

Genesis theological theme and message

Genesis speaks of beginnings - of the heavens and the earth, of light and darkness, of seas and skies of land and vegetation, of sun and moon and stars, of sea and air and land animals, of human beings (made in God's own image, the climax of his creative activity), of marriage and family of society and civilization, of society and civilization of sin and redemption. The list could go on and on. A key word in Genesis is "account", which also serves to divide the book into its ten major parts and which includes such concepts as birth, genealogy and history.

The book of Genesis is foundational to the understanding of the rest of the Bible. Its message is rich and complex, and listing its main elements gives a succinct outline of the Biblical message as a whole. It is supremely a book that speaks about relationships, highlighting those between God and his creation, between God and humankind, and between human beings. It is thoroughly monotheistic, taking for granted that there is only one God worthy of the name and opposing the ideas that there are many gods (polytheism), that there is no god at all (atheism) and that everything is divine (pantheism).

It clearly teaches that the one true God is sovereign over all that exists (i.e., his entire creation), and that he often exercises his unlimited freedom to overturn human customs, traditions and plans. It introduces us to the way in which God initiates and makes covenants with his chosen people, pledging his love and faithfulness to them and calling them to promise theirs to him. It establishes sacrifice as the substitution of life (ch 22). It gives us the first hint of God's provision for redemption from the forces of evil (compare 3:15 with Ro 16:17/20) and contains the oldest and most profound statement concerning the significance of faith (15:6). More than half of Heb 11 - a list of the faithful - refers to characters in Genesis.