

Genesis 1:26-28: Its Significance in Genesis and Biblical Theology

Brian C. Collins
BJU Press

Bible Faculty Summit
August 2019

Genesis 1:26–28 is the foundational passage from which the Bible’s storyline and many of its major themes flow. This claim will be established by identifying the central role of these verses in Genesis 1, in the opening literary sections of Genesis, in its contribution to the structure and themes of Genesis, and in its foundational place for the theological themes of *covenant* and *kingdom*. Covenant and kingdom are not the sole important theological themes in Scripture, but they rise to the top of many lists.¹ These verses transparently connect to other themes (e.g., blessing), and with further study may be shown to connect to still others. However, demonstrating the foundational role of these verses to the theology of Genesis and to the themes of *kingdom* and *covenant* is sufficient to establish their biblical theological importance.

LITERARY INDICATIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Genesis 1:26–30 contains several literary features that highlight its importance in Genesis 1. Before noting these features it is worth noting the significance of Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a unit. The structure of Genesis is indicated by the repeated *toledoth* formula.² The first of these occur in Genesis 2:4,

¹ Numerous theological themes have been discerned by various scholars as playing a central or at least an important role in biblical theology. These include, God’s glory, kingdom, covenant, redemption, blessing, God’s presence/the temple, worship, law, wisdom, righteousness/justice, holiness, wrath, love, mission, and shalom to name just a few. See the listing topics in D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), xiii. See also various summaries of the Bible’s message: “The grand goal of the divine comedy is nothing less than to secure God’s people in God’s place under God’s reign living God’s way enjoying God’s shalom in God’s loving and holy presence as both family and worshippers.” Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 25. “The OT storyline that I posit as the basis for the NT storyline is this: *The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in a worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory.*” G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 16. “God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ.” Jason DeRouchie and Andy Naselli, <https://today.faithlife.com/2018/01/19/the-bible-summarized-in-one-sentence/> accessed 1/20/18.

² For a full discussion of the *toledoth* formula in Genesis, including the promise and perils of seeing it as a structuring formula, see Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 27–35; cf. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 2–8; James McKeown, *Genesis*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary, ed. J. Gordon McConville and Craig

making Genesis 1:1-2:3 the prologue to the book. As the prologue to the first book of the Bible, these verses also serve as the prologue to the entire Bible.³

Within this prologue Genesis 1:26-30 stands out. Day six is the climatic day of creation. It is the final day of creation activity, and the whole creation week has been building to the final creation: man.⁴

Bartholomew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 2-3. Though Mathews opts to see the *toledoth* formula as a structural marker, he notes two major obstacles. First, the sections that follow this formula are not uniform in length or character. Second, the phrase is repeated within what is clearly a single section about Esau (36:1; 36:9). He addresses the first objection by observing that the non-elect lines are noted summarily and are typically followed by more detailed narratives regarding the elect line. Mathews, 34-35. For more detail about how the “short genealogies” and “extended narratives” relate to each other in the structure of Genesis, see Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredericks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 18-19. Mathews does not present a solution to the repetition of the *toledoth* formula in chapter 36, but a closer look at Genesis 36 reveals that the repetition in 36:9 serves a thematic function. Verses 1-6, reveal that Esau had lived in Canaan, married in Canaan, had sons in Canaan, and gained wealth in Canaan. Verses 6-7 recount Esau’s move away from Canaan because the land could not support both he and Jacob. Interestingly, Genesis 31-32 indicated that Esau was already living in Seir. Perhaps Esau lived a nomadic lifestyle that took him back and forth between the two regions. Whatever the harmonization of chapters 31-32 and chapter 36, 36:7 is clear that there is no more room for Esau in Canaan once Jacob returned. The repeated *toledoth* formula in verse 9 adds the phrase “the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.” It thus serves to reinforce the message that Esau does not inherit the promised land. Genesis 36:9 is the only occurrence of the *toledoth* formula that does not mark a division in the book.

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard (Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 5; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 39.

⁴ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 182. Against this view, Michael Morales argues that the Sabbath rest is “the *telos* or goal of creation,” what he labels “humanity’s chief end.” Morales says that “without minimizing the significance of the sixth day,” it is not the climatic day. It does not have the same structural emphasis that the seventh day receives, and arguments from “word allotment” are not sufficient to prove its importance. In addition, he argues that the creation mandate is subordinate to the Sabbath: “As the ‘crown’ of creation, humanity is made in the ‘image’ (*selem*) and ‘likeness’ (*dēmût*) of God the Creator (Gen. 1:26-27). No doubt this status entitles man (*hā’ādām*), male and female, to rule and subdue the rest of creation, but the primary blessing of being created in God’s image is in order to have fellowship with the Creator in a way the other creatures cannot. The ‘rule and subdue’ command, along with the ‘be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth’ blessing, should be directed to this chief end and highest goal—*hā’ādām* is to gather all creation into the life-giving Presence and praise of God.” Morales places a great deal of argumentative weight on the structure of Genesis 1:1-2:3. He notes that days 1-3 are about habitats, days 4-6 are about inhabitants, and the seventh day is “set apart.” This set-apartness is reinforced by the summary statement in Genesis 2:1. Morales also proposes a second, complementary structure. Day 1 establishes day (day and night); days 2 and 3 establish places of “habitation.” Day 4 also deals with time, namely “annual cultic festivals” (not merely times and seasons). Days 5 and 6 pair with days 2 and 3 by being about inhabitants. Day 7 links up with days 1 and 4 by also being about time. Day 4 has a central location because it deals with cultic festivals and the word for lights is used of “the tabernacle lamp.” Morales takes this to indicate that while humans are to rule over the creatures of the earth, humans are subject to time, and to “day and night, cultic festivals,” in particular. Morales’s point seems to be that the creation is headed toward the seventh day in its emphasis on time and cultic festivals and with “day seven’s consecration of the cultic day, the weekly Sabbath.” Morales concludes from this that the seventh day Sabbath (a time) is more significant than the creation mandate. Finally, he observes, “The seventh day is not only the first day to be

With these verses, the narrative pace slows. More words are devoted to day six of the creation week than to any of the other days.⁵ Most of these “day six” words are found in verses 26–30. The increased word count is not simply due to a greater amount of material to discuss. One reason for the additional word count is increased repetition. In verse 26 God speaks of making man in his image and of giving mankind dominion over the earth. Verse 27 then recounts that God made man in his image, and it does so using poetic repetition. Verses 28–29 then return to the theme of dominion,

blessed, and the only day mentioned three times, but it is also the first object ever to be set apart as holy by God. Moreover, the seventh day is the *only* object of sanctification in the entire book of Genesis.” L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of Leviticus*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 43–47.

Morales is correct to highlight the importance of the seventh day, but key elements of his argument do not hold up under close examination. His placement of days 1, 4, and 7 in a palistrophe hinges on the claim that day 4 sets up the times for cultic festivals. But while מועד can refer to cultic festivals, it is a broad word that also refers beyond the cultic realm. In a creation Psalm (104:19), it is clearly contrasted with the normal order of day and night and the seasons. I remain skeptical of readings which seem to read cultic material back into Genesis 1 and 2. It seems more plausible that Genesis 1 and 2 are about the establishment of the normal creation. Connections between creation and cult are due to the cult looking back to what was lost creationally and looking forward to the creation’s restoration. The claim that human rule over creation is subordinate to the rule of the sun and moon over the day and the night also fails to convince upon closer examination. Morales’s reading would place parts of the creation over man, the image bearer of God. This becomes most problematic when Christ ultimately fulfills the role of the Man who rules over creation (Heb. 2:6–9) because it would place Christ’s rule under the rule of the sun and moon. In addition, different terminology is used for the rule of the celestial bodies and the rule of man, suggesting that different kinds of rule are in view (the terms used of man indicate that he is to continue to shape the world that God has made; they are not static terms). Morales’s argument that “word allotment” is not sufficient to demonstrate the significance of the sixth day is true in the abstract, but the argument is not merely that there are more words given to day six. The argument is that the narrative pace shifts in order to place special emphasis on the speech of God related to the creation of man. In addition, as will be argued below, verse 28 is the seedbed for the blessing, seed, land themes, which are at the heart of all the covenants, as well as the seedbed for the kingdom of God theme, which is central to the Bible’s storyline and to the gospel. In other words, the increased “word allotment” is needed to lay the foundation for central biblical themes. Finally, Morales is incorrect to say that the primary blessing of the *imago dei* is to have fellowship with God. Without minimizing the importance of fellowship with God, this is not what the text says. Grammatically, the blessing of the *imago dei* is tied to the blessing of dominion over the earth. A similar problem exists with Morales’s claim that the seventh day is about the presence of God/fellowship with God. These ideas are not found in Genesis 2:1–3. Humans are not mentioned in those verses, nor is the theme of presence/fellowship.

Even so, Morales is correct to emphasize the importance of the seventh day. What is needed is a way to bring together Genesis 1:26–29 with the seventh day. Perhaps God is setting a telos for man in the seventh day. God blessed mankind with rule over the earth, which meant that he was to extend the Garden throughout the world. At a certain point man would complete this work and enter into God’s rest. I further wonder if under the Second Adam this task will be completed in the Millennium after which man can enter the rest of the new earth. Humans will continue to reign under Christ on the new earth, but it will not be a reign of subduing and gaining dominion.

