

Delighting in the Old Testament

Through Christ and for Christ

Jason S. DeRouchie

Foreword by Steven J. Wellum

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Table 6.1 Seven ways to see and celebrate Christ in the Old Testament

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1. Consider the Old Testament's salvation-historical trajectories.
 2. See the Old Testament's direct messianic predictions.
 3. Recognize similarities and contrasts within salvation history.
 4. Identify Old Testament types.
 5. Revel in Yahweh's identity and activity.
 6. Note the Old Testament's ethical ideals.
 7. Use the Old Testament to instruct others.
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While overviewing Genesis's messianic hope, this chapter highlights examples of each of these seven ways.

Introduction

In Genesis, Yahweh introduces his kingdom program by highlighting the need for universal blessing and how he would restore it. Not only does the book clarify the world's problem (sin, curse), it also instills hope for the solution. Genesis describes the initial two KINGDOM stages: Kickoff and Rebellion (creation, fall, flood) and Instrument of Blessing (the patriarchs). In the process, it also details the initial two major biblical covenants: the Adamic/Noahic covenant with creation and the Abrahamic covenant.

While Exodus through Deuteronomy establish the old Mosaic covenant and detail Israel's calling as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:5–6), Genesis clarifies the global context of Israel's calling and the hope of the male royal deliverer. Sin has resulted in worldwide curse, which gave rise to a global flood catastrophe. Abraham and his offspring—climaxing in a single, male, royal descendant in the line of Judah—would be the means for Yahweh's blessing to overcome the curse.

Arrangement and Thought Flow

Genesis opens with a preface in 1:1–2:3 that highlights God's commission to his male and female image bearers to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Genesis then comprises ten units, each with a heading including the phrase “the generations of” (Hebrew *toledot*). This phrase is linked to a named character, from whom flows either a historical narrative or genealogy (Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1[+

36:9]; 37:2). For example, a ten-member genealogy stretching from Adam to Noah (Gen. 5:1–32) follows the title “the book of the generations of Adam” (5:1), and the title “the generations of Jacob” (37:2) introduces an extended story, principally focused on Jacob’s sons (37:2–50:26). The “generations” headings progressively direct the reader from progenitor (i.e., the ancestor) to progeny (i.e., offspring) and narrow the readers’ focus from all the world to Israel, through whom the royal offspring will rise to bless the world.

The choice of “generations” as the structuring term was intentional, for Genesis is dominated by the theme of “seed/offspring,” with the term itself (Hebrew *zera*) occurring 59 times (26 percent of the total 229 Old Testament occurrences) and referring to plant seed (10 times), animal seed (2 times, though figurative for humans displaying serpent-like hostility to God in Gen. 3:15), and human seed/offspring (47 times), the latter cluster of which includes at least 11 references to a single, male deliverer.¹

Significantly, while not evident in the ESV, the ten “generations” headings are grouped into five units by the fronting of the Hebrew conjunction *waw* (often translated “and”) (see table 6.2). Furthermore, building off the contrast between the serpent’s “offspring” and the woman’s “offspring” in Genesis 3:15, seven of the headings introduce units focused on the remnant who hope in God’s promise of the offspring, and three address the rebel nations who were still in need of Yahweh’s blessing. We have, therefore, a contrast between those enjoying Yahweh’s blessing (the missionaries/the chosen) and those needing it (the mission field/the rejected).

Of the seven positive units, five introduce narrative histories: Genesis 2:4–4:26 (heavens and earth); 6:9–29 (Noah); 11:27–25:11 (Terah); 25:19–35:29 (Isaac); 37:2–50:26 (Jacob). Two introduce linear narrative genealogies (i.e., A gave birth to B; B gave birth to C; C gave birth to D):

1 The references to human “offspring/seed” in Genesis are to (1) natural offspring in general (13x in Gen. 9:9; 15:3; 16:10; 17:12; 19:32, 34; 21:13; 38:8–9[3x]; 46:6–7[2x]; 48:11), (2) special natural offspring as a people (23x in Gen. 4:25; 12:7; 13:15–16[3x]; 15:13, 18; 17:7–10[5x], 19; 21:12; 24:7; 26:24; 28:4, 13–14[3x?]; 32:13; 35:12; 48:4), and (3) special natural offspring as a person (11x in Gen. 3:15; 15:5; 22:17–18[3x]; 24:60; 26:3–4[4x]; 48:19). For an article that considers the relationship of the single male offspring to the special offspring people in both the old and new covenants and that includes a chart cataloging all of the Bible’s uses, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in Old Testament Perspective,” *JETS* 58, no. 3 (2015): 445–85 (chart on 448–49). This earlier study catalogs seven of the above “offspring as a person” references differently.

5:1–6:8 (Adam); 11:10–26 (Shem). The remaining three “generations” headings front segmented genealogies, whose disjointed nature forces the reader to slow down and consider their significance (i.e., A gave birth to B and C; B gave birth to E, F, G; C gave birth to H, I, J): 10:1–11:9 (Noah’s sons); 25:12–18 (Ishmael); 36:1–8, 9–37:1 (Esau).²

Table 6.2 The “these are the generations” structure of Genesis

Part	Section	The Preface and “Generations” Units	Genre
1		Preface: Biblical worldview foundations (1:1–2:3)	
2	i	These are the generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26)	N (+LG/SG)
3A	ii	This is the book of the generations of Adam (5:1–6:8)	LG (+N)
	iii	These are the generations of Noah (6:9–9:29)	N
		And these are the generations of Noah’s sons (10:1–11:9)	SG (+N)
3B	iv	These are the generations of Shem (11:10–26)	LG
		And these are the generations of Terah (11:27–25:11)	N (+SG)
		And these are the generations of Ishmael (25:12–18)	SG

2 For a full discussion of the “generations” headings and what they contribute to the message of Genesis, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis,” *JETS* 56, no. 2 (2013): 219–47; cf. Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 107–9.

