language, the global scope of the patriarch's future "fatherly" influence (17:4–5; cf. 12:3)—a paternal relationship over the nations that would apparently be based on election (through adoption) rather than on biology. As such, the greater context of Genesis calls us to use this broader paternal application when interpreting the book's promise that the patriarch's *offspring* would become "like the dust of the earth" (13:16; 28:14), "like the stars of heaven" (22:17; 26:4; cf. 15:5), and "like the sand of the seashore" (22:17; 32:12[13]). That is, regardless of whether one affirms Block's unlikely insistence that "all Abram had on his mind was physical progeny" (p. 34), both the divine and human author of the book would have us understand that the ultimate referent extends beyond biology and that Scripture's later allusions to the "dust-stars-sand"-promise in association with Israel as a nation ("dust" = 2 Chr 1:9; "stars" = Exod 32:13; Deut 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; 1 Chr 27:23; Neh 9:23; Heb 11:12; "sand" = 2 Sam 17:11; 1 Kgs 4:20; Isa 10:22; Heb 11:12; cf. Rom 9:27) were only initial (stage-one) fulfillments of a promise that would find broader, more world-wide realization in a multi-ethnic kingdom (stage-two) (Rom 4:18; cf. Isa 48:19; Hos 1:10).
 - v. God's declaration in Gen 15:5 addresses how the singular "offspring" will give rise to many. The last statement best translated, "Thus your seed will become," with "offspring/seed" referring back to the singular "son" and "offspring" of 15:3–4. Furthermore, we know that God would establish his covenant with Isaac (17:19, 21), but when the Lord later pledges that "through Isaac shall your offspring be named" (21:12; cf. Rom 9:7; Heb 11:18) we see that the "offspring" in view is *not* Isaac but rather a later seed who would be associated with him. While the promise demanded that Isaac survive and father offspring, the promise itself pointed beyond Isaac to another male descendant—one that Genesis 22 specifically identifies as a royal figure who would possess his enemies' gates (thus suggesting the expansion of his kingdom turf, Gen 22:17c; cf. 24:60; 26:3–4) and serve as a channel of curse-overcoming blessing to all nations (22:18).
 - vi. Within the context of Gen 22:17–8, the narrator invites us to link the anticipation of a single male descendant through whom the nations would be blessed (22:18) with the promise that Yahweh would, in allusion to Gen 15:5, multiply Abraham's offspring "as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore" (22:17b). Following the use of collective singular nouns elsewhere, Moses at times uses the number in pronouns to explicitly identify whether עַרְבָּי ("seed/offspring") bears a singular (3:15; 22:17c–18; 24:60) or plural (17:8) referent. In light of the singular in 22:17c–18, we should view the same messianic figure as the assumed agent in those ambiguous

channel-of-blessing-texts that include no pronouns (e.g., 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; 28:14). In Genesis “blessing” stands in alignment with Yahweh and in direct contrast to sin and curse. The promise of global blessing is about reconciliation between God and man. Genesis portrays the decisive agent in the world’s salvation to be *not* a community but a person, not the many but the one, who will represent the nation and inherit all the promises God made to Abraham.

- d. The nature of true faith:
- i. Question: What was the object of Abra(ha)m’s faith in Genesis 15:6? Abraham was not just “believing.” He was “believing *in Yahweh*.” What was significant was not his faith but the object of his faith.
 - ii. Two elements of justifying “Faith”:
 - (1) Trusting God to accomplish in and through us what we cannot accomplish on our own.
 - (a) Sarai was barren (11:30), and the very context of the passage highlights that Abram was without a biological son as his heir (15:3–4). Not only this, God has promised that he would become a great nation (12:1–2b) and that through him the world’s curse would be overcome (12:2c–3). Nature was stacked against Abram, and the fulfillment of the promise would take a miracle; this is why Sarah laughed when the angel of Yahweh told her she would bear a son (Gen. 18:13–14).
 - (b) Biblical faith is directly related to a personal recognition that what God calls of us is *impossible without his help*.
 - Gen. 18:14. Is anything too hard for Yahweh?
 - Rom. 4:3–6, 18–22. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. ⁴Now to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. . . . ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness.
 - Heb 11:11. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.
 - (c) Biblical faith brings great glory to God, and by it alone can we please the One who is passionate for his own renown.
 - Rom. 14:23. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.
 - Heb. 11:6. And without faith it is impossible to please [God].
 - (2) Trusting God to bring the promised offspring through whom all evil will be demolished, the curse of sin reversed, and lasting life

with God restored through the world (cf. Gen. 12:1 with 3:15; 22:17b–18; 24:60).

- (a) While Abraham was clearly trusting in God before Genesis 15 (cf. Heb 11:8), the language of “faith/believe” is held off until Genesis 15, likely in order (1) to associate faith directly with the offspring promise and (2) to identify believing in God as the *only way*, from the perspective of absolute ground, to stand right before him.
- (b) Genesis 15:3–4 places Abra(ha)m’s faith in the context of the promise for the offspring of promise: “And Abram said, ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.’ And behold, the word of Yahweh came to him: ‘This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.’” Abraham’s service as a channel of blessing are contingent on his having this offspring.
- (c) The stars in the sky serve as pointers to the numerous offspring promised to Abraham, each of which provides a reminder that God would indeed raise up One great star whose light would diminish all others, overcoming all darkness, and through whom the world would be blessed.
 - Gen. 15:5. Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.... So shall your offspring be.
 - Num. 24:17, 19. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.... And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!
 - Isa. 9:2, 6. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them a light shined.... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (See Matt. 4:15–16.)
 - Isa. 49:6. It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. (Cf. Isa. 30:26; 42:6–7, 16; 51:4; 60:1, 3, 19, 20.)
 - John 3:19; 8:12. The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.... I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.
 - 1 John 1:5; 2:8–11. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.... ^{2:8}It is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰Whoever love his brother abides in the light, and in his there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and

- walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
- Rev. 21:23–24. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.
 - Rev. 22:5, 16. And night will be no more. They will need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.... I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.
- (d) Because the author of Genesis withheld the use of term *faith* until the crisis of the offspring promise was most apparent (Gen. 15:6), he shows that we understand justifying faith rightly only in relation to the messianic hope.
- iii. In the life of Noah, we learned that righteousness, blamelessness, and walking with God (Gen 6:9) was all due to divine “grace” (6:8). Now we have learned that righteousness is also enjoyed through “faith” (15:6). In short, one is declared righteous by grace through faith. In Paul’s words in Eph 2:8–9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- e. The nature of “righteousness” in Gen 15:6.
- i. Lexical overview:
- (1) There are a host of related terms associated with “righteousness” in the OT:
 - (a) *šdq* (vb): *qal*, to be right, just; *niphal*, to be justified; *piel*, to make someone appear upright, to declare as in the right; *hiphil*, to obtain rights for, to declare as in the right, to treat as right; *hithpael*, to prove oneself right
 - (b) *šedeq* (m): bears a collective meaning and points to the standard of correct or “right order” in God’s world
 - (c) *š^edāqāh* (f): denotes a proof of uprightness, an act of justice; the focus is on proper behavior that aims at right order
 - (d) *šadiyq* (adj): righteous, just, in the right, innocent
 - (2) These terms show up 43x in the Pentateuch under the following categories:
 - (a) To act properly or uprightly: Tamar (*šdq qal*, Gen 38:26)
 - Gen 38:26. Then Judah identified them and said, “She has acted rightly more than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not know her again.
 - (b) To vindicate oneself (*šdq hithpael*, Gen 44:16) or another (*šdq hiphil*, Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1).
 - (c) The description of a person’s character or behavior, at times in contrast to “wrong” action or someone who is “wicked”: Noah (*šadiyq*, Gen 6:9; 7:1); God (*šadiyq*, Exod 9:27; Deut

- 32:4); general (*ṣadiyyq*, Gen 18:23–26, 28; 20:4; Exod 23:7–8; Deut 16:19; 25:1).
- Gen 6:9. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous [*ṣadiyyq*] man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.
 - Gen 7:1. Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous [*ṣadiyyq*] before me in this generation.”
 - Gen 18:23. Then Abraham drew near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous [*ṣadiyyq*] with the wicked?”
 - Gen 20:4. Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent [*ṣadiyyq*] people?”
 - Exod 9:7. Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the LORD is the right [*ḥasṣadiyyq*] (one), and I and my people are the wrong (ones).”
 - Exod 23:8–9[7–8]. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous [*ṣadiyyq*], for I will not acquit the wicked.⁸ And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right [pl of *ṣadiyyq*].
 - Deut 16:19. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous [*ṣadiyyq*].
 - Deut 25:1–2. If there is a dispute between men and they come into court and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent [*ḥasṣadiyyq*] and condemning the guilty,² then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense.
 - Deut 32:4. The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just [*ṣadiyyq*] and upright is he.
- (d) Part of a proper name that highlights a life aligned with right order: Melchizedek (*ṣedeq*, Gen 14:18).
- (e) The correct, accurate, ordered context in which courts are to judge (*ṣedeq*, Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16; 16:18, 20), in which weights and measures in commerce are to be applied (Lev 19:36; Deut 25:15), and in which sacrifices will be made (Deut 33:19).
- Lev 19:15. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness [*ṣedeq*] shall you judge your neighbor.
 - Lev 19:36. There shall be to you balances of righteousness [*ṣedeq*], weights of righteousness [*ṣedeq*], an ephah of righteousness [*ṣedeq*], and a hin of righteousness [*ṣedeq*]: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.
 - Deut 1:16. And I charged your judges at that time, “Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge with righteousness [*ṣedeq*] between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him.”
 - Deut 16:18, 20. You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with a judgment of righteousness [*ṣedeq*]. . . .²⁰ Righteousness, righteousness [*ṣedeq*]

you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

- Deut 25:15. A whole weight—even righteousness [*sedeq*] (i.e., a full and fair weight) there shall be to you; a whole measure—even righteousness [*sedeq*] (i.e., a full and fair measure) there shall be to you—that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
 - Deut 33:19. They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer sacrifices of righteousness [*sedeq*]; for they draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.
- (f) Proper or upright behavior that is expected or performed, often explicitly in association with Yahweh (*s^edāqāh*, Gen 18:19; 30:33; Deut 6:25; 9:4–6; 24:13; 33:21).
- Gen 18:19. For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.
 - Gen 30:33. So my honesty [*s^edāqāh*] will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.
 - Deut 6:25. And it will be righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.
 - Deut 9:4–6. Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, “It is because of my righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,” whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you.⁵ Not because of your righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.⁶ Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness [*s^edāqāh*], for you are a stubborn people.
 - Deut 24:13. You shall restore to him the pledge as the sun sets, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it shall be righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] for you before the LORD your God.
 - Deut 33:21. He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander’s portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the righteousness [*s^edāqāh*] of the LORD, and his judgments for Israel.
- (g) An act of proper behavior that God imputes to one who believes in him (*s^edāqāh*, Gen 15:6).
- Gen 15:6. And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
- ii. Synthesis, definition, and significance:
- (1) Within the Pentateuch, *all* 43 instances of “righteousness” language *except in Gen 15:6* speak of aligning with or doing what is right in God’s world. It is about the orientation of one’s

life with right order through *character and behavior*.

Righteousness is about doing, and because of this many have associate “righteousness” with covenant loyalty. Note the following definitions:

- (a) M. Seifrid – “In biblical thought, ‘righteousness’ is simultaneously moral and creational, having to do with God’s re-establishing ‘right order’ in the fallen world which he has made, an order which includes a right relationship between the world and its Creator” (“Righteousness, Justice, and Justification,” in *NDBT*, 741)
 - (b) W. VanGemeren – “Righteousness is the order that characterizes God’s rule over creation through his acts (blessing, lavish gifts, generosity) and brings harmony, peace, and joy. Justice, as it relates to God, is the aspect of righteousness that pertains to his wise and fair judgments.” (*Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 132)
 - (c) D. I. Block – “‘Righteousness’ (*šēdāqā*) denotes behavior that conforms to norms established in the stipulations of Yahweh’s covenant (cf. [Deut] 33:21)” (*Deuteronomy*, 196).
 - (d) J. Piper – “The righteousness of God consists most basically in God’s unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory. . . . The basic implication as I see it is that man’s righteousness will be seen now as radically God-centered. . . . The righteousness of man in relation to God is (reflecting God’s righteousness) to love the honor of God’s name, to esteem above all things God’s glory (especially as it has been mercifully experienced in his saving deeds), and, finally, to do only those things which accord with this love and esteem. Thus human actions may be described as righteous not because they conform to an ‘ideal ethical norm’ . . . , but rather because they are fitting expressions of man’s complete allegiance to maintain the honor of God’s name and display his glory.” (*The Justification of God*, 119)
- (2) The term in Gen 15:6 rendered “counted” in the ESV (Hebrew *ḥšb qal*; Greek *logizomai*) is associated with a mathematical process of reckoning, counting, or imputing. In Scripture you can reckon something for what it is or for what it is not.
- (a) Phinehas’ zeal against the sexually immoral was “counted” righteousness—i.e., identified *for what it was*, namely a righteous act: “Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed.³¹ And that was counted to him as righteousness [*wattēḥāšeb lô lišdāqāh*] from generation to generation forever” (Ps 106:30–31).
 - (b) However, one can also reckon something *for what it is not*, and this is what is going on with Abra(ha)m. The very

essence of biblical faith is the recognition that one cannot do, and when Abra(ha)m's believing in God is regarded as righteousness, God imputes to him something that is not by nature his own: "And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness [*wayyahš'behā lô š'dāqāh*]" (Gen 15:6).

