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From Biblical Book to Contemporary Hook .................. 268
The Bible begins with a book that takes us all the way from the murky recesses of the distant past to a populated world whose future revolves around the fate of one family group. How are we supposed to get our minds around all of this information? Why did God bother to communicate these details to us? What are we supposed to take away from all this that has anything to do with our lives today? We can begin to answer these questions by looking through the Jesus lens at this book whose very name means “beginning” or “origin.” This is an appropriate name because the book of Genesis describes the genesis of life, and the genesis of a long divine program to restore that life to its fullness in Christ following the genesis of sin.

Theme of the Book

God separates out one through whom he would bless all nations.

From the beginning of creation in the opening chapters through the millennia of conflict and struggle after the fall, God’s activity in Genesis can be summarized by the word separating. God separates:

• light from darkness (1:4)
• the waters in the heavens from the waters on the earth (1:6)
• dry ground from seas (1:9–10)
• animate life in the sea and on land from inanimate vegetable life (1:11–12, 20–25)
• human beings from animals (1:26–28)
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- the line of Seth from Adam and Eve’s other children (5:3–32)
- the line of Noah from other people (6:9–14)
- the line of Noah’s son Shem from Noah’s other children (9:25–27)
- the line of Abraham from all other people (12:1–3)

Memory Passage: Genesis 12:2–3

I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you. (italics added)

The repetition of “I will” in the “Abrahamic blessing” above clearly emphasizes the fact that God is relentlessly committed to a purpose in all of this separating. God’s good creation, and especially his human creations, had been mortally damaged by sin (3:1–19). But it is through the line of Abraham, the one whom God had separated out, that God would provide the avenue through which human beings could once again experience divine blessing. From Abraham, to his son Isaac, to Isaac’s son Jacob, to Jacob’s children, God himself maintains this channel of blessing against all external and internal threats so that his human creations can experience the fullness of life he always intended for them. Through accounts of human failures, wars, family intrigues, deceptions, international slave trade, famines, and miraculous births, Genesis presents to us God’s relentless and gracious separation and preservation of the human line he had chosen to bring his salvation to the world.

The Jesus Lens

Millennia pass, and God’s separating for the purpose of blessing finally comes to focus in Jesus Christ. In the first verse of his gospel, the apostle Matthew reminds us that this Messiah, Jesus, is from the line
of Abraham and is the focus of the promise God made to Abraham so long ago. The apostle Paul further explains this connection by calling God’s promise to bring blessing to all nations through the line of Abraham “the gospel” (Galatians 3:7–8). Jesus is the one to whom all God’s separating was always meant to lead, and Jesus is separate from all others in his ability to bring the promised divine blessing to the nations:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

The ultimate focus of all God’s redemptive activity is Jesus Christ. Anything or anyone else that is held up as a legitimate alternative is only snow on the satellite dish, distorting the clear picture of salvation that God is sending us in his Son.

**Contemporary Implications**

God’s past work of separation for blessing comes into focus when it is viewed through the lens of Jesus Christ, but God is not done working. He continues his work of separation today, and for the same reason— so that his blessing is realized by all nations. To accomplish his divine purpose, he separates out his people, you and me. The apostle Paul puts it this way:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)

As Christ’s ambassadors, we have been “separated out” by God not just to receive the blessing of reconciliation with God and the life that flows from that divine, saving act, but also to pass on that blessing to others by making the good news of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ clear to them with every aspect of our lives. This is not an option. It is what we have been separated out by God to do. It is the reason for our Christian existence.
Hook Questions

• In what ways has God equipped you to be a blessing to other people? Do people avoid you, or do they find in you some evidence of Christ's life, which has a character and quality they desire for themselves? Are you able to tell them about the source of this life in a clear way? Do your words and life communicate something good and attractive to unbelievers, or something no one would want?

• Are Christians a blessing to you? Many of us seem to struggle with communicating the blessing of God in Jesus Christ as good news. Is there anything about the way this communication sometimes takes place that puts you off? How can you avoid these problems yourself?

• What can you do to make yourself a clearer (and more relentless) message of the good news of Jesus Christ to those around you? Are you tapping into the resources God has made available to every believer? Are you aware of how you come across to others? Can you identify areas in your life that hinder your service as Christ's ambassador? Are you willing to tackle these areas with the strength God provides you?

When we grasp what God is doing in Genesis by separating out his avenue of blessing to the nations, we will be able to recognize how that blessing finds its focus in Christ. We will also recognize the responsibility of those of us who have been separated out by God through faith in Christ to live out that communication of divine blessing to those around us who need to realize it themselves. There is no doubt that God may, and often does, call us, as he called on so many of the characters in Genesis, to communicate something of that blessing even through tough circumstances—sometimes really tough circumstances. But we can be confident that when we seek God’s help in carrying out this task, we will indeed be praying for his will to be done because we will be doing exactly what he has separated us out to do. And when we do it, we will begin to appropriate the fullness of life that God wants us to enjoy. We will be blessed and will be a blessing to others as well.