

BIB103 OT1: Creation and Covenants

Unit 1c Genesis as the Foundation

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John: You know, George, as we think about the breadth and a lot of depth as well to the Pentateuch, what I really want to do today as we talk through this is think about not only the whole five-book section that we're going to be sharing about, but also some of the real significant aspects of what takes place in the Pentateuch and the impact that it has in the way that we live our lives currently. So let's kind of start with Genesis.

George: Okay.

John: What do you feel are some of the most impacting principles that are laid out in Genesis that affect the way that we live out our lives in today's culture?

George: Well, in my opinion, Genesis is really the key to the whole thing because it sets forth God's relationship to man, and then conversely, man's relationship to God. So in Genesis, we see God as creator. And so we see God, for no other reason than the good pleasure of his own will, he creates the world. He creates man. He creates man in his image. And man is therefore bound to this relationship with God. Whether he chooses to be or not, he's in relationship with God. He's accountable to God. He is called to uphold God's standards. He's called to obey in spite of his own desires. And so Genesis sets forth that relationship that for Christians today is the basis of everything.

John: Yeah.

George: We should be people who, first and foremost, no matter what we do, no matter where we find ourselves in our culture, no matter what kind of job we have, no matter what our economic status is, no matter what our family situation is, first and foremost, as a Christian, I have to think about what is my relationship to God? Where do I stand in relationship to him, and as a Christian, more specifically to Jesus Christ, God's son?

John: Yeah.

George: And so Genesis to me in the Pentateuch, especially in just the first few chapters of Scripture, sets forth that entire relationship and calls all of us to account right at the beginning of the Bible to say, "Am I in this relationship? Do I view God for who he is?"

John: Yeah. And that leads into some really key doctrines that are actually started in Genesis, because a lot of people, I think, sometimes think of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus almost as irrelevant to the greater breadth of Scripture, whereas there's some really strong doctrines that are laid out very distinctively and foundationally in the Pentateuch and Genesis in particular. What would be a couple of doctrines that you feel are very evident as you study especially the Book of Genesis?

George: Yeah. Well, from a theological standpoint, the doctrine of God. Almost everything we see about the doctrine of God, maybe save the Trinity and some of those other things that we see more clearly as the story of Scripture unfolds.

John: Right.

George: But certainly the doctrine of what we typically call theology proper in theologian speak is laid out even within the first couple of chapters of Genesis.

John: Yeah.

George: So things about God that we learn right away. Number one: God is eternal. Genesis 1:1 begins with “In the beginning, God...” It does not prove his existence in some sort of rationalistic kind of way. It begins with his existence. And the Bible tells us that God created everything that is not God. And so there’s God at the beginning and he’s outside of time. He’s transcendent. He stands over and above. One of the second things we see about God in Genesis is that he is not dependent. In other words, he doesn’t need anything else to exist.

John: Right.

George: That is so crucial to our doctrine of God. A lot of people talk about a belief in God today, right? In our world. They talk about “Well, I believe in a higher power.”

John: Right.

George: Or “I believe in some kind of divine being of some sort.” But in Scripture, our God, the God who has revealed himself in his word, he doesn’t need anything else to exist.

John: Yeah.

George: He doesn’t need my speech about him to exist. He doesn’t need to be in a world or an environment to exist.

John: Right.

George: Everything else that is not God is dependent on God for its existence.

John: Yeah.

George: So when we think about our theology of God, who God is, what is he like, what is his character, those are two of the first, most basic, fundamental things. They’re hard to understand because we get a little philosophical in this discussion, and yet it’s important.

John: Yeah.

George: I think we need to do a better job as Christians understanding who God is in his transcendence above all of his creation.

John: Well, you think of the fabric of mankind wouldn’t exist without God.

George: Right.

John: And it’s so hard because we have these finite minds and we’re trying sometimes to really get God. And that’s where some of the faith aspects come into it and for mankind to realize a lot of times, when they talk about this higher being or God, they don’t really understand. To some extent, they want a God they can control or put in a box. And that’s where the doctrine of God is so key because, as you said, it states so clearly that God is really...he’s outside of us.

George: Yes.

John: He doesn’t need us. We are dependent on him, not the other way around.

George: Right.

John: Now, do you feel like when we talk about the doctrine of God, in Genesis in particular, are there any pictures of Christ that you feel like we find in the Book of Genesis?

George: Well, certainly I think as God relates to man. We could have a God. It would be possible apart from Revelation in Scripture. One could conceive of a God who makes the world and then kind of walks away from it and just allows it to function on its own. That's what we call deism.

John: Right.

George: Many of our founding fathers of our country were deistic in their view of God. They believed God created the world and then kind of walked away and did something else. But we don't get that picture of our God in Scripture. He is presupposed to exist. He transcends all of his creation. And yet within his creation, he continues to be involved in his creation. He cares for his creation. He provides for his creation.

John: Right.

