

GENESIS

A THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB

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THE POINT OF GENESIS

Genesis is the story of a new beginning. The word “genesis” (*Greek γένεσις, Hebrew תְּחִלָּת*) means “beginning.” The book starts out with an account of the *first* beginning – the creation of the physical universe in which we live. But the real point of the book is the *second* beginning.

The two creations have parallel ideas. Both of them show the principal character – God – doing something that only he can do: creating out of nothing. Both of them show the *ways* he went about creating. Both of them show the other main character in the story – man. In both accounts we learn about what God had in mind when he made this special man.

In the first Creation God reviews what he did to make our world, and what he made all of us to be. And he also exposes the terrible reality that brought the Creation to a standstill, which made it impossible for God or man to continue on with the original Plan of Creation. At this point God must either destroy the world, and man with it, to regain his glory, to effectively wash away the pollution, to erase the stain of sin and death in his beautiful world – or begin making a new creation to replace the old one.

God chose the second route. On the surface it doesn't *look* like a new creation; God simply chose an obscure property owner in the Middle East and sent him to the land of Canaan, with the promise that he would make the man and his descendants “a great nation.” Thus begins the story of Abraham. But here is where the differences between the two creations start to show themselves. In the first two chapters God describes how he made the physical world; but starting in Genesis 12, the story begins of how God makes the *new Creation* that will replace the old – and that story runs all the way to the book of Revelation.

The new Creation will entail all sorts of ideas, which is why it requires the entire Bible to sufficiently flesh out the details. But here in Genesis the story of Abraham and his Family is the crucial beginning point. Like a second Adam, God opens Abraham's eyes to a new spiritual world and enables him to live in that world *through faith*. We even have the description of this new spiritual world – which is laid out for us in four key concepts, the Covenant Promises. And like the first man, Abraham passes on his special inheritance to his descendants; they too, as they walk in the faith of their father Abraham, will be enabled to live in the presence of God in his spiritual world. But, in contrast to the first option of totally destroying this world, God intends to *re-create* sinners, bring them back from the dead, and resurrect them into new life.

Adam failed God because he turned to his own lusts, to live in sin, and therefore died under God's Judgment. Abraham, however, will be given the essential characteristic of righteousness through faith that Adam rejected. This righteousness (the details of which are spelled out in other places in the Bible – i.e., the Law of Moses) is the Family characteristic that reconciles God to man and enables man to please God. It is key to the new life.

And finalizing the parallels between the two creations, Adam was made “in God’s image,” which is a way of saying that he had a special relationship with God: God was a Father, and Adam was his son in this world, privileged and enabled to carry out his Father’s will on earth. Since the first son rebelled, God now turns to Abraham and makes him his Heir. Essentially Abraham and all of his descendants are now new *sons of God* with much more to look forward to than what was given to Adam.

The story is put in physical terms, in the context of the Middle East 4000 years ago – but Abraham and his descendants were heirs to, and preparing for, another world (which they knew about), not this world. Abraham’s Family – which we now know from the New Testament is the Body of Christ – is destined to live in God’s world, with the Father in Heaven, and to experience him as the Eternal Son does. Israel’s beginning was only a sort of temporary cocoon to prepare them for the eternal world of God. Israel was God’s Firstborn Son and this unique relationship was first established in the Covenant. In other words, the God of the Trinity is at work here in Genesis: Father and Son and Spirit.

As you can see, there’s a lot on our agenda here. Genesis lays out the foundation for the new creation by following the lives of the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – and watching God bring out the essential elements of the Covenant (as he did with the first Creation account) so that all the children of Abraham can know what it is that we have inherited through him, the kind of world that we now live in by the Spirit. By the time we finish Genesis we will know the essentials about God the Father, his Son and Heir, and the Inheritance which the Father promises to give his Son. We will know who is God’s Heir, how he becomes the Son, and what he receives for his Inheritance.

So if you also are a child of Abraham, this is the story of *your* inheritance.

And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29)

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