- (c) A similar counting for what something is not is seen in Prov 27:14: "Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing." A blessing is not cursing, but in a certain context it can be regarded as such.
 - (d) Brian Vickers writes, "The status or description typically reserved for actions is here counted to Abraham on the basis of faith. Abraham's faith is counted to him as something that it inherently is not, righteousness. . . . What might usually be declared over a person who did what is right in God's sight is declared upon Abraham through faith" (*Justification by Grace through Faith*, 60–61). Similarly, Vickers earlier writes, "When Abraham's faith in the Lord is counted to him as righteousness, it means that God sees Abraham as someone who has fulfilled his (God's) standard of what it means to be righteous. He is deemed a righteous person. Here, however, it is not Abraham's behavior or actions that constitute his righteousness but his faith in God. . . . Because Abraham believes the promise for an heir, God counts Abraham as holding the same status or position as that of a person who has done everything right according to God's standards" (58).
 - (e) Similarly, Paul writes of Abraham (Rom 4:2–5): "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness [*kai elogisthē autō eis dikaiosynēn*].' ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."
- (3) While the "righteousness" of Gen 15:6 appears to bear the same basic meaning as anywhere else in the Pentateuch (i.e., character or behavior aligning with God's right order), in Gen 15:6 faith and not works are counted righteousness. Thus Abraham receives from God by declaration what he did *not* have in himself.
- iii. Genesis 15:6 within its biblical context.
- (1) The law describes "righteousness" and makes life and blessing contingent upon it (e.g., Gen 18:19; Deut 6:25; 16:20).

- Gen 18:19. For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”
 - Deut 6:25. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.
 - Deut 16:20. Righteousness, righteousness you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
- (2) Nevertheless, although the OT gives some examples of real (though imperfect) right living among the remnant (e.g., Noah, Gen 6:9; Phinehas, Ps 106:31; David, 2 Sam 22:21), the Pentateuch’s overwhelming message is that God’s people are not and indeed cannot be perfectly righteous. Their innate stubbornness and uncircumcised hearts render them unrighteous and spiritually disabled (Deut 9:4–6; cf. 10:16; 29:4[3]). They are, in Paul’s words, “ungodly” (Rom 4:5; cf. 4:7–8).
- Deut 9:6. Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.
 - Deut 10:16. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.
 - Deut. 29:4. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.
 - Rom 4:5. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.
- (3) Moses asserted, “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue [LXX: *dikaiōs to dikaion diōxē*], that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (Deut 16:20). Nevertheless, Israel could not reach this goal. Thus Paul says, “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness [*ta mē diōkonta dikaiosynēn*] have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law of righteousness [*diōkōn nomon dikaiosynēs*] did not succeed in reaching that law.³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30–32).
- (4) The ultimate *telos* of the law-covenant was Christ for righteousness to all who believe (Rom 10:4). The law was intended to disclose and multiply sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19), so as to show everyone their need to receive from God by declaration the right standing that no one could himself earn.
- Rom 10:4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
 - Rom 3:20. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
 - Rom 5:20. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,
 - Gal. 3:19. Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

- (5) There is a confluence of images in Deuteronomy that together highlight that only in the new covenant will righteousness be secured for the many.
- (a) Israel's lack of righteousness is equated with their being stubborn and rebellious and having uncircumcised hearts (Deut 9:6–7; 10:16).
- Deut 9:6–7. Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.⁷ Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.
 - Deut 10:16. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.
- (b) When God circumcises Israel's hearts, he will empower them to love with the result that they will live (Deut 30:6). By the Spirit they will keep the statutes and rules (Ezek 36:27), which implies that they will be enabled to walk in righteousness.
- Deut 30:6. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
 - Ezek 36:27. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
- (6) The NT teaches that God imputes our sin to Christ and his perfect righteousness to us (Rom 5:18–19; 8:3–4; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:8–9) and that out of this context of reconciled right relationship with God (justification/no condemnation) we are empowered by the Spirit of Christ in us to do righteous deeds (Rom 8:13; 1 John 3:7), keeping the law's "statutes/just requirements" (Rom 2:26) and fulfilling the law of love (Rom 13:8, 10)—not perfectly overnight but truly and progressively over a life time. Our righteous deeds will serve as evidence in the future that Christ has indeed transformed us (Rom 2:13); because we are truly alive in Christ we will produce fruit of holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:13). On this, Vickers writes: "On the last day, the final verdict of "righteous" will be declared publicly upon exactly the kind of people God said would inherit the promise—the same declaration now had by faith. The ground of that declaration will be faith in Christ (the root), and the evidence to vindicate God's declaration as true (as with Abraham, cf. Rom. 4) will be the obedience (the fruit) that is in keeping with membership in the new covenant" (159).
- Rom 5:18–19. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.
 - Rom 8:3–4. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,

he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- 2 Cor. 5:21. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- Phil 3:8–9. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ Phil. 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.
- Rom 8:13. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- 1 John 3:7. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.
- Rom 2:26. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?
- Rom 13:8, 10. Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. . . .¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
- Rom 2:13. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.
- Heb 12:13. and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

(7) Before we can ever engage in God-honoring deeds of righteousness we must be counted righteous by faith. We pursue righteousness confident that God is *already* 100% for us and that our right standing is secure *because* of what Christ has already accomplished on our behalf.

f. Conclusion:

- i. Abra(ha)m could not produce an heir on his own, so he trusted God to fulfill his promise. The patriarch did not work but believed, and his faith in God was counted for it wasn't—righteousness. Abraham's life of God-saturated dependence provides an example for Christian faith and contrasts with the majority of old covenant community who pursued law-keeping without an inner sense of desperation and inability. The Mosaic law, therefore, became for them an instrument of works-righteousness, whereas for the remnant obedience to the law stood as a fruit of the righteousness they already had declared over them by faith.
- ii. Vickers writes, "Obedience, doing 'justice and righteousness,' is a necessary part of being the people of God. . . . Justification is verdict that through the work of God in Christ we stand before him without guilt and as having done all matters of obedience—we are declared righteous by God" *Justification by Grace through Faith*, 67, 74). Vickers also notes, "Ultimately what we see is that God will create the kind of people he wants by giving them his Spirit" (67). Paul presents Abraham as the model not only of one who is justified by faith (Rom 4:1–12) but also of the just one who lives by faith (4:18–25). Abraham's persevering and increasing faith was like evidence in a

courtroom that God's initial declaration was true (90). Nevertheless, "Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness *before*, and not on the basis of, the evidence shown in his life. . . . God . . . knows the confirming evidence that will flow from faith, but the declaration of justification is founded in Christ alone, the object of faith" (90).

