



# **Genesis**

## **Beginnings**

Week 1  
Chapters 1 and 2



### ***Introduction to this course***

- ❖ The syllabus
  - Course description
  - The class schedule
  - How the class is organized
  - Celia Brewer Marshall's book on Genesis
- ❖ The weekly handouts – copies of the overheads
- ❖ The index cards
- ❖ *The Drama of Scripture*
- ❖ The website – [www.standrewccl.org](http://www.standrewccl.org)
  - All materials will be posted there as I write them.



## What is Genesis?

- ❖ Science? Theology? History? Some of everything?
- ❖ Genesis is first and foremost a book of stories. These stories reveal a great deal to us about God, about ourselves, and about our world – this is theological affirmation and proclamation.
  - These stories are told for a reason and they are written the way they are for a reason. It is all theology – both the story of Adam and the story of Abraham..
  - Not all the stories have a clear “moral,” perhaps not even most. You’ll see that some of the heroes/heroines engage in very shocking behavior and make some tragic decisions. God works with who we really are, not who we wish we could be.
  - One challenge will be getting past all our stereotypes of the stories. Read carefully and slowly. Look for the surprise.
- ❖ We’ll look for the major plot – God’s intervening in human history to restore humanity to a right relationship with God and to restore creation. But there are also important sub-plots; the testing of Abraham, for example. There are small stories embedded in larger stories embedded in the grand biblical narrative.

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## How did we get the book of Genesis?

- ❖ The Jews held that Moses was the author of Genesis, as well as the rest of the Torah.
- ❖ Though Moses probably played a central role in the writing of Genesis, it seems clear that there were other authors and editors.
  - Indeed, many careers have been made and seminary students influenced by various versions of the documentary hypothesis – JEPD.
  - The important thing to bear in mind that God can inspire editors and scribes just as well as anyone else. Indeed, the various strands in Genesis (like the two creation stories) help us to embrace the richness of God’s character and revelation. Genesis (and the rest of the Torah) seems to have been put into its final form about 500 years before Jesus.
- ❖ Regardless of how we got it, this is all “god-breathed.” These are the writings that God intends for us to have. It is the word of God for the people of God. It is Scripture.

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## **The Bible as a six-act unfinished play!**

*Act One*

*Act Two*

*Act Three*

Genesis will take us  
well into Act 3!

Creation → Fall → Israel →

*Act Four*

*Act Five*

*Act Six*

Jesus → The church → Renewal of creation

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## **God creates – the first telling (1:1 – 2:4a)**

- ❖ God's word creates EVERYTHING. God pronounces it GOOD.
- ❖ God makes humankind in God's image
  - This is generally agreed to have royal connotations. To be in God's "image" is to share in God's sovereignty over creation.
  - How else might we think of this? A relational God creates a relational people. God *IS* love.
  - Note that all of all God's creatures, only the humans bear God's likeness. This underlies a great deal of Judeo-Christian ethics. Human worth is not a function of our intelligence, skills, or usefulness. All humans are created in God's image.
- ❖ "God blessed them . . ." (v. 28).
  - There is a theology of blessing in these creation stories. Three times God's creation is pronounced "blessed."
- ❖ God reveals to us "sabbath." A time of rest after a time of creation.
- ❖ We can think of the poetry of this telling as a liturgy of celebration.

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## God creates – the second telling (2:4b – 2:24)

- ❖ We shift from God’s perspective to the humans’ perspective . . . and things get messy.
- ❖ God breathes life into the man and plants a garden for the man to work – a wonderful place containing the *tree of life* and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.
  - Notice God’s breath, *ruach*. The same word is used in Genesis 1:2. Compare to Isaiah 2:22. Only God’s breath creates. Paul wrote that all Scripture is “God-breathed.”
- ❖ God warns the man that he is not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he does, in that day, he will die.
  - Note that God doesn’t really tell the man why the tree is off-limits. God simply tells him of the consequences.
- ❖ God then seeks a helper for the man. Though God allows the man to name the animals, none are a suitable “helper/partner.”
  - This naming shows the man’s dominion over God’s creation.

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## Man and woman (v. 21ff)

- ❖ Because a “helper” could not be found among the animals, God creates a woman – from the man’s flesh.
  - Note how messy and physical all this is. Our “messy physical-ness” is an expression of God’s blessing. There have been some who have denied Jesus’ humanity because physicality just seems too “icky” and weak.
- ❖ God creates woman from the man’s body. Thus, man and woman are “one flesh.” The husband leaves his father and the woman her mother – so that they might “cling” to one another.
  - When Jesus and Paul speak of marriage, both go back to Genesis and the “one-fleshness” of marriage. This underlies most denominations’ perspectives on marriage.
  - There is no gender hierarchy here. The point is the “one flesh.”
- ❖ Though gender and sexuality are part of God’s creation, there is nothing in text that can be used to find either gender or sexuality in God.
  - This is a challenge for a language that lacks neuter personal pronouns.

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## What do these creation stories reveal to us?

### ❖ About God

- God is *personal*. God has both *purpose* and *will*. We learn in Genesis' first sentence of the God-Who-Acts. God creates out of desire, not need.

### ❖ About ourselves

- We are made in God's image. We are unlike God's other creatures . . . and this is not a matter of IQ.
- The responsibility for dominion is a blessing. Humans are given *vocation* (the garden is made to be worked), *permission* (everything -- less one -- is permitted!), and *prohibition* (no explanation is offered and obedience is expected).

### ❖ About our world

- God's creation is inherently good and blessed by God.

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## Jesus in this?

### ❖ Philippians 2:5-11

- Paul's emphasis is not on the "image" of God but the "form" of God. The key mark in Jesus' image/form is that he didn't grasp for equality with God but became obedient. Grasping power cannot improve creation. As we'll see next week, grasping power leads to death.

### ❖ Ephesians 4:22-24

- We are called to "put on the new nature, created after the *likeness of God* in true righteousness and holiness."

### ❖ Ephesians 1:9-10

- God's purposes in creation focuses upon Jesus. All creation is to be a unity in Christ.

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