

Themes in Genesis

1.) God keeps His promises

Throughout the book of Genesis, God demonstrated His ability to keep His promises, even in the most unlikely circumstances. Note that this did not only include promises of blessings (e.g. to Abraham, that he would have a son, Isaac), but also included promises of punishment and consequences (e.g. to Adam and Eve, that they would die after eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge). Thus, as a theme, one could say that the book of Genesis teaches us a great deal about God's character: that He has both the power and the integrity to keep His word when He speaks.

Passages for Consideration:

- Genesis 2-3: God kept His promise regarding the consequences of sin in the Garden of Eden
- Genesis 6-9: God promised that the wicked on the earth would die after 120 years, and that Noah would be saved if he obeyed His commandments. Both promises were kept by the Lord.
- Genesis 11: Although not truly a promise, the story of the Tower of Babel demonstrates that God has the power to effect His will (and keep His word) even when man is not cooperative. Sometimes man is against God, but this chapter shows that God can overcome man's rebellion to do His will.
- Genesis 12, 20, and 28: In these chapters, God reveals His promises (the land of Canaan, the nation of Israel, and the promise of Christ) to the three patriarchs of Genesis, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As the story of the Bible unfolds, these special blessings are given by the Lord.
- Genesis 13: God renewed His promise about the land to Abraham.
- Genesis 15: God renewed His promise about the nation to Abraham. He goes into great detail about the hardships that this nation would face in a foreign land, and the blessings they would receive after they come out of it. This refers to the Israelites being enslaved in Egypt before being delivered by God and His servant, Moses.
- Genesis 17: God gave the specific promise of Isaac, who would be born in Abraham and Sarah's old age in Genesis 21.
- Genesis 18-19: God promised that He would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if only ten righteous were found in it; by Genesis 19, it is clear that there are not even that many righteous, so God destroyed the cities of the valley, just as He promised.
- Genesis 20: God promised Abimelech that if he did not give Sarah back to Abraham, he would suffer and die. Once Sarah was returned and Abraham prayed, Abimelech and his house were restored.
- Genesis 22: God renewed His promises to Abraham, especially focusing on the promise of the blessing of the world through his seed, speaking of Christ.
- Genesis 25: God prophesied about Jacob and Esau, and the prophecy came true, as Jacob received the birthright from Esau and (deceptively) the blessing from Isaac.
- Genesis 28: As Jacob was running from Esau, God promised that he would return to the land (consider that he thought he was going to die in Genesis 32-33 at Esau's hand).
- Genesis 35: God renewed His promises regarding the land and the nation to Jacob.
- Genesis 37: God gave Joseph dreams that prophesied that his family would bow down to him. They thought the dreams were ridiculous, but God fulfilled them in Genesis 42.
- Genesis 40: The dreams that God gave to the cupbearer and the baker were fulfilled.
- Genesis 41: The dreams that God gave to Pharaoh were fulfilled.
- Genesis 46: God promised that, even in Egypt, a great nation would come from Jacob. This was, of course, fulfilled, as Israel became such a mighty nation that Egypt felt compelled to enslave them.
- Genesis 48-49: Jacob's blessings are from prophecies from God which will be fulfilled. Of special note is the prophecy regarding Judah, which is Messianic in nature (Genesis 49:8-12).

There are a few other minor themes within Genesis that are worthwhile to mention. They are listed below with several examples in the book:

2.) Partiality

There are several examples of partiality in the book of Genesis. Partiality or favoritism, in any form, generally causes feelings of jealousy, bitterness, and resentment. While many cases of favoritism are unjustified, some examples (e.g. God's favor for Abel) are righteous.

Passages for Consideration:

- Genesis 4: God shows partiality to Abel because his sacrifice was righteous, while Cain's was not.
- Genesis 6: God shows partiality to Noah, saving him and his family because of his obedience.
- Genesis 12: God shows partiality to Abraham in giving him the promises (land, nation, and seed) because of his faithfulness (see Nehemiah 9:7-8 and Hebrews 11:8-10).
- Genesis 25:28: Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. This led to hatred between the brothers when Rebekah helped Jacob to steal Isaac's blessing from Esau.
- Genesis 29-30: Jacob's favor for Rachel over Leah caused a great deal of strife as they had children.
- Genesis 37: Jacob's favoritism for Joseph caused his other sons to be jealous and sell Joseph.

3.) Importance of prayer, thanksgiving to God, and worship to those who love God

Throughout Genesis, those who love God demonstrate their faithfulness with their constant remembrance for the Lord in prayer and worship.

Passages for Consideration:

- Genesis 8: Noah, after coming out of the ark, built an altar and made numerous sacrifices to God.
- Genesis 12-13: Abraham built many altars to the Lord as he was moving from place to place.
- Genesis 24: Abraham's servant continually trusted in God in prayer, and thanked Him when he found a suitable wife for Isaac in Rebekah.
- Genesis 28: Jacob set up his stone pillow as a memorial to God after his vision of the ladder.
- Genesis 37, 39-41: Joseph demonstrated his love and thankfulness for God in naming his sons.

4.) Jesus is coming (Messianic prophecies and shadows of Christ)

From before God created the world, He had a plan for the redemption of man through Jesus (see Ephesians 1:4, 3:11). There are numerous prophecies about Jesus and His purpose. Many events and people in Genesis also foreshadow what would happen to Jesus thousands of years later.

Passages for Consideration:

- Genesis 3:15: This is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible. God announced that the serpent's head (Satan) would be crushed by the seed of woman, speaking of Jesus.
- Genesis 12, 26, 28: The "seed" promise referred to the eventual coming of Jesus.
- Genesis 22: Compare the sacrifice of Isaac to the sacrifice of Jesus (see Hebrews 11:17-19).
- Genesis 28: Compare Jacob and the ladder with Jesus (see John 1:49-51 and Luke 9:58).
- Genesis 37: Compare Joseph's life to Jesus, especially noting the hatred and betrayal by his brothers as well as his rise to power.