2. Part 2: The Promise of Land in Which to Enjoy Nationhood (15:7–21)
 - a. Structure:
 - i. Yahweh's reminder of past provision and promise of land (15:7; cf. Exod. 20:2)
 - ii. Abraham's question (15:8)
 - iii. Yahweh's revelation and confirmation of the promise of land (15:9–17)
 - iv. Yahweh's covenant with Abra(ha)m formalized (15:18–21)
 - b. An overview of the covenant-formalizing ceremony:
 - i. *The purpose:* to give Abra(ha)m absolute confidence that God would fulfill his promise of land to the patriarch and his offspring (15:7).
 - ii. *The nature:*
 - (1) A number of animals (a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon) are all split in two and separated so that an aisle is created between the parts (15:9–11).
 - (2) While Abra(ha)m sleeps, there is a vision of "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch" that passes between the pieces (15:12–17). For the original readers, this imagery would likely have been reminiscent of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night and thus would have been identified with Yahweh's glory presence.
 - (3) By means of the divine journey through the pieces, "Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram" (15:18), thus granting him unswerving confidence in God's commitment to establish Abra(ha)m's offspring in the land (15:19) and with that to use Israel as the instrument through which the world's curse would be reversed.
 - c. The significance of the ceremony:
 - i. Biblical parallels suggest that, by going through the parts, God was declaring, "Let happen to me what happened to these animals, if I fail to keep my pledge."
 - (1) Genesis 21 supplies an example of how ancient Near Eastern treaties worked. Here Abraham and Abimelech enter into a treaty, which the biblical text terms a "covenant." In v. 27 we read, "So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant." The verb for "making" a covenant is the Hebrew כָּרַת, meaning "to cut." Implied here may be the same cutting ritual testified to in Genesis 15.
 - (2) In Deuteronomy 21:4–8, following the discovery of a murdered victim in a field, the elders of the nearest city must break the neck of an undefiled heifer and then swear an oath before God that they did not commit the treachery. They appear to be declaring,

“Let happen to me what happened to this animal if I lie before you.” By this act, the Lord atoned for the sins of the people.

- Deut 21:1–9. If in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess someone is found slain, lying in the open country, and it is not known who killed him, ² then your elders and your judges shall come out, and they shall measure the distance to the surrounding cities. ³ And the elders of the city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer that has never been worked and that has not pulled in a yoke. ⁴ And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley. ⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the LORD, and by their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled. ⁶ And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, ⁷ and they shall testify, “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. ⁸ Accept atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be atoned for.” ⁹ So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

(3) The clearest parallel with the imagery of Genesis 15 is found in Jeremiah 34:18–20. Here the Judean lords committed before Yahweh to let their fellow Judean slaves go but then reneged on their promise. God declares that they passed between the slain animal pieces and by this portrayed the curse they would endure if they failed to keep their oath. God is now holding them accountable.

- Jer. 34:18–20. And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—¹⁹the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. ²⁰And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

(4) Another parallel is Ps 50:5, where the Lord declares, “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” We don’t know what event the psalmist is referring to, but it elicits the same imagery as Jer 34:18–20.

- ii. In Genesis 15, Yahweh himself (the covenant suzerain) made the journey through the slain pieces. By this act he was declaring an impossibility—“Let happen to me what happened to these animals if I fail to keep my oath.” The imagery suggests that God’s promise to Abra(ha)m was as sure as God’s lasting nature. Because he could never stop being God, the promise would most definitely be fulfilled!
- iii. God’s promise in Genesis 15 was lastingly perpetual without qualification. How does this relate to the conditions already apparent in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:1–2; 18:19; 22:16, 18; 26:5)?

- d. Ancient Near Eastern Support for a Perpetual yet Conditional Abrahamic Covenant:
- i. Of the two kinds of ANE treaties, the royal appears to stand in the background to the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15:
 - (1) *Suzerain-Vassal Treaty*: A relationship of obligation established under divine sanction; the suzerain claimed absolute right of sovereignty and promised provision and protection in return for the vassal's loyalty and exclusive reliance on the suzerain's protection.
 - (2) *Royal Grant*: Added promises of provision (land or dynasty) from a suzerain to a loyal vassal, provided perpetually for the family without qualification but provided conditionally for each individual in the family given they stay loyal within the covenant. The royal grant made a suzerain-vassal treaty perpetually binding.
 - ii. Covenant Ratification in the Ancient World
 - (1) Oaths and Oath-signs in ancient covenant ratification
 - (a) The *oath* was a vow to covenant loyalty.
 - (b) The *oath sign* symbolized this vow by graphically involving the covenant party (usually the vassal) in a picture of either the covenant blessings or curses.
 - (i) Sex in the marriage covenant (Gen. 2:24) and the fellowship meal on Sinai in the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 24:9–11) appear to be oath signs symbolically portraying the blessing of covenant fellowship. Similarly, the rainbow "sign" in the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:12–16) portrays the blessing of covenantal protection.
 - (ii) Circumcision (Gen. 17:11) and the divine presence-cutting ritual (15:17) in the Abrahamic covenant appear to serve as oath signs portraying the curse of covenant excision.
 - (2) The cutting of animals and the suzerain's vow in a land grant bestowed from Abban, king of Yamhad, to his vassal Yarim-Lim.
 - (a) The setting: In response to an act of treason, Abban had destroyed Irridi, a city that once belonged to Yarim-Lim. On the suzerain's return home, he resolved to grant Yarim-Lim the cities of Alalah and Murar in place of Irridi.
 - (b) The oath: "Abban placed himself under oath to Yarim-Lim and had cut the neck of a sheep saying: '[Let me so die] if I take back that which I gave thee!'" (D. J. Wiseman, "Abban and Alalah," 129)
 - iii. Grants as Perpetual and Conditional:
 - (1) The promises were perpetually preserved in the family line without qualification, but every generation could forfeit its participation in the promise through lack of covenant loyalty.