Morales is also correct to argue that the presence of God is one of the central themes of Scripture. Exodus 33 is clear that to receive the seed and land blessings apart from God’s presence is no blessing at all. Nonetheless, it seems that the presence theme is assumed rather than explicit in Genesis 1 and 2.

⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 159; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 25; Gentry and Wellum, 182–83.

repeating and expanding upon verse 26. The increased repetition, and the first instance of poetic parallelism in the Old Testament, serve to highlight the importance of these verses.

These verses also differ from the pattern established by the other creation days.⁶ Instead of simply declaring, “Let there be . . .,” there is instead a statement of divine intent: “Let us make man.”⁷ This deliberative statement serves to heighten the importance of this section. Not only does the creation of man begin with a distinctive statement, in the closing formula, “And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day,” “the sixth day” is articular in Hebrew. The enumeration of days in the corresponding formulas that precede day six is not articular. The article may signal that day six is special.⁸ In addition, it is at the end of this day that God pronounced all he made to be “very good,” an intensification of the earlier forms of this formula.⁹

Finally, the content of these verses highlights their importance. Man is singled out as bearing God’s image,¹⁰ a specific, stated blessing is bestowed on mankind, and the relation between the human and non-human creation is specified.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Genesis 2:4–4:26 is the first major section of Genesis. The importance of Genesis 1:26–30 can be seen in the way themes from these verses are utilized in this section of the book. William Dumbrell makes the suggestive comment, “The remainder of Genesis 2 [that is, vv. 4–25] seems primarily an exposition of chapter 1:26–28 in which the creation of man as a species has been discussed and where the dominion given to man is thus conferred upon mankind.”¹¹ While Genesis 3 and 4 may not be an exposition of Genesis 1:26–28, these verses do figure significantly in those chapters.

⁶ Wenham also notes features that are true only of days three and six. “Both days have a double announcement of the divine word ‘And God said’ (vv. 9, 11, 24, 26) and the approval formula twice (vv. 10, 12, 25, 31).” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 6.

⁷ Augustine, “Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis,” in *On Genesis*, The Works of Saint Augustine, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2002), 147 (16.56); Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 160. This observation is one of eight indications that Mathews gives which highlight the importance of Genesis 1:26–28. Kidner observes, “*Let us make* stands in tacit contrast with ‘Let the earth bring forth’ (24); the note of self-communing and the impressive plural proclaim it a momentous step; and this done, the whole creation is complete.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: Tyndale Press, 1967), 50.

⁸ “The function of the article here has yet to be explored satisfactorily, but adds to the significance of the creation of humans.” Gentry and Wellum, 183–84.

⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 25, 34.

¹⁰ “This fullness of description reflects the importance of the events on this day, for in it creation reaches its climax in the formation of man in the divine image.” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 25.

¹¹ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 35. Similarly, Collins concludes, “So the second pericope [Gen. 2:4–25] fills out part of the sixth day of the first pericope [Gen. 1:1–2:3].” Collins, *Genesis*, 122.

Genesis 2:5-25

Genesis 2:5-9 exposit the dominion aspects of Genesis 1:26-28. This is clouded somewhat by numerous translational and interpretational difficulties,¹² but it can be seen clearly in the Holman Christian Standard Bible:

No shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. But water would come out of the ground and water the entire surface of the land. Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.¹³

The best interpretation of this passage recognizes that with Genesis 2:4 Moses shifts from the broad account of Genesis 1 to a more specific account of the creation and to the placement of man within the world.¹⁴ In this context it makes sense for **אֶרֶץ** to refer to a particular *land* rather than to the *earth* as a whole (in addition to the HCSB, see CSB and ESV).¹⁵ Two reasons are given for why

¹² The central conundrum of this passage is why no rain is given as the reason that the bush and small plant of the field have not yet sprung up (2:5) given that the **אֶרֶץ** is “watering the whole face of the ground” (2:6). A number of proposals have been made.

Kidner suggests that 2:4 and 6 refer to the period of Genesis 1:2. Verse 5 is a parenthesis that looks forward to the creation of plants and man. Derek Kidner, “Genesis 2:5, 6: Wet or Dry?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 17, no. 1 (1966): 110. **אֶרֶץ** on this reading carries the sense of *flood* or *ocean*. This approach alleviates the apparent contradiction between plants not growing due to lack of rain and ground that is well watered by pointing to the nature of the watering (an ocean that covers all the land) and to its timing (before the emergence of dry land). Proponents of the Framework Hypothesis and Analogical Day Theory propose another reading. On this reading the reader’s attention is directed to a particular land that was at the end of its dry season (hence the lack of rain in 2:5). But now a rain cloud is rising from the earth, and it will water the ground. **אֶרֶץ** on this interpretation carries the sense of *mist* or *water vapor*. The takeaway for proponents of this view is that seasons, the water cycle, and “ordinary providence” is already functioning at the creation of man. Thus man was not created in the historical first week of the earth’s existence. Collins, *Genesis*, 125-27; Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 14-15. This view alleviates the apparent contradiction between 2:5 and 6 by connecting 2:5 to one season and 2:6 to another. It also provides one reason for why “no bush of the field was yet in the land” (no rain) and why “no small plant of the field had yet sprung up” (no man to cultivate them). Verses 6 and 7 then provide the solution: rain clouds and the creation of man.

These two approaches suffer from a number of defects. It is not at all apparent that verse 5 is a parenthesis between verses 4 and 6, as Kidner’s view requires. Furthermore, why stress the existence of the primordial ocean in the account of the creation of man? The Framework/Analogical Day approach does a better job at showing how the passage coheres, but it depends heavily on a contested meaning of **אֶרֶץ**. It also fails to present a compelling case for why the author would emphasize that man was created at the end of the dry season.

¹³ Unfortunately, the CSB reverted to a more traditional but, in my opinion, less accurate translation of this passage.

¹⁴ Richard Hess, “Genesis 1-2 in Its Literary Context,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 41, no. 1 (1990): 143-53; Collins, *Genesis*, 110-111; Edward J. Young, “The Days of Genesis,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 25, no. 1 (Nov. 1962): 18-19.

¹⁵ Collins, *Genesis*, 110-111. This understanding alleviates the tension between 1:11-13 and 2:5. Moses is not saying in chapter 2 that no plant life existed on earth before the creation of man. He is saying that in a particular land, particular kinds of plants had not yet begun to grow. The **עֵשֶׂב** (“small plant,” ESV) probably refers to edible plants that a farmer cultivates. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 58; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11*, 194; Robert V. McCabe, “A

these plants are not growing in this land. First, God has not made it rain there. This seems to refer to the type of climate that this land has; it is not the kind of land that receives rainfall.¹⁶ Instead, the land is watered by a spring or fountain that produces a river.¹⁷ Second, there is no man to work the ground. Though there is a fountain and river that provides water to the whole land, the inundation provided from this spring/river must be managed.¹⁸ Hence 2:7 and God's creation of man. Genesis 2:5-9 thus exposit Genesis 1:26-28 by highlighting that God ordered the land in which he placed the man to be of such a nature that it required human cultivation to flourish.

The focus on dominion continues in verses 10-14. Genesis 1:28 says that man is to "fill the earth and subdue it." In this section "there is a hint of the *cultural* development intended for man."¹⁹ Notably,

Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Account (Part 2 of 2)," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, 11, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 88-89. The *field* (תֵּל) does not always refer to cultivated fields, but it often does. This seems to be the best sense in this context. Hess, 143-53; Collins, *Genesis*, 110-111; Young, 18-19. תֵּל is a much more difficult term to define. It occurs only four times in Scripture, and in the other occurrences it seems to refer to a desert kind of shrub. It may be that an allusion exists here to Genesis 3:18. In that passage both cultivated plants (עֵץ) and thorns and thistles appear. Thorns cannot be mentioned here, since they did not exist before the Fall. Perhaps תֵּל is mentioned as the kind of plant that became thorny after the Fall. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11*, 193-94; cf. Cassuto, 1:101-2; Hamilton, 154; McCabe, 88-89.

¹⁶ R. Laird Harris, "The Mist, the Canopy, and the Rivers of Eden," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1968): 178. Similar interpretations are found in Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part One*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), 103-4 and John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 165, 180.

¹⁷ The word תֵּל occurs only in Genesis 2:6 and Job 36:27. Those who favor the translation "mist" or "rain cloud" appeal to Job: "For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist [תֵּל] in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly" (Job 36:27-28, ESV). Collins, *Genesis*, 104, n. 6. The idea of mist and rain make sense in the context of the Job passage. However, this is not the only way of translating the Job passage. The NIV translates "He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams [תֵּל]; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind." Kidner notes, "'Flood' or 'sea' however would suit the context [in Job] equally, as in M. H. Pope's translation: 'He draws the waterdrops that distil rain from the flood' (treating it as a modification of Accadian edû, and the preposition as meaning 'from' (cf. RV as in Ugaritic)." Kidner, "Wet or Dry," 110; cf. John Hartley, *The Book of Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 479; Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 404. Research in other Semitic languages points away from the translation "mist" and toward something like "flood." Tsumura argues that it is related to the Akkadian edû "flood." He concludes that "Both 'ēd and its allomorph 'ēdô mean "high water" and refer to the water flooding out of the subterranean ocean (1989:115)." David T. Tsumura, "Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction Part II," 9, no. 2 *Bible and Spade* (Spring 1996): 37; cf. Kidner, "Wet or Dry," 110. The ancient translations also favor understanding תֵּל as a river that emerges from the earth and inundates the land. Young notes the following translations: "LXX, πηγὴ; Aquila, ἐπιβλυσμός; Vulgate, fons." The Syriac is also in line with these other ancient translations. Young, 20, n. 50; Cassuto, 103 (Cassuto does note, however, that the Targums favor "mist"). The context, with its mention in verse 10 of a river that waters the garden, also fits the flood/inundation understanding better than the mist understanding.

