

Georges Creek Baptist Church 3-Year Bible Read-through

Week 1, January 5-11—Genesis 1-11

We begin at the beginning. And what do we find at the beginning? God! The one true God was already there at the beginning! Simply by speaking powerful words, he creates and orders everything that exists in six days. What majesty! What power! Reflect on the sovereignty of God from these first chapters. God is King of all!

And did you see the climax of his creation? Human beings bear the image of God. With that image imprinted on their souls, Adam and Eve are designed to embody God's rule over God's world as they rule as representative king and queen. They do this all while enjoying fellowship with their King, seeing him in his beauty. Do you feel a pull on your heart to have such fellowship with your Maker?

But what a tragedy to find that fellowship rudely interrupted by the self-exalting foolishness of our first parents as they give in to the seductions of the serpent. They were meant to guard the garden, but instead they do the unthinkable and let God's enemy in. They shattered the sweetness of friendship they were meant to have.

Yet God is merciful. He promises in Genesis 3:15 a future victory over the serpent, a promise ultimately kept in the victory of Jesus Christ. A new creation will one day come through him.

But until then the effects of sin slowly spread, beginning with brother murdering brother, and moving towards worldwide corruption that deserves worldwide judgment in the flood. But hope remains! God's salvation is seen in a huge boat carrying the flawed family of Noah. A new start to creation follows the receding waters. But then the new world looks just like the old, with human self-confidence on full display at Babel.

How will God's purposes for creation ever come about? Enter Abraham, stage right.

Week 2, January 12-18—Genesis 12-21

As we step into a new week of Bible-reading we meet Abram/Abraham. Abraham's entrance onto the scene of God's Story is filled with hope. If you look closely you'll realize that Abraham is promised the very things that the people grasped for at Babel: they tried to get greatness and blessing in their own power, but God graciously promises simply to give it to Abraham. These chapters show us several key moments in history when God revealed to Abraham his plan to just give him some astounding gifts. And at the heart of all these promises we also find Abraham basically saying, "Okay!" In other words, when Abraham believes God (Gen. 15:6) it is the recognition that Abraham has done nothing and can do nothing to receive these blessings, but rather God is simply going to give them.

But as you will notice as you read this week, Abraham is far from a worthy candidate for receiving such blessings. There's nothing great about him! When God calls him, he's classified as being one of the "ungodly" (see Romans 4:5), he lies about Sarah, and he even resorts to sexual immorality with Hagar in trying to bring about God's plan in his own ridiculous way!

And yet God covers Abraham's life with grace.

In the process we are learning that the promises made to Abraham are the way that God is undoing the devastating mess that Adam made. This is how God will establish his kingdom (By the way, God's kingdom = God's rule and reign. In other words, try not to think of God's kingdom only as a place). And the key passage is Genesis 15. Notice that the Lord symbolically passes through the slaughtered animals as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch. As scholar Bruce Waltke observes, "To walk between the carcasses is to submit oneself to the fate of the slaughtered animals as a penalty for covenant breaking." Clearly a foreshadowing of the punishment that Jesus, the Son of God, would one day take on himself! The fulfillment of the covenant depends upon God and his grace alone.

Week 3 January 19-25—Genesis 22-30

One thing to notice as you read through Genesis is God's presence and power on every page. Even if there's no mention of specific actions that God performs, his power is still there.

In the reading for this week we witness the passing of the torch from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. But in the process we are stunned when we read about God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac! How can this be right? And isn't Isaac the one through the promises will be fulfilled?

Author and scholar Tom Schreiner helps us here. First, he says, the Lord tested Abraham (Gen. 22:16-18). As a result of Abraham's proven faith in God the blessings promised to him were confirmed. Second, Abraham's faith was such that he was confident that he and Isaac both would return from the place of sacrifice, since he said, "The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you" (Gen. 22:5). The author of Hebrews says essentially the same thing in Hebrews 11:17-19: Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead if he was sacrificed. And all along the whole scene anticipates and points forward to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son who was sacrificed but then raised from the dead!

And so Isaac lives, and the story of God's great promises continues on through his life and into the life of Jacob and his sons. Through their stories the promise of offspring, land, and universal blessing continue to be passed down. And all this despite Isaac's lies (Gen. 26), Jacob's deception (Gen. 27), and Laban's cruelty (Gen. 29-30).

Week 4, January 26-February 1—Genesis 31-38

The story of the life of Jacob continues with some of the ideas we've already seen since the fall of man in Genesis 3. We especially see the threat that exists against God's people. In chapter 31 there's a threat against Jacob from Laban, and in the next chapter there's an apparent threat coming from Esau. It's like the struggle between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman, Eve. What will happen to Jacob and his descendants, the people of promise?

The wrestling match with God provides the answer. As Jacob prevails (Gen. 32:18) he is given a new name: Israel, which means something like "he struggled (with) God." Victory over the serpent will come through this man named Israel.

Another threat emerges with the horrible incident involving Dinah, daughter of Jacob. The actions of Dinah's brothers are wicked and murderous, and yet God works through their evil actions to bring about his own good purposes: the preservation of his people from the false gods of Shechem.

In the end the only explanation for Israel's preservation is the intervention of God himself, even as a terror from God comes over the people who would otherwise attack Israel and his sons (Gen. 35:5). God's commitment and covenant are what allows Jacob and his small family to persevere despite being outnumbered and susceptible to attack.

In chapter 37 the storyline turns in a new direction which will continue through the end of Genesis. And in chapter 38 a brief inset in the story occurs where the wickedness of Judah and his sons becomes evident. Such actions would undercut the promises of God if it weren't for the cunning actions of Tamar. God doesn't morally approve of Judah's actions, but he works through them for his own holy purpose.