- (2) ANE examples:
- (a) The Grant of royal succession and land in a treaty between Hattusilis III of Hatti and Ulmi-Teshshup of Tarhuntassa: “I, My Majesty, will [not depose] your son. [I will accept] neither your brother nor anyone else. Later your son and grandson will hold [the land] which I have given [to you]. It may not be taken away from him. If any son or grandson of yours commits an offense, then the King of Hatti shall question him. And if an offense is proven against him, then the King of Hatti shall treat him as he pleases. If he is deserving of death, he shall perish, but his household and land shall not be taken from him and given to the progeny of another. Only someone of the progeny of Ulmi-Teshshup shall take them.” (G. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 2nd ed., 109).
 - (b) Property Grant: “Nobody in the future shall take away this house from Umanava, her children, her grandchildren and her offspring. When anyone of the descendants of Umanava provokes the anger of the kings ... whether he is to be forgiven or whether he is to be killed, one will treat him according to the wish of his master but his house they will not take away, and they will not give it to somebody else.” (M. Weinfeld, “Covenant of Grant,” 189–90)
- (3) God’s covenant with David
- (a) Both 2 Samuel 7:8–16 and Psalm 89:30–37 stress how God’s dynastic grant to David is perpetual, unconditioned on the faithfulness of his heirs.
 - 2 Sam. 7:13–16. I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him...your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.
 - Ps. 89:30–37. If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³but I will not remove from my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. ³⁴I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. ³⁵Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. ³⁷Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.
 - (b) Nevertheless, biblical commentary on the Davidic Covenant shows that the original readers knew that the covenants included conditions and that any given generation could forfeit his privilege to the throne (see e.g., 1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:25; Psa. 132:12). As stated in 1 Kings 9:4–5: “And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with

integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, [if] and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

iv. Conclusions Regarding the Perpetual Conditional Unmeritorious Abrahamic Covenant

- (1) In Genesis 15, Yahweh is committing himself to Abraham that the divine kingdom promise of offspring in the land will be fulfilled. God will do it! He will make it happen! In this sense, it is an unconditional, perpetual promise!
- (2) Nevertheless, for individual offspring of Abraham to enjoy participation in the promise fulfillment, they must remain loyal to God (the point of Genesis 17), which is defined as faith overflowing in obedience.
- (3) In Gal 3:17–18, Paul asserts: “This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.” By “law” Paul here refers directly to the Mosaic covenant. His contrast of “law” with “promise” does not mean the covenant with Abraham included no conditions, but it does suggest that the covenant itself bore a promisory nature—a fact made clear through the land/dynastic grant form.

D. Confirming the Covenant: Circumcision (Gen. 17)

1. Structure:

[Yahweh’s appearance – 17:1]

- a. Part 1 (17:2–8): God’s promises to Abraham (“As for me”)
 - i. Yahweh’s intention to confirm his promise about descendants, ultimately to be a channel of blessing to the nations (17:1–2)
 - ii. Abram’s prostration (v. 3)
 - iii. Divine promises of (1) covenantal influence among the nations, (2) descendants, (3) the land, and (4) perpetual special relationship (vv. 4–8).
- b. Part 2 (17:9–14) Abraham’s responsibility: the sign of circumcision given (“As for you”)
- c. Part 3 (17:15–21) God’s promises to Sarah (“As for Sarah”)
 - i. Yahweh’s intention to bless Sarah with offspring (vv. 15–16)
 - ii. Abraham’s prostration & comment (vv. 17–18)
 - iii. Divine promise of a son & offspring to Sarah (vv. 19–22)

[Yahweh’s departure – 17:22]

- d. Part 4 (17:22–27) Abraham’s obedience: the sign of circumcision practiced
2. Excursus: the Meaning of Circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant (see DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and the Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor,” *BBR* 14.2 [2004]: 175–203):

- a. Terminology: The rite is designated a “covenant” (*berît*) and a “sign of covenant” (*’ôṭ berît*) between God, Abraham, and his offspring (Gen. 17:10–11, 13).
- b. “Signs” (*’ôṭôṭ*) in the Hebrew Old Testament
 - i. They fulfill at least one of three functions (so M. V. Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly *’ôṭ* Etiologies.” *RB* 81 [1974] 562–63):
 - (1) To prove the truth of something (e.g., Isa. 38:7–8);
 - (2) To symbolize or represent a future reality by virtue of resemblance or conventional association (e.g., Ezek. 4:1–3);
 - (3) To rouse knowledge of something, whether by (i) identifying (e.g., Josh. 2:12) or (ii) reminding (Exod. 13:9).
 - ii. While circumcision’s function is not made explicit in Genesis 17, a number of observations suggest that in Israel the rite served primarily as a mnemonic cognition sign (#c.ii) and secondarily as both a symbol sign (#b) and an identity cognition sign (#c.i).
- c. Circumcision as a Cognition Sign
 - i. Fox observes that all but one of the other “signs” in the Pentateuch’s priestly material is cognition oriented, which suggests circumcision functions similarly:
 - (1) Example 1: The blood of the Passover lamb was a sign that identified the Israelite homes to the messenger of Yahweh (Exod. 12:13).
 - (2) Example 2: Aaron’s blossomed rod was a sign that reminded the community of the divine choice of the Aaronides (Exod. 17:10; cf. 17:5).
 - ii. The close parallels between circumcision and the signs of the rainbow (Gen. 9:13–17) and the Sabbath (Exod. 31:13–17) help clarify that the main purpose of this knowledge was to help *remind* the covenant parties of their obligations.
 - (1) In the Hebrew Bible, only the “signs” of the rainbow, circumcision, and the Sabbath are linked directly to *berît* (“covenant”).
 - (2) Each of these covenant “signs” is also denoted by the verb *nṭn* (“to give, confirm, make”) and qualified by the phrase “between me and you” (cf. Gen. 9:12, 13; 17:2, 10, 11; Ezek. 20:12 with Exod. 16:29).
 - iii. Because the rite was performed “in the flesh” of the male covenant member (Gen. 17:11, 13–14) and because human failure to observe circumcision would result in being cut-off from the community (17:14), circumcision appears to function as a reminder primarily to Abraham and his offspring rather than to God.
 - (1) Specifically, the sign reminded the human parties of Yahweh’s demand to “walk before me and (so) be blameless” (Gen 17:1).
 - (2) The rite was performed on the male reproductive organ to remind the recipient that the oath of undefiled allegiance was binding on

both him and his offspring (cf. Gen 18:19) and perhaps also to remind both covenant parties of the divine promise of posterity (e.g., 12:2; 15:5; 17:4–5, 19; 18:10).

