

Foundations for Faith

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We cannot understand who we are and where we are going without understanding our origins. Genesis is a book of beginnings, a book that sets the foundation for all that follows in the scriptures. We understand from Genesis that God created everything out of nothing, that this astonishingly magnificent universe did not come into existence randomly but by virtue of the word of God. Genesis teaches that God made men and women in his image, and that we were given the mandate to rule the world for God's glory. It is clear from Genesis 1 that human beings are the crown of God's creation because we are made in God's likeness. Animals are not equal in significance to human beings, as some are suggesting today. We also learn from Genesis that marriage between a man and a woman was God's idea, that he intended marriage for our joy, so that men and women together could function as God's stewards over the world.

What has gone wrong with the human race? Genesis informs us that Adam and Eve rebelled against God, that they trusted their own wisdom and rejected God's lordship. All the misery of the world can be traced back to the first human sin. Over the course of history, many remedies have been proposed to solve the ills of human beings. Any solution that refuses to recognize that the root problem with human beings is our refusal to glorify God as God and give him thanks (Rom 1:21) will not be effective. As believers in Jesus Christ we know that a person's fundamental need is forgiveness of sins, a right relationship with God.

Genesis reminds us of a crucial truth that is foundational to the call for repentance and faith. God did not create humans as evil. Everything God made was good. Adam and Eve turned away from God as the source of joy and life and, as Paul says, they "worshiped the creature rather than the creator" (Rom 1:25). Now all human beings enter the world as sinners and condemned by virtue of their union with Adam (Rom 5:12-19).

Genesis also teaches us about God's plan for redemption. The *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 promises God's victory over the seed of the serpent. He will crush the serpent's head, though the serpent will bruise the heel of the seed of the woman. As the story unfolds, the seed of the serpent appear to be stronger than the seed of woman. Cain belongs to the serpent's seed and demonstrates it by striking down Abel. In subsequent years the seed of the serpent dominates the seed of the woman, for by the time of Noah all the world is corrupt except for Noah. Still, our God reigns and nothing will frustrate his purposes. The great flood demonstrates that the seed of the serpent will be judged, and that those who oppose God will not finally triumph. The Lord also promises that the world will not be totally destroyed again until God brings about the victory and redemption promised in Genesis 3:15.

Some scholars have doubted whether Genesis 3:15 truly represents the promise that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The careful reader sees that the *protoevangelium* is alluded to in other places in the OT. Psalm 72:9 says of the Davidic king, "Let the

nomads of the desert bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust." The licking of the dust reminds us of God's ultimate enemy, the serpent crawling in the dust. In Psalm 89, a Davidic psalm celebrating God's everlasting covenant with David, another allusion to Genesis 3:15 surfaces: "You yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain" (Ps 89:10; cf. Ps 72:4; 89:23). The crushing of Rahab foreshadows the final crushing of Satan that will be accomplished through the work of Jesus the Christ. In 2 Samuel 22 David celebrates his victories, grateful that his enemies have been subdued under his feet and that they are as the dust of the earth (2 Sam 22:39, 43). Once again the work of David anticipates the work of the David to come (cf. Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 37:24-25), Jesus the Messiah.

Perhaps there is also an allusion to Genesis 3:15 in Psalm 8:6 where the Psalmist speaks of the rule of human beings over the world and declares that God has "put all things under [our] feet." We know from Hebrews 2:5-9 that this Psalm is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for he is the perfect human being who succeeded where Adam and Israel failed. Interestingly, a few verses later the author of Hebrews tells us that through his death Jesus stripped the devil of his power (Heb 2:14-15). We see another allusion to the victory over the serpent in Psalm 110, the great Messianic psalm that is cited often in the NT (e.g., Matt 22:41-46 par; Acts 2:32-36; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25-28; Eph 1:20-22; Heb 1:3, 13; 10:12). "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (Ps 110:1). A few verses later God promises to crush his enemies (Ps 110:5-6). Balaam spoke about the Messiah in an oracle, "I see him, but

not now. I behold him, but not near. A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall arise from Israel, and shall crush the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth" (Num 24:17). Paul himself looks forward to the day when this promise will be fulfilled, proclaiming that "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). In Christ the promise that the kingdom of God will crush all enemies is fulfilled (Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; cf. Mal 4:3). The seed of the woman runs from Abraham to David to Christ. The book of Genesis, like all of scripture, as Jesus himself taught us (Luke 24:44; John 5:39), points to Christ. We must interpret the OT in its historical and cultural context, but if we do not see how it points to Christ, then we have not yet progressed to a true understanding of its contents.

My prayer is that this issue of the journal will help readers understand the message of Genesis. Paul House provides a holistic sketch of creation in Old Testament Theology, while Russell Fuller sets forth a proper hermeneutical method. Duane Garrett demonstrates the bankruptcy of the documentary hypothesis, and Ken Mathews refutes an erroneous hermeneutic that justifies racism. In addition, Mark Rooker defends the historicity of the flood. A selection from Andrew Fuller's *Expository Discourses* provides a fitting application of the message of this book to later generations.