

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Genesis

Primeval Prologue

--Structure

- The Book of Genesis is organized around 10 *toledoth* (), translated “generations” or “account.”
 - 2:4—“The generations of the heavens and the earth.”
 - 5:1—“The generations of Adam.”
 - 6:9—“The generations of Noah.”
 - 10:1—“The generations of the sons of Noah.”
 - 11:10—“The generations of Shem.”
 - 11:27—“The generations of Terah.”
 - 25:12—“The generations of Ishmael.”
 - 25:19—“The generations of Isaac.”
 - 36:1, 9—“The generations of Esau.”
 - 37:2—“The generations of Jacob.”

--In this structure we can see the major divisions: creation, Adam’s family, Noah’s family and the ark, and then the call of Abram and the patriarchs.

--Theological Themes

--Creation—

- God is the creator. *Bara* (בָּרָא) is only used with God as subject.
 - A single God creating the entire universe sets the OT apart from other ANE documents.
 - The creation is orderly and planned by God, esp. in Genesis 1, unlike the chaotic work of the polytheistic gods of Mesopotamia. Genesis 1 shows an orderly process of creation, nothing happening by chance.
- Humanity is the apex of creation. At the climax of creation, man is created.
 1. Man is created in “God’s image.”
 - In a sense, humanity contains the “essence” of God, enabling us to represent God in the creation & to serve Him & have relationship w/Him (through conscience, self-awareness, & spiritual discernment).
 2. Man is given dominion over creation.
 3. Man is given a special companion, woman. This shows the innate importance of humanity to God. Woman is specially created from man’s body for intimate relationship.
- Creation is good. In Genesis 1, God announced that His creation is good. In Genesis 2, the man and woman are placed in a beautiful, idyllic garden. But if this picture is true, then what happened. No one could legitimately say that the world as it exists is “good.”

--Sin—

- The origin of sin—
 - Eve and Adam fall from their idyllic life when they listen to the serpent’s temptation, which questions God’s word and care.
- The results of sin—
 - Adam, Eve, & the serpent are judged in the garden. (See below.)

--Humanity falls into a downward spiral of sin, from Adam, to Cain, to Lamech, and then to the days of Noah, when everyone is wicked.

--Judgment—

--Judgment in Eden

--Man's primary relationships are all damaged (w/ God, woman, and the land). Adam will have to toil over the land. The woman will suffer in childbirth. Man & woman will strive for power. And God's intimacy is removed when they are removed from the garden.

--Judgment with a flood

--As sin spirals seemingly out of control, God decided to destroy the world with a flood. In fact, God says that He is sorry he created humanity.

--Judgment at Babel

--When humanity attempts to organize themselves and reach the place of God, He scattered them in land and language. After the perfect creation, sin appears to have destroyed humanity's only hope for life with God. But . . .

--Grace—

--Grace in Eden

--God showed grace by caring for the needs of Adam & Eve. (He also showed grace by caring for Cain after his murder of Abel.)

--Grace after a flood

--God makes a covenant with Noah to never destroy the earth with a flood again. This is the 1st covenant in the OT. (Some see a covenant with Adam, although the word is not used there.)

--Grace at Babel

--God calls a new man & family to be His people. In a sense, he replaces Adam with Abram. Abram will be the father of God's chosen people, the people through whom ultimate grace will be shown.

Patriarchal History

--Structure

--*Toledoth* of Terah (11:27-25:11)

--This is primarily the history of Abram/Abraham. It begins with the account of Terah leading his family from Ur to Haran & ends with Abraham's death.

--It includes

--the call & covenant of Abram,

--Abram's journeys to & in Canaan,

--Lot's experiences,

--Ishmael's birth, and

--the promise, birth, marriage, & near sacrifice of Isaac.

--*Toledoth* of Ishmael (25:12-25:18)

--*Toledoth* of Isaac (25:19-35:29)

--This is primarily the history of Isaac's sons, Jacob & Esau. It begins with Rebekah's barrenness & the birth of twin sons & ends with the death of Isaac.

--In between, of course, are Esau's forfeiting of the birthright, Jacob's theft of the blessing, Jacob's travels to and sojourn in Paddan-Aram, Jacob's marriages & children, Jacob's reuniting with Esau, and Jacob's encounters with God.