- d. Circumcision as a Symbolic Sign
 - i. The fact that circumcision was a cutting rite suggests that it also bore a symbolic function.
 - ii. Like the dismembering ritual in Gen. 15:7–18 (cf. Jer. 34:17–20), circumcision may have graphically portrayed the covenant curse of excision and threatened the cutting off of descendants (Gen. 17:14) (so M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* [So. Hamilton, MA: Meredith G. Kline, 1993], 193).
- e. Circumcision as an Identity Sign
 - i. Circumcision appears to have distinguished those who were incorporated into Israel’s covenant community from her neighbors (Gen. 17:12–13).
 - ii. We know that many of Israel’s neighbors practiced a form of circumcision. But the combination of the biblical and extra-biblical evidence suggests that from the Middle Bronze Age (2000 B.C.) through the early Roman Period (A.D. 125)—the time roughly associated with biblical Israel, Israel alone amputated the foreskin (see DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums,” 186–189). Israel’s full removal of the prepuce thus set them apart from the Egyptians and many of her West Semitic neighbors (cf. Jer. 9:25–26) who performed the rite only by slitting the foreskin, from the “uncircumcised” Philistines and the East Semites of Mesopotamia who apparently had nothing to do with the ritual, and from the Greeks and Romans of the Intertestamental and NT periods who were repulsed by all forms of circumcision.
 - iii. It is not surprising that for Israel the term “foreskin” bore a negative connotation, representing all that was against God and his people.
 - (1) Foreskin represented hostility and distancing from God, and as such, it was easy for the prophets to use “circumcision” language metaphorically, stressing Israel’s need to have circumcised “lips” (Exod. 6:12, 30), “ears” (Jer. 6:10), “hearts” (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25–26; Ezek. 44:7, 9), and “fruit” (Lev. 19:23–25).
 - (2) To remain “uncircumcised” (both physically and spiritually) like the Philistines (Judg. 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4//1 Chr. 10:4; 2 Sam. 1:20) or like the other foreign enemies of Israel (Isa. 52:1) was to separate yourself from God and to resign yourself to destruction. As stated explicitly by Ezekiel, Yahweh will destroy the “uncircumcised” and cast them to the realm of the dead (Ezek. 28:10; 31:18; 32:19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32).
 - (3) Such truths highlight the remarkable significance of Jeremiah’s including Judah among those with a foreskin in 9:25–26:

“Behold, the days are coming—the declaration of Yahweh—when I will punish all who are circumcised with a foreskin—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all those [whose hair is] clipped at the temples, who are dwelling in the desert. For all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.”

- iv. Following the coming of Jesus, all national markers like physical circumcision became of no value. God’s people were now distinguished solely by faith working itself out in love, which stood as the true sign of their identification with the Messiah through the transforming work of the Spirit (Rom. 2:28–29; Gal. 5:6; 6:14–16; cf. Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31:33; 32:39; Ezek. 36:26–27).
3. The Abrahamic Covenant Community: Its Nature and Purpose in Genesis 17
 - a. Its Nature:
 - i. Not all biological descendants of Abraham were part of the line of covenant promise, for God restricted this benefit to Isaac’s line in contrast to Ishmael’s (17:19–20; cf. Rom. 9:7–8); this does not counter the fact that Ishmael became a great nation simply because he was Abraham’s offspring (21:12–13).
 - ii. Not all covenant members were biologically connected to Abraham (17:12), which stresses that neither circumcision nor the covenant associated with it were race restrictive. God’s promises were for all who would devote themselves to him.
 - b. Its Purpose
 - i. Part of the goal of Genesis 17 is to clarify how Abraham’s call to “be a blessing” would result in global curse being reversed and “all the families of the earth” being blessed (12:2–3).
 - ii. The promises regarding royal parenthood:
 - Gen. 17:4–6. Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram [“exalted father”], but your name shall be Abraham [“father of a multitude”], for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.
 - Gen. 17:15–16. As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [“princess”] shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of people shall come from her.
 - Gen. 35:11. I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.
 - iii. The significance of the promises:
 - (1) The patriarchs’ paternal relationship to the nations is most likely *not* restricted to biological descent.
 - (a) Because the promise to Sarah that “she shall become nations” in 17:16 is most likely a reiteration of the parental promise made to Abraham (meaning the two promises refer to the same reality) and because two nations (Israel through Sarah’s grandson Jacob and Edom through her grandson

- Esau) seem far from the “multitude” that is promised, it seems likely that the parenthood referred to in Gen 17:4–6, 16 points beyond physical offspring.
- (b) While the Ishmaelites, Edomites, Midianites, and several other peoples mentioned in the genealogy lists of Genesis 25 and 36 are known to have biologically descended from Abraham, only the one nation of Israel is known to have descended from Jacob. Consequently, the fact that Jacob is to bring forth a “company of nations” suggests his “family” is larger than Israel and will include other nations somehow related by adoption.
- (2) The patriarchs’ paternal relationship to the nations most likely points to royal authority wherein Abraham and his wife Sarah, the “princes” (Gen. 17:15), are regarded as the founders of a new dynasty that will climax in a specific, royal descendant who will rule Israelites (both native-born and alien residents) and vassal nations.
- (a) The use of “father” language in this more metaphorical sense parallels the use of the term throughout the ancient world for various social roles that bore an authoritative or shepherding function, the most significant of which is the designation of kings as “fathers” of their vassal peoples (cf. 1 Sam 24:11 vs. 24:16).
- (b) While Abraham himself was never called a king, a number of textual hints, both in and outside Genesis, suggest that the author of Genesis wanted us to view him like one.
- (i) He was to be the progenitor of a royal line: “kings will come from you” (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11).
- (ii) He was promised to become a great nation, bear a great name, and receive divine protection (Gen. 12:2; cf. 18:18; 35:11; 46:3), all of which are qualities that point to a royal future *for Abraham* and his descendants (cf. 2 Sam 7:9; Ps 72:17).
- (iii) His battle with the northern kings (Gen. 14:1–24), his covenant with Abimelech (21:22–34), and his standing in the eyes of the Canaanites (23:6) all portrayed the patriarch with status similar to his contemporary monarchs.
- (iv) The LXX translator called Abraham a “king (βασιλεύς)” in place of his title as “prince (נָשִׂיךְ)” in 23:6.
- (v) Matthew opened his Gospel with a royal genealogy for the “King of the Jews”: “the genealogy of Jesus Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1; cf. 2:2).

- (3) While the royal adoption of the nations addressed in Genesis 17 will *result from* the “covenant of circumcision” (“through Israel the world will be blessed”), the adoption itself does not appear to be into this specific covenant. This is so because all circumcised members of the community (whether the alien resident or the father, son, or household servant among the native born) were considered part of *one nation* later named Israel (17:12; Josh. 8:33)—a nation that is here only one part of “the multitude of nations” parented by Abraham.
- (4) If indeed Abraham’s fatherhood of the nations is directly related to the promise of universal blessing and if that promise finds focus through a particular, individual descendant of Abraham (see the discussion above on the “first gospel” of Gen. 3:15), then *the stage is set for Paul, in a context of eschatological fulfillment in Christ, to identify Jew and Gentile as having a place in the family of Abraham apart from circumcision and the Law that would later be associated with it* (see Rom. 4:16–18; Gal. 3:29).

E. The Test of Covenant Loyalty (Gen. 22)

1. The Setting:
 - a. Genesis 22 is generated by the messianic and missiological thrust of the book as a whole.
 - b. For over 25 years, Abraham had been hoping in God’s promises regarding nationhood in general and the specific male offspring in particular. Through life changing encounters, remarkable victories, graphic visions, and miraculous provisions God had proved himself to Abraham.
 - c. Most specifically, with no uncertainty, God had declared “what will come out of your loins shall be your heir” (15:4) and “I will establish my covenant with [Isaac] as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him” (17:19) and “through Isaac shall your offspring be named” (21:12). The hopes of the world rest on what God will do through Isaac and his offspring.
 - d. None today who may claim, “God told me to kill my child,” have the extended history of miraculous provision and protection associated with Abraham and his family. Indeed, the dating of Abraham’s life appears to be intentionally designed to highlight the long miraculous bank account Yahweh had built up with Abraham before he commanded the patriarch to do what seems so contrary to his character and so explicitly against his promise.