¹⁸ "Without man to irrigate the land, the spring was useless." Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 59.

¹⁹ "There is a hint of the *cultural* development intended for man when the narrative momentarily (10-14) breaks out of Eden to open up a vista into a world of diverse countries and resources. The digression, overstepping the bare details that locate the garden, discloses that there is more than primitive simplicity in store for the race: a

rivers could serve as highways in the ancient world, and the names assigned to these places indicates that they were developed. The mention of gold and jewels may be an indication that human rule over the earth would not be merely utilitarian.²⁰

Verse 15 summarizes Genesis 2:5–14. Man’s task, initially, focused on working and keeping the garden.²¹ In other words, Genesis 2:5–14 focus on the dominion aspects of Genesis 1:26–28.

complexity of unequally distributed skills and peoples, even if the reader knows the irony of it in the tragic connotations of the words ‘gold,’ ‘Assyria,’ ‘Euphrates.’” Kidner, 61.

²⁰ Apart from Kidner, the commentators are singularly unhelpful on this passage. The critics view this as an interpolation from one source into another. They therefore fail to look for the coherence of the passage with its context. Evangelical commentators tend to focus on locating Eden based on the names of the rivers. See, for instance, Collins, *Genesis*, 119–20. Regarding this effort, Luther had long before commented, “My answer is briefly this: It is an idle question about something no longer in existence. Moses is writing the history of the time before sin and the Deluge, but we are compelled to speak of conditions as they are after sin and after the Deluge. . . . For time and the curse which sins deserve destroy everything. Thus when the world was obliterated by the Deluge, together with its people and cattle, this famous garden was also obliterated and became lost.” Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5*, Luther’s Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958), 88. The interpretation proposed above has the benefit if integrating these verses into their context.

I should also note that I am indebted to Bryan Smith for a conversation on May 17, 2012 in which he pointed out that the building blocks of society are found in this passage.

²¹ It has become common to read עֲבָד and שָׁמַר in light of their usage later in the Pentateuch, where they occur in material about the duties of the priests. This is thought to establish Eden as a primeval sanctuary the priestly nature of Adam’s work. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and The Church’s Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 66–69, 84–85, 87. While, the material about the priests and the tabernacle do look back to Eden, it is inappropriate to read priestly work and a primeval sanctuary back into Genesis 1–2. The context here supports the standard translations of the passage (KJV, NKJV, NRSV, NASB, ESV), expressed more expansively by the NIV as “to work it and take care of it.” Daniel Block observes, “Based on priestly elements and links with the instructions for the tabernacle’s construction (Exod. 25–31), many argue that God created the cosmos, and even the garden of Eden, as a temple. However, this interpretation is doubtful on three counts. First, all the supposedly priestly elements are capable of different interpretations. Second, while the instructions concerning the tabernacle suggest that the structure was designed as a microcosm of creation, this does not mean creation is a macrocosm of the tabernacle. Finally, the interpretation is precluded by the function of sanctuaries in the Bible and the ancient Near East. Temples were constructed as residences for deity. Although God walked about in the garden, he did not live there; nor did he create the world so he could have a home.” Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 298. For a longer argument, see Daniel I. Block, “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence,” in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*, ed. David M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 31–32. In the longer essay Block comments, “In my response to reading Gn 1–3 as temple-building texts, I have hinted at the fundamental hermeneutical problem involved in this approach. The question is, should we read Gn 1–3 in the light of later texts, or should we read later texts in light of these? If we read the accounts of the order given, then the creation account provides essential background to primeval history, which provides background for the patriarchal, exodus, and tabernacle narratives. By themselves and by this reading the accounts of Gn 1–3 offer no clues that a cosmic or Edenic temple might be involved. However, as noted above, the Edenic features of the tabernacle, the Jerusalem temple, and the temple envisioned by Ezekiel are obvious. Apparently their design and function intended to capture something of the original environment in which human beings were placed. However, the fact that Israel’s

Genesis 2:16–17 establishes that human dominion must be exercised under God’s greater dominion. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test to see if man would rule in submission to God. The prohibition itself should have brought about the knowledge that humans are to do nothing apart from the authority of God.²² Man could have come to the knowledge of good and evil by submitting to God’s command and refusing to eat from the tree.²³

Human rule in submission to God’s greater rule was the goal from the beginning. Though the Fall does not remove from mankind his rule over the world (Gen. 9:1–2), human rule after the Fall is disordered by sin.²⁴ Understanding the importance of human rule over the earth in submission to God’s greater rule will become a significant component of the kingdom of God theme in Scripture.

Genesis 2:18–25 turns to the “be fruitful and multiply” aspect of Genesis 2:18–25.²⁵ For man to carry out Genesis 1:26–28, he needs a helper who corresponds to him. This helper can help him in many

sanctuaries were Edenic does not make Eden into a sacred shrine. At best this is a nonreciprocating equation.” Ibid., 20–21.

²² “Man was thereby taught. 1. That God is lord of all things; and that it is unlawful for man, even to desire an apple, but with his leave. In all things therefore, from the greatest to the least, the mouth of the Lord is to be consulted, as to what he would, or would not have done by us. 2. That man's true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing to be desired, but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for him. So that it is he only, on whose account all other things appear good and desirable to man. 3. Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful, and desirable things if God so command: and to think, there is much more good in obedience to the divine precept, than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world.” Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, trans. William Crookshank (1822; repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010), 68–69 (1.3.21).

²³ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (1948; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 31–32.

²⁴ David VanDrunen observes, “The command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ in 9:1, 7 reiterates the creation mandate in 1:28 and, though Genesis 9 does not use the language of having dominion and subduing the earth found in 1:26, 28, the statements about human superiority over animals and the enforcement of justice in 9:2–6 evoke the dominion idea.” David VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 105; cf. Jeremy Cohen, *“Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It”: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 26–27. A comparison of Genesis 1:28b and Genesis 9:2 strengthens this assessment:

Genesis 1:28b—. . . and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

וַיִּרְדּוּ בְּדִגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּה הַרְמִשֶׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ: —Genesis 1:28

Genesis 9:2—² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.

וּמִרְאֵיכֶם וּחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמֹשׁ הָאֲדָמָה וּבְכָל־דְּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיָדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: —Genesis 9:2

²⁵ The dominion aspect is not absent from this section however. Several interpreters note that Adam’s naming of the animals is an act of dominion. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). See also Psalm 147:4; Ephesians 3:15. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 228.

facets of his rule over the world, but she is especially needed if mankind is to be “fruitful and multiply.”

If Genesis 2:5–25 is an “exposition of [Genesis] 1:26–28,” as the preceding has sought to demonstrate, then the structure of these opening chapters of Genesis testify to the central importance of those verses. It is also significant that while modern theologians have emphasized the *imago dei*, Moses placed the emphasis on the fecundity and dominion aspects of Genesis 1:28. This observation is not meant to diminish the significance of the *imago*, but it does indicate that the *imago dei* must not be stressed at the expense of God’s words about subduing the earth and multiplying upon it.

Genesis 3

Genesis 3 focuses on whether Adam and Eve will heed the instructions of Genesis 2:16–17.²⁶ The key themes of Genesis 1:26–28—blessing, seed, rule/land—reoccur in God’s pronouncement of judgment for sin (3:16–19). The theme of blessing finds its analogue in Genesis 3 in the curse (3:17). Though the word curse (אָרֶר) only appears in verse 17, the reversal of blessing occurs throughout these verses. Fittingly, this reversal of blessing focuses on seed (3:16) and dominion over the earth (3:17–19).²⁷

Eve will continue to bear children, so the blessing of being fruitful and multiplying is not removed.²⁸ But in a fallen world it is not just children who will multiply. “I will surely multiply [רָבַדָּהּ] your pain in childbearing.”²⁹ In fact, this statement itself is multiplied by being repeated twice in verse 16, in slightly different forms.

Adam’s role as the cultivator of the ground is reaffirmed (see also 3:23). But the ground now resists human dominion.³⁰ It is painful to work the ground, and the ground produces thorns in thistles along with food. In the end, it seems as though the ground will have dominion over the man because the man returns to the dust of which he was created.³¹

Notably, the fact that the whole creation fell when man fell into sin testifies to the reality of human dominion. Because man was given dominion over the world, his sin has cosmic consequences.³²

²⁶ Once again, structurally, we have a section of the text that looks back to several key verses in a preceding section and expands upon it.

²⁷ A curse also appears in 3:14–15.

²⁸ “Curses are uttered against the serpent and the ground, but not against the man and woman, implying that the blessing has not been utterly lost.” Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 243; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

²⁹ רָבַדָּהּ, “multiply,” is the same word used in Genesis 1:28.

³⁰ “The ground will now be his enemy rather than his servant.” Matthews, *Genesis 1–11*, 252. Leupold speaks of the “insubordination” of the ground. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, (1942; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 1:173; Waltke, 95.