(Table 6.2 continued)

	And these are the generations of Isaac (25:19–35:29)	N
	And these are the generations of Esau (36:1–8, 9–37:1)	SG (+N+SG)
v	These are the generations of Jacob (37:2–50:26)	N (+SG+N)

KEY: N = Narrative; LG = Linear Genealogy; SG = Segmented Genealogy

This structure highlights many significant features: First, the most extended literary grouping runs from Genesis 11:10 to 37:1 and gives prominence to the account of Yahweh’s covenant with the patriarchs (809 of 1,533 verses—that is, 56 percent of the book). The size of the narrative suggests that the plot development, divine charges, and patriarchal covenant promises related to land, offspring, blessing, and divine presence highly contribute to Genesis’s overall message.³

Second, the five major sections (i–v in table 6.2) shift from the heavens and earth (Gen. 2:4) to Adam (5:1) to Noah (6:9) to Shem (11:10) and to Jacob (37:2) and thus indicate a movement from (1) all creation to (2) humanity in general to (3) all living humanity (after the execution of the rest) to (4) a subset of living humanity (through a shift in genealogical focus) and finally to (5) Israel.⁴ Genesis, therefore, signals a progressive narrowing that places focus on the line of promise and the centrality of Israel in God’s kingdom purposes to restore blessing to the world.

Third, Genesis’s overarching flow of thought is as follows: The book opens with a preface (Gen. 1:1–2:3) that elevates the blessing-commission (1:28) by focusing on God’s desire for his image-bearing humans to reproduce and then reflect, resemble, and represent his glory to the ends of the earth (1:28). We then get the only “generations” heading in the book that does

³ For a catalog of all the patriarchal promises with references, see chap. 7.

⁴ Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Promise and the Toledot Formula*, LHBOOTS 551 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 73.

not include a human name (part 2 in table 6.2). Both this and the context suggest that the section devoted to “the generations of the heavens and the earth” (2:4–4:26) introduces the redemptive story that follows. The section clarifies the world’s *need for blessing*, as it (1) celebrates humanity’s covenantal purpose in the global context (2:4–25); (2) details humanity’s sin, God’s curse on the world, and its immediate aftermath (3:1–4:26); and (3) highlights Yahweh’s merciful kingdom promise of a curse-overcoming offspring (3:15).

After this, the two linear genealogies unpacking the sections related to Adam (Gen. 5:1–6:8) and Shem (11:10–26) introduce two parallel units—3A and 3B in table 6.2—that develop the world’s *hope for blessing* and how Yahweh will mercifully preserve and provide (5:1–11:9; 11:10–50:26). Part 3A (table 6.2) opens by reporting the perpetual kingdom hope from Adam to Noah, all in the context of threat (5:1–6:8). It then uses a mixture of narrative and genealogy to describe how Yahweh protected the promised line and mercifully renewed his covenant with creation in the context of the flood punishment and its aftermath (6:9–11:9). Part 3B (table 6.2) shows the perpetuation of kingdom hope from Shem to Terah and clarifies how God will use Abraham and his offspring, climaxing in a single deliverer (15:4–6; 22:17–18) to extend kingdom blessing to the world’s nations (11:10–37:1). It then closes with an extended narrative (37:2–50:26) that recounts the promised line’s preservation in Egypt while also stressing the developing of kingdom hope for a royal deliverer, now known to be from the tribe of Judah (49:8–10).

An Outline of Genesis’s Thought Flow

- I. Preface—God’s blessing-commission (1:1–2:3): God purposes that humanity rule his world as his image bearers
- II. The need for blessing (2:4–4:26): humanity rebels and God curses the world yet promises a curse overcoming offspring
- III. The hope for blessing (5:1–50:26): God preserves humanity and provides a way for the world to enjoy kingdom blessing
 - A. God reaffirms humanity’s blessing-commission (5:1–11:9)
 1. God perpetuates kingdom hope from Adam to Noah in the context of threat (5:1–6:8)

2. God protects the promised line and restores humanity's kingdom purpose in the context of punishment (6:9–11:9)
- B. God declares how his kingdom blessing will reach the world (11:10–50:26)
 1. God perpetuates kingdom hope from Shem to Terah and elevates Abraham and his offspring as the agents for bringing kingdom blessing to the world (11:10–37:1)
 2. God preserves the promised line through famine in Egypt and develops kingdom hope for a royal deliverer from Judah (37:2–50:26)

When read within its close, continuing, and complete contexts, Genesis details gospel hope climaxing in Christ. Within this framework, *the book's main idea* is this: despite humanity's losing the blessing of eternally reigning over a very good world under God as his image bearers and spreading God's heavenly kingdom to the ends of the earth, Yahweh will restore this blessing to all the nations when they place their faith in the victorious, royal offspring of the woman, who will descend from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah and who will crush the serpent and claim all lands.

An Overview of Major Movements in Genesis

The Preface (Gen. 1:1–2:3)

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). As the climax to his creative work, God shapes humans in his image (1:26–27) and charges his male and female representatives to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” (1:28). From the start, God's covenant with creation through Adam stresses the themes of progeny, property, and power (rule), all themes that resurface at each period in Scripture's covenantal progression culminating in Christ.⁵ The narrator characterizes the commission as a blessing, meaning that mankind would only increase and rule as God's representatives on the earth if he graciously empowered it to happen. Proper image bearing demands dependence.

⁵ See Paul Kyuwook Kim, “From Biblical Coherence to Systematic Theology: A Critical Reinterpretation of Covenant Theology” (ThD diss., South African Theological Seminary, 2020), especially the overview on 13–15.