Fig. 3.12. Dated Events in Abraham’s Life

<i>Event</i>	<i>Abe’s Age</i>
Abra(ha)m is called and goes from Haran to Canaan (12:4)	75
Abra(ha)m marries Hagar, Sarah’s maidservant (16:3)	85
God renames Abram “Abraham” and establishes the covenant of circumcision (17:1, 24)	99
Abraham and Sarah’s son Isaac is born (21:25; cf. 17:17, 21; 18:14)	100
Abraham dies (25:7–8)	175

2. The Test:
 - a. In light of this context, the reader must feel the weight of God's call for Abraham to "take your son, you only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Gen 22:2).
 - b. The question to be answered in this test: "Does Abraham truly fear God in a way that creates sustained faith overflowing in obedience even when God's commission seems outrageous and in conflict with all his previous promises?" The answer: "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, *for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.*" (22:12).
 - c. In contrast to crazies today who may say, "God told me to kill my son, just like he did to Abraham," the test God gave Abraham appears to be non-reproducible, for it specifically related to the hope of a Messiah who has now come and it specifically follows a long-life of provision, protection, and promise-fulfillment witnessed to by many.
3. God's Faithfulness and Abraham's Obedience of Faith
 - a. Abraham was confident that God would either provide a substitute or would resurrect his son.
 - Gen. 22:5, 7–8. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."... ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "May father ... behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."
 - Heb. 11:17–19. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' ¹⁹He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."
 - b. As covenant head, Abraham's obedience proved that he was indeed righteous by faith, thus securing blessing for future generations and modeling the type of obedience God desires of all.
 - Gen. 22:16–18. By myself I have sworn, declares Yahweh, *because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.*
 - Gen. 26:3–5. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ⁵because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. (Cf. Deut. 11:1; 26:17.)
 - James 2:21–24. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- c. In response to Abraham's fear-faith-obedience composite, Yahweh added an oath to his early promises of offspring and divine blessing, thus establishing the fulfillment of what was promised.
- Gen. 22:16. By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord. . . .
 - Luke 1:68–75. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us, ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
 - Heb. 6:13–18. For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.
- d. Abraham's obedience of faith resulted in the display of God's greatness throughout the generations. At the very place where the temple would one day be built, Yahweh provided a substitute sacrifice, thus showing himself merciful—the One who sees (i.e., provides for) those who trust in him.
- Gen. 22:2, 8, 13–14. [God] said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." . . . ⁸Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." . . . ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, "Yahweh will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of Yahweh it shall be provided."
 - Chr. 3:1. Then Solomon began to build the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where Yahweh had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.
4. Genesis 22 in Its Redemptive-Historical Context
- a. Because burnt offerings (22:2, 8) were the only offerings for sin prior to the establishment of the tabernacle, it appears that Isaac was to die a sinner's death, as promised to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:17) and as brought upon the flood generation (6:5–6, 11–13) and Sodom and Gomorrah (19:24–25). Unlike the previous divine judgments, however, this one would be carried out by a human agent, much like Israel performing Yahweh's war of judgment on the Canaanites.
 - b. Because all messianic hope rested on Isaac, his sacrifice served as a pointer to the way the great salvation of humanity would only come through the death and resurrection of the promised One. However, the substitutionary sacrifice witnessed in Isaac's situation also points to the way sinners deserve a wrath that God pours out on another. In short, both Isaac and the ram appear to be pointers to Christ.
 - c. God had declared to Abra(ha)m, "him who dishonors you I will curse" (12:3), and when he passed through the animal pieces he had also taken a

self-maledictory oath upon himself, declaring that he would stop being God if he failed to fulfill his promise of land to Abra(ha)m's offspring (cf. 1 Sam 11:7; Jer 34:18–19). It appears, therefore, that if God was forced, due to Israel's disobedience, to curse Israel (Lev. 26; Deut. 27–28), then he would also ultimately be required to curse himself. The imagery of Genesis 22 may point in this direction.

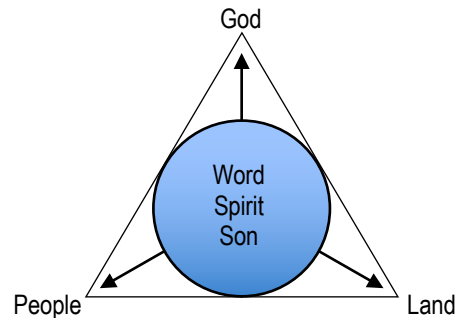
- d. The surety of God's promise bound up in the oath of Gen 22:16 appears to stand behind the amazing divine faithfulness and radical human faith seen in the rest of the book:
 - i. God's oath here gives clarity to why the schemes of the youthful Jacob, the envy of Joseph's brothers (ch. 37), the sin of Judah (ch. 38), or a great famine could not thwart God's purposes for Israel.
 - ii. God's oath here gives clarity to the faith that stands behind Isaac's blessing both Jacob and Esau (27:27–29) and Jacob's blessing his twelve sons (ch. 48) (cf. Heb. 11:20–21).
 - iii. God's oath here gives clarity to Joseph's confidence in the exodus and his commission to have his bones buried in Canaan (50:24–25; cf. Exod. 13:19; Josh. 24:32; Heb. 11:22).

F. Summary of the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. God's covenant relationship with Abraham and his offspring was unconditional, if by that we mean it was initiated by grace alone and would be perpetuated by grace alone.
 - a. *The land promise:* In the graphic act of Genesis 15, God declared that his promise to give Abra(ha)m's offspring the land would never be revoked; his commitment Abra(ha)m, the man of faith, would stand, apart from any deeds done.
 - b. *The offspring and divine blessing promises:* In Genesis 22, God swore to fulfill his promises to multiply Abraham's offspring and to bring a single male descendant that would overcome evil and serve as a conduit of blessing to the nations—all this because Abraham obeyed.
2. In spite of the perpetual promises, individual enjoyment of the covenant blessing was contingent on individual covenant loyalty. Obedience was mandatory but not meritorious. This obedience, however, was fruit growing from the root of faith—faith in God's promise to do for his people what they could not do on their own, including and most importantly his raising up a royal offspring who would defeat all that is hostile to God and his ways and restore blessing to the world.
3. According to Gen 12:1–3, blessing coming to the nations was contingent on Abraham and his offspring “being a blessing.” Ultimately, Jesus is the one through whom the blessing of Abraham reaches the nations. Galatians 3:8, 14: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ . . . In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [comes] to the Gentiles.”
4. God is both the initiator and sustainer of the relationship by enabling covenant loyalty (dependence, surrender, following) through motivating promises that all point to the realization of his sovereignty in all things for the joy of all peoples in Messiah Jesus.