³¹ “Once again the judgment is related to the offense. Mankind had been given dominion over the creation when Adam and Eve were first formed. But now the ground claims victory—it brings mankind into ultimate subjection.” John D. Currid, *Genesis, An EP Study Commentary* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2003), 1:136. Note, however, that the body of Christ was not dominated by the earth after death. He did not suffer decay (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:25–32; Acts 13:35, in context). He was the king; he was not conquered.

³² Though some might wish to read Genesis 3:17–19 narrowly as referring to the ground alone, Romans 8:19–23 indicates that the effects of the Fall were cosmic. Romans 8:20 says “the creation was subjected to futility, not

Genesis 3:15 is closely connected to Genesis 1:26–28. It is related to the theme of blessing and cursing in a complex way. It is a curse upon the serpent, but as the *protoevangelium*, it is a blessing to the people of God. Its reference to the seed of the woman connects with the theme of offspring in Genesis 1:28.³³ The struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is a struggle for dominion.³⁴

Genesis 4

C. John Collins argues that the structure of Genesis 4 “consists of three episodes, each beginning with a man ‘knowing’ (יָדַע, *yada*) his wife (אִשְׁתּוֹ, *’ishtô*), who then ‘bears’ (יָלַד, *yalad*) a son: Gen. 4:1, 17, 25.”³⁵ If Collins’s observations are correct, then chapter 4 is structured around the *seed* theme.

But the content of the chapter is focused heavily on the *land/dominion* theme. At the beginning of this chapter Cain is the worker of the ground (4:2–3). Cain’s occupation is to cultivate the ground, but as the story unfolds he murders his brother in the field—the place of cultivation.³⁶ Because Abel’s blood cries to God from the ground, the ground figures prominently in Cain’s punishment. He is cursed from the ground, which means that the ground will no longer produce for him.³⁷ In addition Cain is exiled from his land and becomes “a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (4:12). However, Cain rebelled against God and built a city. The first record of civilization is in connection with the line of Cain (Gen. 4:17–24).

Commentators seem to struggle with the significance of Genesis 4:17–22. The emergence of culture is obviously the theme (as noted by almost all the commentators), but the focus on the line of Cain is troublesome to many. For instance, Calvin is careful to note that the godly were also exercising creativity at this time. This raises the question: why did God emphasize the emergence of culture among the ungodly?³⁸ Wenham suggests this passage teaches that every part of culture is “tainted” by sin.³⁹ Calvin argues that this passage demonstrates God’s grace in gifting the sinful as well as the righteous.⁴⁰ While making valid observations, these interpreters fail to understand the passage’s full significance because they fail to understand its purpose in the opening chapters of Genesis. These

willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope.” John Murray notes, “‘By reason of him who subjected it’—this can be none other than God, not Satan, nor man. Neither Satan nor man could have subjected it *in hope*; only God could have subjected it with such a design.” John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:303. According to Cranfield, “The sense is well expressed by Gaugler’s paraphrase: ‘because of the judicial decision pronounced by God on account of Adam’s sin.’” C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:414.

³³ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 246.

³⁴ I am indebted to a January 23, 2015 conversation with Bryan Smith for some of these observations.

³⁵ Collins, *Genesis*, 191; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 97.

³⁶ Leupold, 1:206; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 107.

³⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (1847; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 209.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

³⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 111.

⁴⁰ Calvin, 218.

verses expand the themes of the creation blessing. Cain is fruitful, and he multiplies (implied by the building of a city).⁴¹ The cultural achievements are all instances of subduing the earth. These cultural achievements are recorded in the line of Cain not simply to demonstrate that God still blesses wicked people but to demonstrate specifically that Genesis 1:28 still remained force among fallen people.⁴²

Also present is the *blessing/cursing* theme: Eve gets a man with the help of the LORD (blessing), and blessing is evident when God appoints another seed instead of Abel. More prominent in the chapter is cursing, the mirror to blessing. In many ways the punishment of Cain is an intensification of the punishment received by Adam.⁴³ The ground was cursed such that it would require extra work from Adam to make it productive; Cain is cursed (the person, not the ground this time) such that the ground will not produce for him. Adam and Eve were exiled from Eden, and at the eastern edge of the garden cherubim blocked the entrance; Cain is exiled from his land and moves further east of Eden to the land of wandering (Nod).⁴⁴

Conclusion

The first major section of Genesis following the prologue confirms the significance of Genesis 1:26–28. The first pericope in this section is an exposition of Genesis 1:26–28. The second pericope of this section includes the themes of Genesis 1:26–28 in God’s decisive judgements after the Fall. These words of judgment define our present condition and provide the first hope of redemption. The third pericope in this section is structured by, and is in large part taken up with, the themes of Genesis 1:26–28.

Not only are the themes of Genesis 1:26–28 pervasive in this first major section at Genesis, but several passages that commentators have found difficult to integrate into the whole are seen to cohere with their context once the importance of Genesis 1:26–28 is recognized.

⁴¹ Lamech’s bigamy should also be viewed in the context of the multiplication of progeny. While sexual sin in our culture is tied to lust, polygamy in the Old Testament is typically tied to gaining more offspring. I am indebted to Tom Parr for bringing this to my attention.

⁴² Because this record occurs in the context of a larger demonstration of human sinfulness, and because Lamech’s bigamy is an obvious disordering of the first part of the creation blessing, Wenham’s conclusion about the taint of sin is also true.

⁴³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108.

⁴⁴ Currid, 1:151.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL INDICATIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Theology of Genesis

Genesis 1:26–28 is not significant for the first section of Genesis alone. Its themes pervade the entire book. As the first book of the Bible, Genesis is the seedbed for a multitude of themes that are developed throughout the rest of the Bible. Nevertheless, James McKeown argues that standing out among all the themes of Genesis are three “unifying themes.”⁴⁵ Notably, the three unifying themes that McKeown identifies first occur together in Genesis 1:26–28: seed, land, and blessing.⁴⁶

Unifying Theme: Seed

There is a close connection between the structure of the book and the seed theme. The *toldedoth* formulas, best translated “these are the generations of,” mark the major structural divisions of the book. Thus the entire book of Genesis is structured according to the seed theme.⁴⁷

The seed theme is also prominent in the seminal texts of Genesis: 1:26–28; 3:15; 12:1–3. These texts set the agenda for the book. In every part of the book the seed theme appears refracted through these key texts.

Genealogies are an important part of Genesis, and one of their functions is to show that humans truly were being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth.⁴⁸ Notably, the genealogies indicate that this was true even for those outside the Abrahamic Covenants. They also function is to link the recipients of God’s blessing to the first statement of blessing in Genesis 1:26–28.⁴⁹

The struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent also runs throughout the book, beginning with Cain’s murder of Abel (1 John 3:12).⁵⁰ God raised up Seth as a seed in place of Abel (4:25).⁵¹ The seeming triumph of the seed of the serpent leading to the Flood puts all mankind at risk, were it not for God’s choice of Noah to preserve a seed.⁵² In the patriarchal narratives there is a repeated contrast between the chosen seed and the rejected seed: Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau. The same pattern appears to be playing out between Joseph

⁴⁵ According to McKeown, these unifying themes can be identified by the following criteria: (1) They occur “in every major narrative,” (2) they are closely tied to the “structure” of the book, and (3) they connect Genesis to “the other books of the Pentateuch.” A fourth factor, not noted by McKeown, is the intertwining of these themes with each other in Genesis.

⁴⁶ McKeown, 197. Kenneth Mathews also observes, “This promissory triad of blessing, seed, and land is the thematic cord binding the Book of Genesis.” Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 197; cf. Kenneth A. Mathews, “Genesis,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 141–45.

⁴⁷ McKeown, 200; Mathews, “Genesis,” 141.

⁴⁸ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 427; McKeown, 67.

⁴⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 298; Waltke, 107; McKeown, 203.

⁵⁰ Currid, 1:130; McKeown, 198.

⁵¹ Currid, 1:157; McKeown, 198.

⁵² McKeown, 198

and his brothers, especially between Joseph and Judah. But in this final *toldedoth*, God graciously not only redeems and includes Judah but also exalts him.⁵³

From Abraham onward, the struggle to have a seed is a major part of the narrative. Though promised a multitude of offspring, Abraham and Sarah must wait many years to have a son. In this period Sarah is twice put at risk through Abraham's deception and taken into a royal harem. Abraham's taking of Hagar as a second wife is a failed human effort to bring about the promises of God. Finally, Isaac is born, as God promised, though this seems to be put at risk by God's command that he be sacrificed.⁵⁴ Though less space is given to it, Rebekah is also barren. The birth of Jacob and Esau is the answer to Isaac's prayer.⁵⁵ Finally, the struggle for preeminence between Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel leads to the birth of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Central to this struggle as well is Rachel's barrenness.⁵⁶

At the close of Genesis, Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons is really a blessing on their seed. One of these sons, Judah, has royal promises extended to his seed. This makes the genealogies from Adam to Judah in Genesis a "royal lineage,"⁵⁷ connecting the seed theme to the kingdom theme.⁵⁸

Unifying Theme: Land/Dominion

Intertwined with the seed theme throughout Genesis is the land theme. Genesis uses several different land words, and these words can be translated in several ways. The English words *earth*, *land*, *ground*, *field*, and even *dust* translate Hebrew land words.

