

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY-- IN CREATION, HISTORY AND REDEMPTION

I. PRIMEAL HISTORY (1-11)

Four Outstanding Events

THE CREATION-- Divine sovereignty in the physical creation.
God's eternal priority.

THE FALL-- Divine sovereignty in human probation.
God's moral authority.

The FLOOD-- Divine sovereignty in historical retribution.
God's judicial severity.

THE BABEL CRISIS-- Divine sovereignty in racial distribution.
God's governmental supremacy.

II. PATRIARCHAL HISTORY (12-50)

Four Outstanding Persons

ABRAHAM-- Divine sovereignty in election.
Supernatural call.

ISAAC-- Divine sovereignty in election.
Supernatural birth.

JACOB-- Divine sovereignty in election.
Supernatural care.

JOSEPH-- Divine sovereignty in direction.
Supernatural control.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Because it stands first there is a natural tendency to view it as introductory to what follows. However, it is more than just introductory. It is also explanatory. In Genesis we have all that is later developed in scripture. J. Sidlow Baxter says, "The major themes of the Bible may be compared to great rivers ever deepening ever broadening as they flow. And it is true to say that all these rivers (Major themes) have their rise or beginning in Genesis." A brief comparison between Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and Revelation, the last book of the Bible, will help us to see this. First, note some similarities between the two.

In both we have a (1) new beginning, (2) a new order, (3) the tree of life, (4) the river, (5) the bride, and (6) the same spiritual ideals. Then note some completions of Genesis in Revelation (1) the Garden in Genesis gives place to the city in Revelation (Note: Even through much intervenes between Genesis and Revelation God never abandoned the Eden Ideal for man in the Holy City come down to from Heaven the Eden Ideal of holiness finally triumphs). (2) The one man Adam has become a race, (3) in Genesis we see human sin in its beginnings in Revelation, we see it in its full and final development, in the Harlot, the False Prophet, the Beast, and the Dragon. (4) In Genesis we find sin causing physical death on earth! In Revelation we see sin issuing in the dread darkness of the second death. In the beyond (5) in Genesis we have the Sentence passed to Satan. In Revelation we have the Sentence executed (6) in Genesis we are given the First promise of our coming Savior and Salvation (Gen. 3:13-15). In Revelation we see that promise in its final and glorious fulfillment (Rev. 21). (7) Genesis causes anticipation Revelation effects realization. Although limited this comparison helps us to understand Genesis is not only introductory but, is bound inseparably with all the other books of the Bible. So, if we are going to truly comprehend their revelation we must begin here.

Structure and Contents

Genesis is divided into two major parts.

Part one covers chapters 1 through 11. Part 2 covers chapters 12 through 50. Each part is arranged according to a significant fourfold plan. In part one, we have four outstanding events (1) the creation, (2) the fall, (3) the flood, and (4) the Babel Crisis (Note: In part one we see the process of degeneration, in part two we see the process of regeneration, we will consider this later).

In part two we have four outstanding persons (1) Abraham, (2) Isaac, (3) Jacob, and (4) Joseph. The entire contents of Genesis are arranged around and are in relation to these four pivotal events in part one, and four pivotal persons in part two. Seeing these pivotal events and characters thus thrown into relief we discover the truth which is to be learned before all others in our dealing with God, in our interpretation of history and our study of the Bible is namely the Divine Sovereignty. God is the absolute sovereign one. He alone is the Divine Sovereign. This is the central significance of Genesis.

As we consider carefully the four great events of part one, and the four great figures of part two, we see that they constitute an impressive demonstration of God's sovereignty. In the first of the four events in part one; we see God's sovereignty in the Physical Creation. In the second, the Fall, we see God's sovereignty in Human Probation. In the third, the Flood, we see God's sovereignty in Historical Retribution, in the fourth, the Babel Crisis; we see God's sovereignty in Racial Distribution. In these four great events we see God's sovereignty in His eternal priority, His moral authority, His judicial severity, and His governmental supremacy.

