

Reading Genesis & Exodus as Christian Scripture for the Church Today
Diocese of Chichester Online Book Group for The Year of the Old Testament 2023
Session 2: Genesis Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (25/1/23)

Genesis introduction

In Hebrew the books of the Pentateuch are known by their first words, “In the beginning”

Our English title of the book is the Greek word “Genesis”, “origin, source, race, creation” – the LXX term for generations / family history “These are the generations of...” which comes 10x in Genesis – normally seems to introduce a new section

A narrowing focus:

The origin of the world (chapter 1)

The origins of the nations (chapters 2-11)

The origins of Israel (chapter 12-)

The Generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)

The Generations of Adam (5:1-6:8)

The Generations of Noah (6:9-11:9 – 10:1)

The Generations of Noah’s Sons (10:1-11:9)

The Generations of Shem (11:10-26)

The Generations of Terah (11:27-25:11)

The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)

The Generations of Isaac (25:12-35:29)

The Generations of Esau (36:1-37:1)

The Generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

Genesis 1-11 often seen as a section (Primeval history) – The overture to the rest of the Bible (Atkinson, BST, p9) - The call of Abraham a new stage (ch. 12 – Patriarchal history) – the promises to Abraham shape the rest of the Bible

NIV Proclamation Bible: The message of Genesis in a sentence: “The Creator God is faithful to his covenant promises and redeems humanity through the promised line, despite their sin and rebellion.”

Genesis 1 and 2

Deserves a sermon series!

V1, “the heavens and the earth” = could just be skies and land; heavens God’s place, earth, creation’s place; everything, two extremes and everything in between

V2, “Spirit”, or breath, or wind

The first article of the creed, “I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth”

The creation of all things *ex nihilo*, out of nothing

The Creator / creation distinction – God the uncreated Creator

God's power – he says the word, and creation springs into being – cf. King Charles, "Let that drain be unblocked!" – cf. Ancient Near Eastern Creation myths

Confidence in God and his promises – Israel's redeemer is the creator of all things

A Trinitarian reading of Genesis 1:1-3

John 1:1 – "In the beginning..." – A second Genesis – creation through the word – Genesis 1v3 and John 1v3

Cf. The Baptism of Christ - Mark 1:9-13 – Jesus a New Adam – A New Creation

The unity and order of creation provides a basis for valid scientific investigation – not chance or warring gods

Five great truths from Genesis 1-3 <http://marclloyd.blogspot.com/2023/01/parish-magazine-item-for-february-2023.html> - for Genesis 1 and 2:

- (1) God created the world. It belongs to him and is accountable to him, and has meaning and purpose and destiny.
- (2) God created the world good.
- (3) God made men and women to live in the world under his loving rule.

Not a modern scientific text – e.g. v3, light and days before sun and stars v14ff

On Genesis and evolution etc. see Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday (ed.s), *Four Views of the Historical Adam* (Zondervan, 2013)

Archbishop James Usher, *Annals of the Old Testament, deduced from the first origins of the world* (1650) dated creation to noon, October 23, 4004 BC. – not the Genesis writer's main concern! Not so much *when* or even *how* God made the world but *that* he made the world and *why*

Polemic against Ancient Near Eastern creation myths – sea monsters and stars as mere creatures not rival gods – 1v16, "he also made the stars"

A highly structured, patterned, poetic account (repetition, groupings of tens and sevens, chiasm, inclusion etc.):

Forming and filling – Forming (days 1-3); Filling (days 3-6)

Days 3 and 6 are highlighted and correspond because they have "God said" and "it was good" twice (vv10, 12, 25, 31)

The days correspond:

Day 1: light;	Day 4: the lights in the heavens
Day 2: sky and waters;	Day 5: birds and fish
Day 3: land and plants	Day 6: Land animals and plants for food

The repeated pattern of each day:

- (1) God commands – “And God said, let there be”
- (2) Creation obeys – “and there was”
- (3) God evaluates – “And God saw that it was good”
- (4) God names – “God called...”
- (5) Conclusion – “And there was evening and there was morning the ___ day”