In the very first verse of Genesis, God created the earth, and the rest of chapter 1 is a description of how God formed and filled the earth. In the climatic verses of the chapter, God gave man the right to rule over the earth, with its animal and plant inhabitants (1:26-30).

Land continues to be a major theme in the Flood narrative. God saw that instead of filling the earth with their seed, humans had instead filled the earth with violence and corruption (6:11-12).⁵⁹ Thus the earth and all on it will be destroyed, save Noah and those God rescued through him (6:13, 17). A cleansing of the earth with water, however, could not solve the problem of humans born with wicked hearts (8:21). Thus God made a covenant with Noah in which God placed limits on his judgment while he works out the plan of redemption (8:21-22, 9:1-17). God also reaffirmed the role of mankind in filling and ruling over the earth (9:1-7).

⁵³ Ibid., 206-17; Bryan Smith, "The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity," (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2002), 308-9.

⁵⁴ See McKeown, 210-13.

⁵⁵ See Ibid., 213-14.

⁵⁶ See Ibid., 214.

⁵⁷ T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 109-10.

⁵⁸ The above is simply a survey of the seed theme in Genesis that outlines its broad contours. A close reading of the book will reveal that the seed theme is worked into the details of many of the accounts. This theme appears in every chapter of Genesis.

⁵⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 171.

Genesis 10–11 reveal that despite sinful resistance, mankind did fill the earth. However, because of the resistance at Babel, the filling in many ways began as an exile rather than as the blessing that it should have been.⁶⁰

With all the importance placed on land in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, it is no surprise that land is one of the three central promises that God gave to Abraham (12:1, 7). As the narrative develops, the land promise is elaborated upon. Abraham is promised the land, but it is also a possession of his seed. The borders and the time that his seed will come into possession of the land is given (15:12–16). And Abraham's faith is tested regarding the land as he experiences famine in the land and lives in it as a sojourner. In the end it is implied that Abraham will bless the world by in some sense ruling over it (22:17–18).⁶¹ But at the end of the life Abraham only owns a burial ground in the land.⁶²

The promise of the land is passed on to Isaac, though his faith is tested both by famine and opposition from the Philistines. He passes the land blessing on to Jacob, but since Jacob achieved the blessing by deceit, he ended up exiled from the land. Nonetheless, God met him on his way out of the land and reaffirmed that Jacob would return to the land and that his seed would possess it. Once out of the land, all manner of obstacles hindered Jacob from returning to it. Laban found reasons to keep Jacob in Padan-Aram. Esau invited him to Seir. And Jacob himself was slow to return to Bethel as he had promised. But when he returned God reaffirmed that Jacob's seed would receive the land and would rule as kings over it (35:11). There is even a hint that the reign of Jacob's seed would extend over other nations as well.⁶³

⁶⁰ McKeown, 72; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 476.

⁶¹ At the end of the passage God confirms the land promise by promising that Israel will possess the gates of its enemies (22:17). This at least refers to the conquest of the land. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 112. But there may be more to this promise than the conquest under Joshua. Certain prophetic passages also look to Israel's future rule over her enemies, and they relate this rule to the promise that the seed of Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations of earth. For instance, Isaiah 14:2 predicts that once Israel is restored to the land after a time of tribulation (ch. 13), she will “take captive those who were their captives, and rule over those who oppressed them.” In that future day, “the nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste” (Isa. 60:12; cf. Jer. 31:7–9). Since Isaiah 11 and Zechariah 14 indicate that in the Millennium not all nations will submit to the Messianic King in all things and will therefore come under judgment, there could be something punitive in view. However, the rule of the Messianic King over Israel's former enemies can also be viewed as a great blessing to those nations. Robert Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 231–34. From this latter perspective there is a close connection, then, between Abraham's seed possessing the gates of its enemies and all the nations of the earth being blessed in Abraham's seed (22:18).

⁶² Owning one's burial plot in the promised land points toward ultimate fulfillment only if the resurrection is a reality.

⁶³ Along with the reaffirmation of the land promise, Jacob was promised that “a nation and a company of nations shall come from you” (35:11). Land is likely implied in this promise. Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 2005), 622. Likewise, kings rule over land, so land is also likely implied in the promise, “and kings shall come from your own body” (35:11). Since the kings are said to come, “from your loins” (lit.), the kings come from Jacob in physical descent. However, one could argue that an intentional distinction is meant between the kings who come by physical descent (“from your loins”) and the company of nations (וְיִקְהֵל גּוֹיִם) that are related to Jacob in a more generic “from you.”

In contrast to Jacob, Esau and his seed will not receive the land. Given a nomadic lifestyle Esau seems to have come and gone between Canaan and Seir. But once Jacob returned, there was no room for them both, and Esau left for Seir (36:1-8). This is a clear indication that Esau did not receive the promised land. This is further emphasized by the repetition of the *toldedoth* formula for Esau, this time with the addition “the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir” (36:7), and by closing Esau’s *toldedoth* section with the words, “Jacob lived in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan” (37:1).

Joseph’s exile to Egypt was the first exile in the book that does not come as a consequence of the exiled person’s sin. Instead, God was preparing a way for his people to dwell in Egypt as he had predicted in Genesis 15. One indication that this exile was not a punishment is the fact that even though Jacob’s family were foreigners and despised shepherds, they came into possession of the best of the land of Egypt (47:6, 11). Yet despite the goodness of the land of Goshen, it is clear that Canaan remained the promised land. God promised to bring Jacob back to Canaan (46:4). Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him with Abraham and Isaac in Canaan (47:29-31). The book closes with Joseph making his brothers swear to take his body back to Canaan when they leave Egypt.

Land is also integral to the royal promise given to Judah. A descendant of Judah will rule as king over his brothers (49:8), and kingly rule implies land both for Judah and for all the other tribes over which a Judahite will reign. But not only will the tribes of Israel be subject to him, the peoples will obey him (49:10).⁶⁴ This is another indication that the land promise will extend beyond the borders of the Promised Land to encompass the world.

What becomes clear as Genesis unfolds is God’s commitment to Genesis 1:26-28. Abraham’s seed is to exercise dominion in promised land under God’s greater rule. This rule of the land under God is then to extend to all the world. The effects of the Fall are real, but they do not ultimately derail the dominion aspects of God’s purpose in Genesis 1:26-28. Indeed, those purposes remain central to God’s redemptive purposes.

Unifying Theme: Blessing

The creation account climaxes with a blessing: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’ (1:28). Dominion over the earth and a seed that will fill the earth are the great blessings that God gives to mankind at creation. This verse is the foundation for the blessing theme throughout the remainder of Genesis.

The flip side of blessing is cursing. After the first sin, God brings in curses that affect the original creation blessing. As the Genesis account unfolds, sin continues to result in curses. Cain is cursed from the ground for his murder of Abel. Ham’s seed, Canaan is cursed, for Ham’s sin against his father.

But God did not forget blessing. In the Noahic Covenant God reiterated the original statement of blessing. This blessing is further amplified in the Abrahamic Covenant. God selected Abram from a family of idolaters and extended to him a special blessing. His seed will become a great nation. He

A hint of worldwide rule may also be found in 28:14. The universal blessing aspect of the promise to Abraham that would be alluded to by this distinction.

⁶⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 11-50*, 896; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 478.

and his seed will be given dominion over a land. But God was not merely ensuring that that his original intention expressed in Genesis 1:26–28 will take root in a particular family. The rest of the world will be blessed or cursed as they relate to Abraham. The goal is for Abraham to mediate blessing to all the families of the earth.

Blessing continues to be a major theme in the *tolodoth* of Isaac. The blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant is being passed on to his seed. Jacob's quest to receive blessing drives the narrative, from his deal with Esau, to his deception of Isaac, to his pleading for a blessing as he wrestles with God. The account exposes the futility of seeking the blessing through connivance, for Jacob ends up exiled from land and family for much of his life. Instead, he must receive the blessing by grace.

In the final *tolodoth* of Genesis, the seed of Abraham is in a small way seen to be a blessing to the nations as Joseph rises to prominence in Egypt. His wisdom provides food for the region during the famine. The book also closes with Jacob's blessing of his sons.

Conclusion

While some sections of Genesis develop additional themes, the themes of seed, blessing, and land are clearly the three unifying themes of the entire book. Thus one could say that thematically the entire book of Genesis flows from Genesis 1:26–28. That being the case, one could argue that Genesis 1:26–28 is the most significant set of verses for establishing the theology of Genesis.

Longitudinal Biblical Theology

Not only does Genesis 1:26–28 establish the central unifying themes for a book theology of Genesis, but these verses also lie at the root of two themes that run throughout the entire Bible: covenant and kingdom.

Biblical Covenants

The biblical covenants all have as central components the themes of blessing, seed, and land. This is unsurprising since the covenants exist to restore what was lost in the Fall. As already established, the judgments that God pronounced in Genesis 3 were reversals of Genesis 1:26–28.

Noahic Covenant

The Noahic covenant is closely linked with the creation narratives. The Flood judgment was a kind of de-creation, and the Noahic covenant “is best understood in terms of a ‘recreation’—a restoration of the divine order and God's visible kingship that had been established at creation.”⁶⁵ The Noahic Covenant is initially stated in terms of the internal speech of God in response to Noah's sacrifice in Genesis 8:20–22.⁶⁶ This internal speech of God emphasizes God's purpose to preserve the creation from further judgment as God works out his plan of redemption.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 60–61; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 188; Gentry and Wellum, 162–63.