George: And we find hints of this in Genesis 2 where God communicates with man seemingly more than once, on a regular basis. And certainly by the time we get to Genesis 3, we realize that God had been communicating with man on what would seem to be a very regular basis, daily or something like that.

John: Right.

George: And so God is intricately involved in the very things that he has made, and God does not choose to be distant. And to me, this pictures everything that God did in Jesus Christ.

John: Right.

George: In the person and work of Jesus Christ, God appears.

John: Right.

George: Do we want to know who God is? Yes. We look at Jesus.

John: Right.

George: And so in Genesis, while we don't have an unfolding of a doctrine of Christ, so to speak, and we're not really introduced to the man Christ Jesus, we see incarnational kinds of attributes of God from the very beginning.

John: Right. Yeah. And that brings the whole aspect of man into it because, obviously, as you stated, God doesn't need man. God created man.

George: That's right.

John: But there is the doctrine of man that we see in Scripture that we have to wrestle with to know our part in the plan and to know the significance that God has for his creation.

George: Right.

John: Can you share a little bit with us about that aspect of theology?

George: Yeah. So just as the doctrine of God is set forth for us, I think, in Genesis 1 and 2, I think the doctrine of man is right there.

John: Yeah.

George: We see toward the end of Genesis 1 that God creates man in his own image.

John: Right.

George: There is nowhere else in Scripture where anything else is created in God's image other than man.

John: Right.

George: Not even angels.

John: Yeah.

George: And so man has this special relationship with God. And while there are all kinds of views about what does it mean for man to be created in the image of God, whatever it means in its totality, it at least means at least three or four things.

John: Right.

George: One, that man has a unique capacity above and beyond anything else in the plant or animal kingdoms to relate to God.

John: Yeah.

George: Secondly, God creates man in his image and gives man this personhood, this status of being a person. You can't say that about anything else in creation.

John: Right.

George: So that's a key component of what it means to be created in God's image. And then third, at the very least, God doesn't just have a relationship with man, but now man, as being in God's image, has this unique ability apart from sin to please God, to glorify him, to live out God's will.

John: Right.

George: In Genesis 1 and 2, it's in the Garden of Eden and other places in Scripture. And for us, of course, it's in everything we do.

John: Right.

George: Paul tells us in Colossians 3:17, "Do all to the glory of God." That is not possible apart from redemption. But even prior to redemption, it wouldn't be possible without man being made in God's image.

John: Yeah. And what I love about it is not only does it establish who God is and who man is and the function he has, but then he even really establishes for us what the cultural fabric should look like with man and woman and God's plan for marriage, the way that we would call marriage today. Share a little

bit about where you see that intricate tie-in about the way that God establishes the actual cultural units that we know of as the family today way back in the Book of Genesis.

George: Right. So in Genesis 2, God says that it is not good for man to be alone. Everything else in creation seems to have a partner, seems to have something compatible to itself to reproduce, to live in community, those kinds of things. And so God intends from the very beginning that man should not be alone.

John: Right.

George: And so he creates woman out of man for intimacy, for fulfillment, for completion, for all of those things. And right toward the end of Genesis 2, we get the foundational basis for what we as Christians believe marriage should be.

John: Right.

George: And that is a union between one man and one woman forever.

John: Right.

George: And it is characterized by physical, emotional, spiritual intimacy, all reflecting who God is in his being as a relational being.

John: And it shows this amazing love over and over again, but from the foundation of the Book of Genesis. And I love, especially we live in such a child-centric culture, and yet when you look at the way that God established family, he said when he created man and woman and made them one, it was very good. And what I try to really make sure that people understand as I teach them is that being a husband and wife, you are a family. Children expand that family, but it doesn't define that family. So again, when you look at the big picture of God not needing us but choosing to create us, and then you look at this amazing plan he has for mankind, and even in our sinfulness, as we'll find out later in the Scriptures, his plan of redemption in that. And it's introduced by him having a plan in Genesis 3 that Jesus would come. And then we see that on top of that, he creates this amazing fabric of "Hey, as you live life, you're not going to be alone. I'm going to provide a helper." And then the beauty of expanding many families even to other aspects of life is just incredible and shows us amazing love that God has for us.

George: That's right. And God wants us to be fulfilled in his created order.

John: Amen.

George: Pre-fall, everything in creation was perfect.

John: Right.

George: It was good. And then after the creation of man and the union of man and woman, it's very good.

John: Right.

George: And so as Christians, we should not downplay the significance of family, of culture, of being in this world. Sometimes we get this monastic perception that creation is kind of less than God's best.

John: Right.

George: And certainly because of the fall, creation is flawed and fallen because of what we have done in our sin. But fundamentally, creation, as God has made it, is good.

John: Right.

George: It is God's best.

John: Amen.

George: And it is for us to enjoy. It really is. And so you're right. The family unit that God has made is meant to be there for our fulfilment and completion.