Turning to part two, we see Divine Sovereignty in regeneration. The process of regeneration, in part two, stands in sharp contrast to the process of degeneration in part one. From Adam to Abraham we witness the process of degeneration. First, in the Individual: Adam, then his Family: Cain and his descendants. Then the Nations: the antediluvian civilization and finally persisting through the race as such at the Babel Crisis. But as we turn to part two we become aware that God has intervened. In these post flood patriarchs we see regeneration operating first in the Individual: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then in the Family: the sons of Jacob. Then the Nation: Israel. All with the view to the ultimate regeneration of the race.

In Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we see divine sovereignty in "Election." Abraham, although the youngest, is chosen in preference to his two older brothers. Isaac is chosen in preference to Ishmael, the older son of Abraham. Jacob, although second to Esau, is

chosen in preference to his brother. Running through it all we see the Principal of Divine Election. God, choosing whom He will in sovereign Grace. Then in the wonderful biography of Joseph we see the sovereignty of God in direction in the overruling and infallible directing of all happenings in his life, however seemingly contrary to the predetermined end.

In the case of Abraham, we see sovereign election expressed by a “supernatural call” (see Gen. 12:1-3). In the case of Isaac, we see sovereign election expressed by supernatural birth. Abraham has said, “Oh that Ishmael might live before thee” (Gen. 17: 18). But no! When Abraham is one hundred and Sarah is ninety years old the miracle babe Isaac is born. In the case of Jacob, we see sovereign election in supernatural care. First, God saves him from Esau’s knife, then meets him at Bethel, prospers him despite Laban’s guile; saves him from the revenge of his brother, who comes to meet him with a band of four hundred men. And so it goes until at last when Jacob is dying, he blessed young Manasseh and Ephraim, saying, “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads.” Finally, in Joseph, we see divine sovereignty in direction exhibited in supernatural control. God causing all happenings in his life contribute to the predestined issue. So, in these pivotal events and pivotal figures we come to understand that the significance of the writing as a whole is the “Divine Sovereignty.”

Practical Lessons

Before we leave this wonderful book, let’s consider just one of the many practical lessons found here.

In the four pivotal, persons of part two, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, we see exhibited in a typical way, the qualities and characteristics of the regenerated life. They show us those forms of life which are known after we are regenerated by the work of Christ on Calvary.

In Abraham, we see the life of faith he stands out as the supreme exemplar of the faith life we as Christians are called to live. In him, we see the man of faith going forth, trusting in the divine guidance, believing the divine promises, receiving the divine assurance, inheriting the divine blessing, undergoing sharp testing, and despite occasional failures, being “accounted righteous” through faith, and being called “the Friend of God”

In Isaac, we see the life of sonship. The Genesis account clearly puts the emphasis upon Isaac’s unique sonship. He is the son of special promise, of special birth (supernatural birth), of special preciousness, the only son of his mother, and the only heir of his father,

dwelling in the land of inheritance, biding by the wells of water, with many joys and few conflicts. In Isaac, we see typified the privileges and joys of sonship.

In Jacob we see the life of service. Jacob's is that life which (as at his birth), "Takes hold with hand." Jacob is the worker throughout, busy with his hands. Here is untiring service. There are mistakes in method and manner, yet there is blessing, for at heart the motive is good.

Finally in Joseph, we see the life of suffering and glory. Here faith, sonship, and service are blended in something deeper and grander. Here Egypt (type of the world and the sense-life), which had been a snare to Abraham and Isaac, is completely ruled. Here is the fellowship of Christ suffering and the power of his resurrection. Here is the character of the regenerated made perfect through sufferings. Here is suffering and reigning with Christ, and being "glorified together."

These then, are the marked characteristics exhibited by the four pivotal persons of part two.

Abraham- The Life of Faith

Isaac- The Life of Sonship

Jacob- The Life of Service

Joseph- The Life of Suffering and Glory

Truly there is fascinating type teaching here: If we study these four characters in this light, they become rich with suggestions that fill out our ideas of the great truths which they typify.

For instance, if we were merely told, in so many words, that following our spiritual desire and choice and renewal there follows a life of faith, sonship, service, suffering and glory, how limited would our idea of these things be! But, when we see them illustrated and exemplified in these living and fascinating characters, our understanding of the truths they typify is incalculably enriched.

May God bless you as you study this wonderful book!