⁶⁶ Vos, 51.

⁶⁷ Williamson, 62; Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (New York: Duyckinck, 1811), 40; Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty against the Oppressions of the Present Day* (Boston: Boyle, 1773), 6.

In Genesis 9:1–17 the covenant is declared to Noah. God’s declaration of the covenant to Noah begins by echoing of Genesis 1:26–28. In fact, Genesis 9:2 repeats Genesis 1:28 almost word for word with two differences: (1) the order of the phrases have shifted, and (2) the phrase “and have dominion” is replaced by the phrases “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon. . .” and “into your hand they are delivered.” The phrase “into your hand they are delivered” is the language of dominion and subduing placed in the context of the Fall.⁶⁸ The point of Genesis 9:2, 7 is that God intends to sustain the purposes stated in Genesis 1:28 in the fallen world.

By reaffirming Genesis 1:26–28 and by creating a stable place for God to work out the plan of redemption, the Noahic covenant also looks forward to the day of full redemption.⁶⁹

Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant reaffirms Genesis 1:26–28 for the sake of the nations. G. K. Beale observes the close connection between the Genesis 1:26–28 and the Abrahamic covenant:

The commission of Gen 1:28 involved the following elements: (1) ‘God blessed them’; (2) ‘be fruitful and multiply’; (3) ‘fill the earth’; (4) ‘subdue’ the ‘earth’; (4) ‘rule over . . . all the earth’ (so Gen 1:26, and reiterated in 1:28). The commission is repeated, for example, to Abraham: (1) ‘I will greatly bless you; and (2) will greatly multiply your seed . . . ; (3–5) and your seed will possess the gate of their enemies [= “subdue and rule”]. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. . .’ (Gen 22:17–18).⁷⁰

Beale’s observation is confirmed by a survey of land (dominion), seed, and blessing in the key Abrahamic covenant passages.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 400–1; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 192.

⁶⁹ Williamson, 67–68. “[T]he flood narrative provides an anticipation of the eschatological ‘destruction’ and renewal of creation. This is the main thrust of 2 Peter 3:1–10, which seem to be suggesting that on the day of judgement the earth will be ‘destroyed’ by fire just as it had been ‘destroyed’ by water during the time of Noah. As Bauckham, Williams and Wright have pointed out, however, this does not imply that the earth will be completely done away with—after all the earth was not done away with by the flood. Nevertheless, it does point to the fact that the renewal of creation will involve a cataclysmic change or transition, the closest ‘historical’ parallel to which is the flood.” Aaron Chalmers, “The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2008): 215.

⁷⁰ Gregory K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 13.

⁷¹ In the following list the key terms are coded as **land/dominion**, **seed**, and **blessing**.

Genesis 12:1–3—Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the **land** that I will show you. And I will make of you a **great nation**, and I will **bless** you and **make your name great**, so that you will be a **blessing**. I will **bless** those who **bless** you, and him who **dishonors** you I will **curse**, and in you all the families of the earth shall be **blessed**.”

Genesis 12:7—Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your **offspring** I will give this **land**.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 17:2—that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may **multiply** you greatly.”

Genesis 17:6—I will make you exceedingly **fruitful**, and I will **make you into nations**, and **kings shall come from you**.

Genesis 17:8—And I will give to you and to your **offspring** after you the **land** of your sojournings, all the **land** of Canaan, for an everlasting **possession**, and I will be their God.”

While all three themes are present in the Abrahamic covenant, it is important to note that these themes all contribute to Scripture's kingdom theme. The land is the domain, the seed is the king, and the blessing is the rule of the seed over the domain. Beale comments, "Notice that the ruling aspect of the commission is expressed to Abraham elsewhere as a role of "kinship" (Gen 17:6, 16), and likewise with respect to Jacob (Gen 35:11)."⁷² Wenham sees a royal aspect to the entire set of promises: "Behind the fourfold promise of nationhood, a great name, divine protection, and mediatorship of blessing E. Ruprecht (VT 29 [1979] 445-64) has plausibly detected echoes of royal ideology. What Abram is here promised was the hope of many an oriental monarch (cf. 2 Sam 7:9; Ps. 72:17)."⁷³

At the end of Genesis Jacob prophesied a king from Judah would rule over a restored earth (49:8-12). Bryan Smith observes how in the details of the king tying his donkey to a vine this kingly prophecy is a prophecy of a restored creation:

Though His donkey will no doubt eat the grapes, He feels free to use a 'choice vine'⁷⁴ as a hitching-post, and He does not hesitate to wash his clothes in 'the blood of grapes.' . . . Moses has spoken before about a world of great abundance, one that the infinite Creator called "very good" (Gen. 1:31). But sin made man exchange the garden planted by God Himself for thorns, sweat, and death. Pinched by a world that opposes his labors, man would have to wait for the coming of the one who will crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Just before the curtain falls on the stage of Genesis, Moses assures the reader that Eden will be restored when He who owns the right of kingship sets up His universal dominion. By subjugating all the peoples of the earth and once again making creation "very good," He will prove

Genesis 22:16-18—and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely **bless** you, and I will surely **multiply your offspring** as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your **offspring** shall **possess the gate of his enemies**, and in your **offspring** shall all the nations of the earth be **blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."

Genesis 26:3-4—Sojourn in this **land**, and I will be with you and will **bless** you, for to you and to your **offspring** I will give all these **lands**, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will **multiply your offspring** as the stars of heaven and will give to your **offspring** all these **lands**. And in your **offspring** all the nations of the earth shall be **blessed**.

Genesis 26:24—And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will **bless** you and **multiply your offspring** for my servant Abraham's sake."

Genesis 28:3—God Almighty **bless** you and make you **fruitful and multiply** you, that you may become a **company of peoples**.

Genesis 35:11-12—And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: **be fruitful and multiply**. A **nation and a company of nations** shall come from you, and **kings** shall come from your own body. The **land** that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the **land** to your **offspring** after you."

Genesis 48:3-4—And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and **blessed** me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you **fruitful and multiply** you, and I will make of you a **company of peoples** and will give this **land** to your **offspring** after you for an everlasting possession.'

References gleaned from Gentry and Wellum, 226-27.

⁷² Beale, "Eden," 13, n. 18.

⁷³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

⁷⁴ "The coming golden age is often presented in the OT as a time of plentiful harvests (e.g., Lev. 26:5; Ps. 72:16; Isa. 25:6; Joel 2:24; Amos 9:13)." Smith, 215, n. 61.

Himself to be both the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham. His triumph will reverse the serpent's catastrophic deed and will bless all the peoples of the earth.⁷⁵

Once again, it is important to note the continuity of the blessing, seed, and land themes in the biblical covenants. First promised in the Adamic covenant, seed and land came under the curse in the Fall. The blessings of seed and land are reaffirmed in the Noahic covenant, though in the context of the Fall. The Abrahamic covenant's promises also revolve around promises of seed and land to a particular people along with the promise that these people will extend God's blessing to all the peoples of the earth. The Abrahamic covenant also carries specific promises about a coming king.

Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic covenant was designed to provide for "initial and partial fulfillment" of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant until the coming of the Messiah.⁷⁶ As part of the seed promise to Abraham, God promised to make of him a great nation (Gen. 12:2). This is reaffirmed in the Mosaic covenant in the promise that Israel will be a holy nation to the Lord (Ex. 19:5; cf. Ex. 2:24; 6:3-8). The Abrahamic promises regarding land and kingdom are also furthered in the Mosaic covenant. Israel will be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:11) that inherits the land promised to Abraham (Ex. 34:11). God's intention for the blessing that he provided to Abraham and his seed to be mediated to the nations is also carried forward in the Mosaic covenant. As a kingdom of priests to the nations (Ex. 19:6), Israel was to bless the families of the earth by leading them to the true God (Deut. 4:1-8).

It should not be forgotten that God's purposes for Abraham regarding blessing, seed, and land/dominion are rooted in God's original creational purposes as stated in Genesis 1:28. God intended to further his original purposes for creation through both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. This is even alluded to in Exodus 19:5 in the statement "for all the earth is mine."⁷⁷

Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant reaffirms the themes of seed, land/dominion, and blessing. God promised David that he will raise up a seed after him (seed theme), God will establish a kingdom for this seed (land/dominion theme), and God will establish a house, or dynasty for him (seed and dominion theme combined). All of this is a blessing, and David recognized that this blessing will extend to the nations: "You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God" (2 Sam. 7:19).⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid., 215-16.

⁷⁶ Saucy, 59, n. 1.

⁷⁷ "Dumbrell rightly notes that phrase 'because [*ki*] the whole earth is mine' should be understood 'not as an assertion of the right to choose but as the *reasons* or *goal* for the choice' ('The Prospect of the Unconditionality of the Sinaitic Covenant,' in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. A. Gileadi [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1988], 146.) Cf. Fretheim, who also translates this as 'because the whole earth is mine' and notes that it links this text with the missional purpose of God first articulated to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 ('Because the Whole Earth Is Mine,' [*Interpretation* 50, no. 3 (July 1996):] 237)." Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 38, n. 56.

⁷⁸ Dumbrell, 151-52.