VIII. The Agency of Blessing, Part 2—The Line of Promise in Egypt (Gen. 37:2–50:26)

IX. Summary of the Theology of Genesis in Light of the Covenant Triangle:



A. God

1. Yahweh, Lord of Creation (Gen. 1–4)
 - a. Creator-king over all
 - b. Covenant maker
 - c. The standard for and judge of good and evil
2. Yahweh, the Covenant Lord (Gen. 5:1–11:9)
 - a. The world's judge
 - b. The covenant renewer
3. Yahweh, God Almighty (Gen. 11:10–50:26)
 - a. The One who calls, for a unique purpose
 - b. The One who makes believable and desirable promises
 - c. The oath taker
 - d. The able One
 - e. The judge of wickedness
 - f. The one who sees/provides
 - g. The purposeful sustainer

B. People

1. Humanity, Stewards of Creation (Gen. 1–4)
 - a. Imagers of God
 - b. Stewards of creation
 - c. The ideal and warped family defined
2. Humanity, Remnant and Rebel (Gen. 5:1–11:9)
3. Israel, a Channel of Blessing to the Nations (Gen. 11:10–50:26)
 - a. Abra(ha)m's initial obedience of faith
 - b. The suzerain's commitment and the vassal's obligations
 - c. The nature of Abraham's faith and righteousness
 - d. The nations, recipients of blessing

C. Land

1. The heaven and the earth as the context for divine-human relationship (Gen. 1–4)
 - a. Eden as a temple-palace
 - b. Mankind and animals come from and will return to the ground

- c. Creation care and supply
- d. Paradise lost and the cursed cosmos
- 2. Global destruction and renewal (Gen. 5:1–11:9)
 - a. The cursed cosmos
 - b. De-creation and recreation
 - c. Creation care and supply
- 3. The Promised Land (Gen. 11:10–50:26)
 - a. The royal grant
 - b. Now but not yet
 - c. The future hope
 - d. The contingency of holiness for keeping the land
 - e. Theological geography: the significance of the “Land Between”

D. Son-Spirit-Word

- 1. Divine presence and rule (Gen. 1–4)
 - a. God’s Spirit is active in creation.
 - b. God creates by his Word.
 - c. The man is the royal “son” who will oversee the kingdom building.
 - d. The “first gospel” anticipates a conquering, male, descendant of the woman who will destroy evil and restore blessing.
- 2. Divine presence and rule (Gen. 5:1–11:9)
 - a. God’s Spirit is active in recreation.
 - b. Noah is representative covenant head.
 - c. Instructions, blessings, and promises color the relationship.
- 3. Divine presence and rule (Gen. 11:10–50:26)
 - a. God’s presence establishes the covenant.
 - b. Words of instruction, promise, and oath color the relationship.
 - c. Anticipation is heightened for the male, royal offspring of promise.

X. Guided Reading for Genesis:

A. Points of Focus:

- 1. Key chapters: Gen. 1, 2, 3, 9, 12, 15, 17, 22, 49
- 2. Key persons: Abra(ha)m; Adam; Adam’s 3 sons: Able, Cain, Seth; Eliezer of Damascus; Esau; Eve; Hagar; Isaac; Jacob; Jacob’s 12 sons: Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Joseph, Judah, Levi, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun; Ishmael; Joseph’s two sons: Ephraim, Manasseh Laban; Leah; Lot; Melchizedek; Noah; Noah’s 3 sons: Ham, Japheth, Shem; Pharaoh; Potiphar; Rachel; Rebekah; Sarai/Sarah; Tamar; Terah
- 3. Key places: Babel, Canaan, Egypt, Garden of Eden, Goshen, Haran, Hebron, Ur, Sodom & Gomorrah

B. Questions:

- 1. Historically, Jews and Christians alike have held that _____ was substantially the author / compiler of the first five books of the OT, which are also known as the _____. The most likely period for the author to have written / compiled the bulk of the first five books of the OT was during _____.

2. The word that acts as a literary marker for Genesis, dividing the book into 10 (or 11) sections, is _____.
3. Identify and place in chronological order the following names: Adam, Terah, Noah, Isaac, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin, Rebekah, Seth, Sarah, Ishmael, Rachel, Shem
4. What are the two major types of covenants in the Old Testament and how are they described?
5. List ten things you learn about God, humanity, and God's world in Genesis 1:1–2:3.
6. In view of Genesis 1:26–28 and ch. 2, in what ways are the roles and responsibilities of men/women, husbands/wives similar and distinct? List some ways how the serpent's scheme and God's curses against Adam and Eve in ch. 3 directly correspond to the roles/responsibilities given to the man and woman in ch. 2.
7. Characterize the covenant God established in Genesis 9. Who were the parties of the covenant, and what were the promises, obligations, and the sign of the covenant?
8. Reorganize the biblical references on the right to align with the correct people or items on the left:

Adam	Sees his father's nakedness & is cursed
Eve	Renamed Israel
Adam & Eve	Cursed because of Adam's sin
Serpent	Seek to make a name for themselves by building a tower
Creation/ground	Requested his body be taken to Canaan after Israel leaves Egypt
Tower of Babel	Compared stars to Abraham's future offspring
Noah	First given responsibility to cultivate & keep the Garden of Eden
Ham	Where God confuses language
Shem	Builds an ark
People of Babel	Where Isaac was almost sacrificed
Abraham	God will dwell in his tents
God	First deceived by the serpent
Mt. Moriah	God clothes with animal skins
Jacob	Will one day be overcome by the woman's offspring/seed
Joseph	The one through whom the world will be blessed

9. What was the object of Abra(ha)m's faith in Genesis 15:6? What was so awesome about the promise God made Abra(ha)m (cf. 11:29–30; 18:19–15)?
10. What is the significance of the "cutting" ritual described in Genesis 15:7–21? (See Jeremiah 34:18–19 along with the note at Genesis 15:17.)
11. Examining the details of Genesis 12, 15, and 17, characterize the covenant God established with Abraham and his offspring. What were the promises, obligations, and the sign of the covenant?
12. According to Genesis 22:1, 12, why did God call Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac? How does the promise given to Abraham in 22:17b–18 relate to the curse against the serpent in 3:15 (cf. Galatians 3:16; Acts 3:25–26; Rom 16:20)?

13. “_____, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down to you... The scepter shall not depart from _____, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” To whom did Jacob declare this blessing? Any idea what is significant about this blessing for the future of God’s people ... and the world?
14. “Now behold, I myself do establish my covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth, with you.” To whom did God declare these words?
15. “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” To whom did God declare these words?
16. “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” To whom did god declare these words?