2. Genesis: The Beginning of God's Covenant

Like the first chapter of a great novel, the book of Genesis sets the stage for everything else that happens in the Bible. An understanding of the basic themes and important doctrines of Genesis is therefore critical if we are going to be able to follow the unfolding story of the unifying threads of revelation in the Bible. The readings that follow are given in seven groups, as will be the readings in the lessons that follow. If you work on one set of readings per day you can complete this lesson in one week and be ready to take an active role in the discussion at your group meeting.

2.1 **Read Genesis 1 and 2:** In these first chapters of Genesis, we being to see the development of two of the major themes of Scripture - the glory of God and the creation of a people for God.

2.11 Briefly summarize the content of these readings and any initial responses you may have concerning what they suggest to you about the unifying threads of revelation.

2.12 In what ways can you see the glory of God reflected in His work of creation and in the creation itself?

2.13 God pronounced His creation, "good", and then "very good", Can you be more specific? In what ways was the creation good? What does this reveal to us about God, the Maker of creation (God the creator)?

2.14 In what ways did God show Adam and Eve that his relationship with them was to be special? How were they different from other living creatures? What does this mean?

2.15 What seems to have been God's plan for mankind, for the people He created, according to what we read in Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15-17? Given the unique condition of the garden and God's plan for mankind, what would have been the likely impact of that plan on the glory of God, had that plan actually been carried out?

2.2 Read Genesis 3, 4, 6 and 8:15-22: The entrance of sin into the creation caused a disruption of enormous proportions. These readings will help us to understand both the calamity of sin and its severity in the eyes of God.

2.21 Summarize the content of these readings. What do you learn from them about any of the unifying threads of Scripture?

2.22 How did sin affect Adam and Eve? How did it change their attitudes toward themselves, one another and God?

2.23 What else was affected by the entrance of sin?

2.24 Genesis 3:15 is thought by many scholars to introduce the third of the unifying threads of revelation. How can you see this indicated in the passage?

2.25 What do the punishment of Cain and the story of the flood tell us about God's attitude toward sin? How can we incorporate this into our understanding of His glory and the people he is creating for himself?

2.26 What do we learn from the material in Genesis 4:16-26 and 6:1-5? What do these passages suggest to us about being the people of God in this sinful world?

2.3 Read Genesis 12 - 15: These chapters introduce us to God's Covenant. We see Him working in a special way to bring into existence a people for Himself.

2.31 Summarize the teaching of these four chapters. What do they suggest to you about any of the unifying threads of revelation?

2.32 In Genesis 12:1-3, how many promises can you identify that God made to Abram? What are they? What do these suggest about how God plans to relate to the people He is creating for Himself?

2.33 As we follow Abram in this section, what do we learn about the kind of people God chooses to be His? What does God provide for Abram to keep him from ruining the very thing God is working to create (see esp. 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:1, and 15:18-21).

2.34 What do you think is the significance of the strange ceremony described in Genesis 15:7-17? What was God saying to Abram by His actions here?

2.4 Read Genesis 18, 21, 22, 26:1-4. In this section we find Abraham passing on the promises of God to his son Isaac.

2.41 Summarize the content of this reading. What does it suggest to you about any of the unifying threads of revelation?

2.42 How does the birth of Isaac represent something of a "down payment" by God on the promises He made to Abraham? What would this have said to Abraham and Sarah about the rest of God's promises? What does it indicate about how God wants His people to relate to Him?

2.43 Can you see any growth in Abraham in this section? In what ways? What does this suggest about what it means to be one of the people of God?

2.44 What is the significance of Genesis 26:1-5 and v 24, 25 with respect to the Covenant between God and His people? What do we learn about God from watching Him in these Covenantal dealings with His people?

2.5 Read Genesis 28 - 32: Jacob gives us an opportunity to see the glory of God in His continuing faithfulness toward sinful people.

2.51 Summarize the content of this section. What is suggested to you about any of the unifying threads of revelation?

2.52 Why are verses 1-4 and 10-15 of chapter 28 so important to the developing theme of God creating a people for Himself?

2.53 In what way to these verses tie Jacob back to Isaac? Abraham? Adam?

2.54 What kind of man was Jacob? What does this suggest about the kind of people God chooses for Himself? What does this suggest about the kind of God Who chooses such people?

2.55 What does God do to help Jacob become a man of true faith? By the time we get to chapter 32 has Jacob changed at all? In what ways? What do we learn from this about what it means to be in a Covenantal relationship with God?

2.6 **Read Genesis 35:9-29, then chapters 37, 39, 40 & 41:** Joseph will play a major role in God's continuing to unfold His Covenantal relationship with His people.

2.61 Summarize the content of this reading. What initial thoughts are stirred by this section about the unifying threads of revelation?

2.62 What did God intent by changing Jacob's name from Jacob ("deceiver") to Israel ("God persists")? What does this episode suggest about what it means to be one of God's chosen people?

2.63 What does God do to emphasize the continuing character of His Covenant?

2.64 In what ways is the glory of God revealed in the story of Joseph? What do we learn about His glory from the depiction of His sovereign rule that we have here?

2.65 How does the story of Joseph represent a partial fulfilling of the promises made to Abraham?

2.7 Read Genesis 42, 43, 44, 45, 48 & 50: In the conclusion of Joseph's story we can see the coming together of the unifying threads of revelation.

2.71 Summarize the content of these readings. What do you learn from them about the unifying threads of revelation?

2.72 How do we see in Joseph's brothers their sense of having violated God's plan to create a people for Himself?

2.73 Look at the actions of Judah in chapters 43 and 44.

(a) What is he doing?

(b) Given who he is (Judah), and what we know to have been the tribe of Judah's great contribution to the saving plan of God (the Lord Jesus), what is God telling us in this episode?

(c) Would Moses, the compiler of Genesis and the writer of the next four books of the Bible, have been likely to understand this?

(d) Why should it be important to us?

Final exercise: Genesis

Take a few minutes to summarize in writing what you have learned thus far about the unifying threads of revelation.

(a) How do they help to hold the book of Genesis together?

(b) How would you explain God's Covenant - what it is, how it operates, what mankind's role is within it?

(c) Have you made any progress toward achieving any of the goals you articulated in the first lesson?