This continuity is significant because it indicates that the kingdom theme finds its roots in the creation blessing. The promises of the Davidic covenant are thus designed to bring about the restoration of the original dominion of the creation blessing.

The continuity of the kingdom theme with Genesis 1:28 finds confirmation in Hebrews 1 and 2. Hebrews 2:6–8 quotes Psalm 8’s reference to the promise of dominion given in the creation blessing: “you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet” (2:8). Hebrews 2:5 links that promise of dominion to the Davidic kingdom: “For it was not to angels that God submitted the world to come, of which we are speaking.” The phrase “of which we are speaking” links back to chapter 1. In 1:13 the author comments that God did not give the Davidic covenant promise of Psalm 110, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet,” to angels. In fact, from 1:5 through 1:13, Davidic covenant promises permeate the proofs of the exalted incarnate son. These passages clearly link Genesis 1:27–28 and the promises of the Davidic covenant.

The seed theme is clearly picked up in the Davidic covenant’s promise of great things for David’s son. David’s last words reflect on the promise of this covenant that his house will provide a ruler who fears God. This will result in the blessing of all the people (2 Sam. 23:3–5). The land theme is seen in passages like Psalm 72:8–11 where the borders of the Davidic kings reign are mentioned.⁷⁹ The blessing theme is seen especially in 1 Kings 4 in which the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are seen in some sense realized in Solomon’s reign, including the mediating of those blessings to the nations.

First Kings 4 is worth some additional attention because the author of 1 Kings intentionally drew parallels between Solomon’s reign and the Abrahamic covenant. Verse 20 says, “Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea,” a reference back to Genesis 22:17, “I will surely multiply your offspring . . . as the sand that is on the seashore.” Verse 21 of 1 Kings 4 says, “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.”⁸⁰ This is a partial fulfillment of God’s promise, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18; cf. 17:8). First Kings 4:34 says that “people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.” This reflects Genesis 22:8, “And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (cf. 12:3; 18:18). Thus all three aspects of the Abrahamic covenant—seed, land, and blessing—are fulfilled in Solomon’s reign. And yet, as the narrative of Kings demonstrates, these elements are present typologically, pointing to their greater fulfillment in the future.

Indeed, the language of 1 Kings 4 is the language that the prophets use to describe the Messianic kingdom in the latter days.⁸¹ In Solomon’s day, “Judah and Israel lived in safety” (4:25). In the Messianic

⁷⁹ In this case the borders promised to Abraham are extended to embrace the entire world.

⁸⁰ It may be significant to the typology that Solomon is a king who rules over other kingdoms. Though the boundaries given in 1 Kings 4:24–25 correspond to those God promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18), the text does not actually say that the Israelite kingdom filled those borders. Rather, Solomon had dominion over all of the kings within those borders. This reflects the new creation in which the King of kings rules not over an undifferentiated mass of people but over other kings and kingdoms.

⁸¹ Since Micah prophesied before Kings was written, it seems likely that the author of Kings intentionally used language from Micah to connect this part of Solomon’s reign typologically with the Messianic kingdom.

kingdom “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . . and no one shall make them afraid” (Mic. 4:3–5). In Solomon’s day, this safety is for “every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (1 Kgs. 4:25). In the Messianic kingdom, “they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Mic. 4:4; cf. Zech. 3:10).⁸² In Solomon’s day, “people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kgs. 4:34). In the Messianic kingdom, “many nations shall come, and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Mic. 4:2).⁸³

Clearly, the Davidic covenant picks up the themes of blessing, seed, and land from Genesis 1:28. By this point the outlines of how this blessing is going to be restored through a Davidic king are beginning to take shape.

New Covenant

The new covenant—at least in many treatments—seems to focus on soteriological blessing to the exclusion of the themes of seed and land. The new covenant promises the indwelling of the Spirit (36:27; 37:14), the internalization of the law (Jer. 31:33), personal knowledge of God (Jer. 31:33; Eze. 37:27); forgiveness of sin (Jer. 31:34; Eze. 36:25, 33).⁸⁴ These blessings are the fundamental reversal of sin and its effects. They are at the heart of redemption.

But they do not make up the sum total of the new covenant promises. Many of the neglected new covenant provisions relate to the land theme in Scripture. The reestablishment of Jerusalem (Jer. 31:38–40), the return of Israel to its land (Jer. 32:37; 33:36); Eze 36:24; 37: 21), the reunion of Israel and Judah into a single kingdom (Eze. 37:15–22). Other provisions relate to the seed theme. The Davidic line will be established and the Davidic king will be enthroned (Jer. 33:17, 20–22; Eze. 37:24–25).⁸⁵

Though these promises regarding land and seed are Israel-focused, the Gentiles are not left out of the seed and land aspects of the new covenant. Though the specific promises to Israel will be fulfilled just as God promised them to Israel, the Gentiles will be caught up in these promises as well. The Davidic

⁸² Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and Robert K. Johnston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 59.

⁸³ The connection between wisdom and law in the Kings/Micah comparison is not strained. As Craig Bartholomew observes, “The wisdom and legal traditions in the OT are clearly distinct, and yet they manifest some awareness of each other. Both have in common the ordering of the life of God’s people. Van Leeuwen argues persuasively, as we have seen, that a notion of creation order underlies the surface metaphors of Proverbs 1–9.” Craig G. Bartholomew, “A God for Life, and Not Just for Christmas!” in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 55. Thus the wisdom of Solomon’s rule points forward to the Messiah’s rule in which people once again live according to the created order, that is, humans live out the dominion of Genesis 1:28 under God’s greater rule.

⁸⁴ See the listing of the provisions of the new covenant in Layton Talbert, “Interpreting the New Covenant in Light of Its Multiplexity, Multitextuality, and Ethnospecificity” (paper presented at the annual Bible Faculty Summit, Greenville, SC, August 1, 2018), 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

king, the promised Seed, will not reign over Israel alone but over the whole world. And in doing so he will mediate blessings on the lands of the Gentiles as well as on the land of Israel.⁸⁶

Kingdom of God

Because the kingdom comes through the covenants,⁸⁷ the relation of the kingdom theme to Genesis 1:26–28 has already been touched on. Nevertheless, a few comments about the kingdom theme itself must still be made.

Eugene Merrill argues *kingdom* is the central theme in biblical theology.⁸⁸ In making this claim Merrill outlines the criteria for determining a central biblical theme. He observes that a central theme should be “enunciated early on in the canonical witness in unmistakable terms” and then continue as “the interlocking and integrating principle observable throughout the fabric of biblical revelation.” Merrill locates the early enunciation of this theme in Genesis 1:26–28, observing that “[t]he theme that emerges here is that of the sovereignty of God over all His creation, mediated through man, His vice-regent and image.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ The expansion of the Messiah’s kingdom from the borders promised to Abraham to the entire world is specified in Old Testament passages related to these covenants (Gen. 22:17–18; 35:11; 49:10) (see discussion of these passages above). Note especially that in Genesis 49, The earth over which this king from Judah will reign is one of abundant fertility. This is a land in which the curse has been removed. This is an explicit indication that the land promise will extend beyond the borders of the Promised Land to encompass the entire new creation. The Davidic covenant also contains an indication that the Davidic Messiah would reign over more than Israel alone in the statement, “This is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD!” (2 Sam. 7:19). See Dumbrell, 151–52 and Gentry and Wellum, 400. See also Psalm 2:8; 72:8; 108:7–9; 110:5–6.

⁸⁷ I think that the phrase “kingdom through covenant” does capture an important biblical truth. However, I would disagree with significant portions of Wellum and Gentry’s argument in *Kingdom through Covenant*. See Brian C. Collins, “The Land Promise in Scripture: An Evaluation of Progressive Covenantalism’s View of the Land” (paper presented at the annual Bible Faculty Summit, Watertown, WI, July 27, 2016).

⁸⁸ Though it is more likely that kingdom serves as one part of a cluster of central themes, his observations do highlight the significance of kingdom in biblical theology.

⁸⁹ Eugene H. Merrill, “Daniel as a Contribution to Kingdom Theology,” in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 212. The precise wording of Merrill’s statement of the theme is important because scholars have long wrestled with the fact that God has never lost his sovereignty over the earth while the kingdom of God was something not present that drew near in Christ. Craig Blomberg explains this tension by proposing, “It was not that [God] was not previously king, but his sovereignty is now being demonstrated in a new, clearer, and more powerful fashion.” Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 271, n. 1. Thomas Schreiner presents a bit sharper explanation: “[Jesus] was not referring to God’s sovereign reign over all of history, for God has always ruled over all that occurs. The coming of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed designated something new, a time when God’s enemies would be demonstrably defeated and the righteous would be visibly blessed.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 53–54. Though Blomberg and Schreiner are not wrong in what they say, their explanation fails to take into account that the kingdom draws near when Jesus is incarnated as the Davidic Son. Alva McClain’s explanation is similar to Schreiner’s, though McClain does pick up on the mediatorial aspect of the kingdom. He does not, however, root this concept in Genesis 1:26–28 as Merrill does. As a result, McClain sees the mediatorial kingdom as a temporary phase that emerged due to sin: “And it is precisely at this point that the great purpose of the mediatorial kingdom appears: On the basis of blood redemption it will put down at last all rebellion with all its evil results, thus finally bringing the kingdom and will of God on earth *as it is in heaven*. When this purpose

Confirmation of this thesis is found in Jesus's summary of the gospel, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Finally, the final verses of the body of Revelation reads, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:3-5).⁹⁰ This theme is found at the beginning, ending, and focal point of the Scripture story.