Ian J. Vaillancourt, “It would be a shame to encounter Genesis 1 and never stand in awe of God.” (The Dawning of Redemption, p39)

The first building blocks of a symbolic world view – e.g. waters, chaos, uncreation, death, the nations (fish); clean and unclean animals and association with the dust / death; sun, moon and stars as rulers; day beginning with evening (see James Jordan, Through New Eyes)

Genesis 1 and 2 - Two complementary parallel accounts of creation

Source Criticism - The Documentary Hypothesis – two accounts combined? – 1:1-2:3, “Elohim” = God; 2:4-3:24, “Yahweh Elohim” (only here and in Exodus 9:30 in the Pentateuch) – The majestic powerful Creator God is also the personal covenant God

Genesis 1 (Zooms out): humanity as the climax of creation

the sixth day is given 140+ words; some days have fewer than 40; the next longest days, 3 and 4, have around 70 (chart in Vaillancourt, The Dawning of Redemption, p43)

6th day, not just “good” but “very good” (1v31)

Humanity as kingly

Genesis 2 (Zooms in): humanity at the centre of creation

Humanity as priestly

Humanity’s unique role in creation

1v26 – “us”

Royal – a plural of majesty - “we are a grandmother”

A relic of polytheism?

God addressing the heavenly court, angels (Isaiah 6:8) – are angels in the image of God?

The persons of the Trinity

1v26 – “the image of God”

Image and likeness probably refer to one thing not two

Some quality shared by God and humanity but not the rest of creation? E.g. reason, personality, free-will, self-consciousness, intelligence, soul / spirituality / capacity to relate to God

The task of representing God in the world, ruling the world under him – vice-regent – vice-gerent (v28) Egyptian and Assyrian texts speak of the king as the image of God – kingly rule

Jesus as the True and Ultimate Image of God (LXX *eikon*) of God (Colossians 1:15), the one who faithfully rules as the True Human Being, the world's true king

Jesus as a New Adam, the Son of God (Luke 3:38; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Hebrews 2:5-9 quoting Psalm 8)

1v26-28 – stewardship of creation a God-given responsibility – loving rule not selfish exploitative domination – implications for our care of creation

1v27 - Men and woman both / together in the image of God - for readers in a patriarchal society, radical countercultural teaching on the equal value of men and women

2v2 – sabbath – Exodus 20:11 (creation); cf. Deuteronomy 5:15 (redemption)

God timeless eternal and doesn't slumber or sleep, but from the point of view of creation, God had completed his work of creation, whilst of course continuing to sustain the universe
The goal of creation rest / worship – holiness, blessing

An endless seventh day? – No concluding formula as in 1v31, "there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day"

A picture of final eschatological eternal sabbath rest of the new creation? (Hebrews 4:1-11)

bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-1/ - some ? debatable but well worth watching – perhaps search "Genesis"; Genesis 1-11 Overview; bibleproject.com/explore/video/intro-spiritual-beings/ - and related content

2v11 - Humanity of the earth (from the dust, to work the ground), with the breath of life (1v30), formed and breathed into by God – created, but unique within creation

Zone of creations: Garden (cf. sanctuary, tabernacle, temple) – Land (cf. later, Israel) – Wilderness (cf. later, the world / nations)

The task of cultivating the land, taming the wilderness / world / converting the nations

Making earth more like heaven – the creation sinless but incomplete, immature – to be transformed from one degree of glory to another

The hope of the New Creation (this creation transformed and renewed, not just "heaven")

Garden of Eden as a mountain (Ezekiel 28:13-14) sanctuary / temple / tabernacle – water – trees – a special enclosed space at the centre of the created order (the centrality of church! Cult drives culture!) where God's presence is especially known

(Tree of Life & Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – next time?)