--Note especially the contrast between Abraham & Jacob. The former is a "paradigm of faith," while Jacob is a model of "guile and self-reliance" (*OTS*, 49-50). Not until his "wrestling with God" (Gen. 32:22-32) does Jacob appear as humbled before God.

--*Toledoth* of Esau (36:1-43)

--Esau, also called Edom, settled with his family at Mt. Seir, which is the land south of Canaan, where Edom does appear in later narratives.

--*Toledoth* of Jacob (37:1-50:26)

--This is the account of Jacob's family, with most of the material taken up with the story of Joseph.

--The Joseph story, esp. the core in Gen. 39-47, reads like a coherent, single narrative, very much unlike the earlier material of Genesis, which appears as a somewhat disjointed composite. This may suggest that the Joseph narrative was popular in certain circles and was remembered as a whole. When it was inserted into Genesis (by Moses or others?), the inner coherence remained intact.

--Note also the interplay between Joseph & Judah, which may explain the inclusion of Genesis 38 in the middle of the story. The later tribes of Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh) and Judah would continue throughout Israel's history to be the major players, sometimes together and sometimes at odds with one another.

--**Theological Themes**--

--Election and Promises of God

--God's word of grace in light of the judgment at Babel is the call of Abram. Here God's redemptive plan begins in a somewhat humble fashion, one family moving as landless nomads to Canaan.

--But the promise was not humble: land, nation, name, & blessing to the whole earth. This incredible promise must have seemed both exciting and confusing to Abram. He had a wife, but no children. He had property, but no land. But still he followed God.

--The promises are reaffirmed to Isaac & Jacob. Jacob seems to grasp his own position as heir at Bethel as he wrestles with God. He perseveres and "prevails," which is a repeated action in Israel's history (i.e. the need to wrestle w/God and w/enemies, to persevere, and to prevail when they submit to God's leadership).

--Interestingly enough, Genesis ends with the promises unfulfilled; in fact ironically Genesis ends with Jacob's family in Egypt. Of course, even the Pentateuch ends with the promises unfulfilled at the borders of Moab and Canaan.

--Faith and Righteousness

--Were the patriarchs monotheistic? Abram is pictured as leaving behind his polytheistic ways to follow Yahweh, the only true God. There is no mention of other gods (except in the case of Rachel), however there is also no definitive statement of monotheistic faith.

--We could at least call the patriarchs “proto-monotheistic,” if they were not true monotheists as we understand the term. Remember that their culture would have believed in hundreds of gods and goddesses.

--The patriarchs’ new God (Yahweh) has no consort, which would be very unique in the ANE.

--Whatever we say, the movement of Abraham and his faith in only this one God is unique.

--Righteousness before God comes from “faith” or “faithfulness,” rather than by living up to a set of norms. This suggests that relationship with God is the priority for this new faith of Abraham.

--God is working through Abraham and his family to reestablish the relationship that was broken in Eden. As we know, that process of reconciliation would last for almost 2000 years until Jesus came to complete the work.

--Patriarchal faith is based on the promises of God.

--That explains his willingness to take Isaac to the altar of sacrifice. He had learned that God would supply his needs if he would believe His promises. Only in radical and complete faith can any follower of God see the miracles of God’s provision. This was the lesson that Jacob had to learn, that God was the provider.

--The Joseph story has as its theme the provision of God when his followers trust in him. Joseph lived in faithfulness to God and listened and told His words in various situations. God’s miraculous provision for Israel was the outcome of Joseph’s faith.

--Covenant

--Definition

--1. A binding agreement=treaty or contract=between two parties. It binds both parties.

--2. That which defines a relationship, more from family & kinship circles than from legal circles.

--God’s Covenant with Abraham

--1. Solemn ceremony of enactment in Gen. 15. Sacrifice was a common part of the ceremony of ratification of a covenant. Walking between the two halves of the sacrificial animals was also normal, but here only God binds himself? Does that mean that this is a unilateral covenant with only God bound?

--2. Circumcision was required of Abraham. This act for all males was to be a sign of their covenant with God. They were set apart as God’s people by their circumcision.

--3. Abraham received his name. He is no longer “exalted father” (אַבְרָם) but “father of many” (Abraham--אַבְרָהָם). The covenant is built upon God’s promises.