Significantly for this paper, this central theme is deeply rooted in Genesis 1:28.

CONCLUSION

Jeremy Cohen in his study of the reception history of Genesis 1:26-28 observes that this passage contains the seeds of key themes within systematic theology.

Scrutinizing the divine blessings of the first parents and its relationship to other passages in Hebrew Scripture, we have touched upon fundamental aspects of the biblical world view: belief in creation (cosmology), the nature of human beings (anthropology), God's concern for his creatures (providence), and the covenantal bonds between the deity and particular individuals or communities (salvation history). The breadth of its ramifications signals the doctrinal importance of Gen. 1:28.⁹¹

It is widely accepted that the *imago dei* remains a fundamental component to a biblical anthropology. Yet, the *imago dei* receives little elaboration in the Old Testament. From Genesis 5:1-3 it may be deduced that being made in God's image is something true not only of Adam and Eve but of their seed as well. From Genesis 9:6 it may be deduced that the Fall did not eliminate the *imago dei* (though it marred it). The passage also shows that the *imago* distinguishes humans from animals. Psalm 8 does not directly speak to the image of God borne by man. But it does say that man was made a little lower than the *elohim*.⁹² In this context, it says that man was "crowned...with glory and honor," which may be a reference to the image of God that mankind bears. The Second Commandment's prohibition of images of deity (Ex. 20:4) may be linked to the reality of the image of God in man. When we fashion images (even of the true God), we place ourselves in the role of

has been accomplished, the mediatorial phase of the kingdom will finally disappear as a separate entity, being merged with the universal kingdom of God." Alva J. McClain, "The Greatness of the Kingdom Part I," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112, no. 445 (Jan 1955): 14, 17. This view also fails to reckon with Revelation 22:3, 5 in which both the Lamb and the saints rule over the new creation forever. In sum, Merrill rightly recognizes, because of Genesis 1:26-28, that the kingdom theme in Scripture is not simply about God's sovereignty over all of his creation. It is about God's sovereignty mediated through man.

⁹⁰ Grant Osborne argues that Revelation 22:6-21 is an epilogue on the grounds of "numerous" parallels with the prologue (1:1-8). Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 777-78. Richard Bauckham's detailed and persuasive study of Revelation's structure also concludes that Revelation 22:6-21 is the book's epilogue. Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 3-4, 6-7, 22. See also Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 33.

⁹¹ Cohen, 35.

⁹² This is a reference to the angels (Heb. 2:7).

creator rather than in the role of creature. We make God in the image of man (or of a lesser creature), but God already created the only authorized image of himself when he made man.⁹³

The New Testament reaffirms and expands on the Old Testament teaching on the *imago*. James 3:9 implies that all humans, not just the redeemed bear the image of God. And yet Paul indicates that there is a renewal that needs to take place regard the image of God in man. In Ephesians Paul tells Christians they need to put off their old self and “to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). He wrote to the Colossians that they had put off the old self “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:20).

In this brief survey of the *imago dei*, I believe I have touched on every single passage that directly addresses the theme of the image of God in man.⁹⁴ What becomes apparent is that while the image of God in man is (rightly) a significant aspect of systematic theology, it does not have the same central role that blessing, seed, and land have in biblical theology.⁹⁵ Thus, if the image of God ought to play a significant role in our theology (and it should), then the creation blessing also ought to play a significant role in our biblical theology.

⁹³ Peter Gentry observes, “The divine image is particularly revealed in living out the Ten Commandments. This is why there could be no image at the centre of Israel’s worship—God wanted the commands or instructions in the ark to be imaged in one’s actions: this was the divine character embodied in human lives!” Gentry & Wellum, 190, n. 23.

⁹⁴ There are other passages that address the theme indirectly. Colossians also makes the interesting statement that the Son is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). John 1:18 says “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” And in John 14:8–9 Jesus told Philip, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father.’” Paul refers to “Christ, who is the image of God” in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Hebrews 3:3 famously says the Son is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”⁹⁴ Once the connection between the *imago dei* and the Son is made, passages that speak of believers being transformed into the likeness of the Son become relevant (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21).

1 Corinthians 11:7 was not addressed above because, as Philip Edgcumbe Hughes observes, Paul was not talking about the *imago dei* in this passage. Rather, Paul was addressing “the question of order and headship in both home and church. To fail to see that it is particularly the domestic situation to which St. Paul is referring must lead to the unsatisfactory conclusion that, because he asserts that man ‘is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man,’ therefore only man and not woman, as created is God’s image.” In this context Paul is teaching that “as head of the home the husband is described in relation to the wife, not as being God, but as imaging God—something that, in this particular sequence, is not true of the wife. It is simply a relationship of order; it is an expression of the orderliness of creation.” In other words, it is in this order of authority that man images God in relation to the woman. Hughes, 22–23.

⁹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the grammar of the passage does link the image of God in man to the kingdom theme. We should translate Genesis 1:28: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness so that they may rule’” Gentry and Wellum, 188. This would indicate that the image of God in man is not dominion over the world itself (as some argue) but is *at least* that humans are of the nature that they have the capacities to rule over God’s world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aquinas, Thomas. *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Augustine. "Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis." In *On Genesis*. The Works of Saint Augustine. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Translated by Edmund Hill. Hyde Park: New City Press, 2002.
- Backus, Isaac. *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty against the Oppressions of the Present Day*. Boston: Boyle, 1773.
- Bartholomew, Craig G. "A God for Life, and Not Just for Christmas!" In *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*. Edited by Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993.
- Beale, G. K. "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 5-31.
- _____. *A New Testament Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- _____. *The Temple and The Church's Mission*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Block, Daniel I. "Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence." In *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by David M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013.
- _____. *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. 2nd edition. Nashville: B&H, 2009.
- Boston, Thomas. *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*. New York: Duyckinck, 1811.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*. Translated by John King. 1847; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Carson, D. A., ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part One*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978.
- Chalmers, Aaron. "The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2008): 207-16.
- Cohen, Jeremy. *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

- Cole, Graham A. *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Collins, Brian C. "The Land Promise in Scripture: An Evaluation of Progressive Covenantalism's View of the Land." Paper presented at the annual Bible Faculty Summit, Watertown, WI, July 27, 2016.
- Collins, C. John. *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary. edited by J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975.
- Currid, John D. *Genesis*. An EP Study Commentary. Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2003.
- Dumbrell, William J. *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984.
- Futato, Mark D. "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1-21.
- Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012.
- Goheen, Michael W. *A Light to the Nations*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Edited by R. K. Harrison. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Harris, R. Laird. "The Mist, the Canopy, and the Rivers of Eden," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1968): 177-79.
- Hartley, John. *The Book of Job*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Edited by Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Hess, Richard. "Genesis 1-2 in Its Literary Context," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41, no. 1 (1990): 143-53.
- Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Edited by D. J. Wiseman. London: Tyndale Press, 1967.
- _____. "Genesis 2:5, 6: Wet or Dry?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 17, no. 1 (1966): 109-14.
- Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Genesis*. 1942; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950.
- Luther, Martin. *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5*. Luther's Works. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Translated by George V. Schick. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958.
- Mathews, Kenneth A. "Genesis." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

- _____. *Genesis 1-11:26*. New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: B&H, 1996.
- _____. *Genesis 11:27-50:26*. New American Commentary. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: B&H, 2005.
- Merrill, Eugene H. "Daniel as a Contribution to Kingdom Theology." In *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*. Edited by Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer. Chicago: Moody, 1986.
- McCabe, Robert V. "A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Account (Part 2 of 2)," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, 11, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 63-133.
- McClain, Alva J. "The Greatness of the Kingdom Part I," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112, no. 445 (Jan 1955): 11-27.
- McKeown, James. *Genesis*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Edited by J. Gordon McConville and Craig Bartholomew. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of Leviticus*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015.
- Murray, John. *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by F. F. Bruce. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Provan, Iain W. *1 and 2 Kings*. New International Biblical Commentary. Edited by Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and Robert K. Johnston. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
- Sailhamer, John. "Genesis." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Volume 2. Edited by Frank E. Gæbelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Saucy, Robert. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Smith, Bryan. "The Presentation of Judah in Genesis 37-50 and Its Implications for the Narrative's Structural and Thematic Unity." PhD dissertation, Bob Jones University, 2002.
- Talbert, Layton. "Interpreting the New Covenant in Light of Its Multiplexity, Multitextuality, and Ethnospecificity." Paper presented at the annual Bible Faculty Summit, Greenville, SC, August 1, 2018.
- Tenney, Merrill C. *Interpreting Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

- Tsumura, David T. "Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction Part II," 9, no. 2 *Bible and Spade* (Spring 1996): 33-43.
- VanDrunen, David. *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology*. 1948; reprinted, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975.
- Waltke, Bruce K. and Cathi J. Fredericks. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Walton, John H. *Genesis*. NIV Application Commentary. Edited by Terry Muck. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary. Edited by David A. Hubbard. Nashville: Nelson, 1987.
- Williamson, Paul R. *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007.
- Witsius, Herman. *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*. Translated by William Crookshank. 1822; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010.
- Young, Edward J. "The Days of Genesis," *Westminster Theological Journal* 25, no. 1 (Nov. 1962): 1-34.