2vv10-14 - Mountain – the rivers flow out from it (Ezekiel 47; Zechariah 14; Revelation 22) –

A biblical theology of mountains (and high places) as a meeting point between earth and heaven - Mount Sinai, Zion

2:10-14 – gold, bdellium and onyx adorn the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 25:7; 1 Chronicles 29:2)

The golden candlestick / lampstand in the tabernacle / temple a stylised tree

Temple has wooden carvings of trees and flowers etc. creating a garden like atmosphere

2v15, “to take care” of the garden, “to serve / till / work / minister and keep / guard it”, the work of a priest / Levites to guard the tabernacle - Numbers 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chronicles 23:32; Ezekiel 44:14

3:24 – the Garden like the temple entered from the east – Ezekiel 40:6

Cf. 3v8 – the presence of God in the garden (as later in Tabernacle and Temple)

See the work of G. K. Beale e.g. JETS 48/1 (March 2005) 5–31, pp7-10

https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-1/48-1-pp005-031_JETS.pdf

Gender, sex and marriage

2v18 – “not good” – cf. the seven-fold refrain of chapter 1, “it was (very) good”

Why not?

Loneliness?! (To think marriage is the only antidote to loneliness is perhaps to put too much of a burden on it, and to devalue friendship. And what of the unmarried?)

Not good for the task God is giving humanity, not least because procreation will be needed

Men and women equal but different

2v18, 20 – “helper-suitable”, according to / like, the opposite / matching – suitable, complementary, corresponding rather than identical

“helper” usually used of The LORD as the helper of his people, Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 70:5 – no inferiority implied

Cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Proverbs 31:10-31

Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7-12 – the interdependence of men and women

Naming as an exercise of authority – 2v19-20 – God named creation in Genesis 1 – The naming of the woman, 2v23?; and the naming of Eve, 3v20, 16 – post fall authority tends to tyranny? – the battle of the sexes

2v21 – the woman closely related to the man, intended to be side by side with him as a companion – an ideal of harmony and intimacy

Matthew Henry: “Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

2v21 – Eve gains new life through the “death (sleep) and resurrection” of Adam – sacrificial? Augustine, “Adam’s sleep was a mystical foreshadowing of Christ’s death” – as blood and water flowed from his side, symbolising the sacraments by which the church is built, Eve was built from Adam’s side / rib. City of God 22.17. Similarly, Jerome, Homilies 66. ACCS p70f.

The Bible as a love story which begins and ends in a marriage (Revelation 21:2)

Yahweh’s marriage to Israel (Hosea – exile as divorce; Song of Songs)

Jesus the Bridegroom (John 2, 3v29, 4)

Jesus will kill the dragon and get the girl!

Ephesians 5:22-32 – The husband and wife relationship a picture of Jesus and the Church

2v23 – the first ever love song! – parallelism, assonance, word-play, chiasm, repetition, begins and ends on the word “this” (see e.g. Wenham, WBC, p70).

2v24 – a principle for marriage - leaving and cleaving – though in fact wider families often would have lived in close proximity, a relative forsaking, a new obligation and first priority – cf. Israel’s covenant with God, forsaking and sticking

Jesus quotes Genesis 2v24 in Matthew 10vv19-12

2v25 – a cliff hanger ending! – 3v7, 10f, 21

The harmonious relationships of God – Man – Woman – Creation about to be inverted? / disturbed

For next time: 8/2/23 – please read and reflect on Genesis 3

Some questions to ponder from Tom for next time:

1. In Session 1, Marc gave us a number of different ‘frames’ in which to read a text (e.g. Canonical Criticism, Allegorical, Typological, Historical, alongside other Ancient Near Eastern texts.) Which of these might be useful ways of ‘framing’ Genesis 3? (if you are interested you can look up the *Atrahasis Epic*, or the *Epic of Gilgamesh*)
2. How does Paul’s use of this chapter inform our use of it? Romans 5:12 ‘Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned’
3. When does ‘the fall’ happen in the passage?
4. Bonus reading for the really keen – Augustine *City of God* Book XIV particularly Ch. 11. Is this still a useful way of thinking about the fall?