

GENESIS 1-4

GENESIS 1–4

A LINGUISTIC, LITERARY, AND
THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

C. JOHN COLLINS



P U B L I S H I N G

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ANALYTICAL OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. A Discourse-Oriented Literary Approach
 - A. What Is Discourse Analysis?
 - B. What Is a Literary Approach?
 - C. What about History?
 - D. The Expository Questions
 1. What is the pericope, and who are the participants?
 2. What is the paragraph structure of the pericope (including peak)?
 3. What is the basic sequence of events?
 4. How do those events follow causally from what comes before and affect causally what comes after?
 5. Are there repeated key words or roots (both within this pericope and across several pericopes)?
 6. How does the author present the characters?
 7. What devices does the author use to communicate his point of view?
 8. What is the passage about?
 9. How are covenantal principles on display here?
 - E. Allusions, Echoes, and Reverberations
3. Genesis 1–4 in Its Literary Context
4. Genesis 1:1–2:3: The Creation Week

- A. Pericope Boundary, Structure, and Genre
- B. Translation and Notes
- C. Extra Notes
 - 1. Genesis 1:1 and creation from nothing
 - 2. The proper rendering of the refrain
 - 3. The fourth day
 - 4. The meaning of “kind”
 - 5. Genesis 1 and the Trinity
 - 6. The image of God
 - 7. The use of the words create and make
 - 8. Genesis 1:28 and environmental ethics
 - 9. The goodness of creation
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- D. Literary-Theological Exposition
- E. Other Reverberations
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 - 2. “Be fruitful and multiply” and God’s blessing
 - 3. The fourth commandment: Exodus 20:8–11; 31:12–17; John 5:17; Hebrews 4:3–11
 - 4. Christ and creation in the New Testament
 - 5. Creational apologetic: Acts 14:15–16; 17:24–28
- 5. Genesis 2:4–25: The Garden of Eden
 - A. Pericope Boundary, Structure, and Genre
 - B. Translation and Notes
 - C. Extra Notes
 - 1. The meaning of Genesis 2:4–7
 - 2. Is Genesis 2:15–17 a covenant?
 - 3. What are the two trees?
 - 4. What is death in Genesis 2:17?
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 - 6. Relationship between Genesis 2:4–25; 1:1–2:3; 3:1–24
 - 7. How long was the creation week?
 - 8. Creation ordinances in Genesis 1–2
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- E. Other Reverberations
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 - A. Pericope Boundary, Structure, and Genre
 - B. Translation and Notes
 - C. Extra Notes
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 - 2. Is Genesis 3:15 a protoevangelium?
 - 3. What is the woman’s “desire” (Gen. 3:16)?
 - 4. Was Adam made mortal?
 - 5. The curses and nature
 - 6. Are Adam and Eve the parents of all mankind?
 - D. Literary-Theological Exposition
 - E. Other Reverberations
 - 1. The “seed” theme in Genesis
 - 2. Romans 5:12–19
 - 3. Romans 8:18–25 and the fallen world
 - 4. Paul as interpreter of Genesis
 - 5. Edenic imagery
 - 6. The temptation of Adam and the temptation of Jesus
- 7. Genesis 4:1–26: After Eden
 - A. Reasons for Including Genesis 4 in This Work
 - B. Pericope Boundary, Structure, and Genre
 - C. Translation and Notes
 - D. Extra Notes
 - 1. What did Eve think she’d got (Gen. 4:1)?
 - 2. The meaning of אָמַן (“accept, bear”) in Genesis 4:7, 13
 - 3. Why was Cain’s offering rejected?
 - 4. Where did Cain’s wife come from?
 - 5. What is the relation of Cain’s lineage to Seth’s?
 - 6. How does antediluvian culture fit in with archaeology?

7. Do biblical genealogies have gaps?
8. What does Genesis 4:26b mean?
- E. Literary-Theological Exposition
- F. Other Reverberations
 1. Sacrifice and offering
 2. The line of Seth
 3. Later reflections on Cain and Abel
 4. Matthew 18:22
 5. Cain in Romans 7?
8. Sources, Unity, and Authorship
 - A. Summary of Friedman's Documentary Hypothesis and His Arguments
 - B. Assessment of the Literary Details of Genesis 1–4
 - C. Assessment from Ancient Near Eastern Background
 - D. Conclusions
9. The Communicative Purpose of Genesis 1–4
 - A. In Reference to Ancient Near Eastern Background
 - B. In Reference to the Pentateuch as a Whole
 - C. In Reference to Life in Israel
10. Genesis 1–4, History, and Science
 - A. Historical Truth Claims
 - B. Historical Truth Value
 - C. World Picture, Worldview, and Good Faith Communication
 - D. What Kind of Science Does This Expect?
 - E. Conclusions
11. Seeing the World through the Eyes of Genesis 1–4
 - A. Worldview: The Idea
 - B. The Biblical Worldview and Christian Doctrine
 - C. Conclusions

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This commentary owes its origin to the urging of the students in my fall 2002 Hebrew class, with Mr. Brig Jones as the chief instigator. I pray that they find their efforts rewarded.

To reflect on God's work of creation, and his instituting of marriage and family, is to renew my gratitude to the Lord for his kindness in surrounding me with the wife and children he has. These remind me that God's blessings are free and gracious:

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is
than a fattened ox and hatred with it. (Prov. 15:17)

Thank you, Lord, for the love in my house!

ABBREVIATIONS

AV	Authorized (King James) Version
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3d ed. Chicago, 2000
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1906 (cited by page and column)
CEV	Contemporary English Version
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>JOTT</i>	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
<i>NBD</i>	<i>The New Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by I. H. Marshall et al. Downers Grove, Ill., 1996 (cited by page and column)
NEB	New English Bible

- NIDOTTE* *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997 (cited by volume and page)
- NIV New International Version
- NRSV New Revised Standard Version
- OPTAT* *Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics*
- REB Revised English Bible
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- RV Revised Version

1

INTRODUCTION

How can anyone ever get tired of studying the opening chapters of Genesis? It is true that many controversies swirl around these chapters. Who wrote them, and why? What use did the author make of sources? Do they have any value as history? How do they square with science?

The list goes on, but it gets tedious fast. But when one turns from the controversies to the Hebrew text, the tedium vanishes and the fascination returns. These chapters are front-loaded with all manner of vital topics, such as God's work of creating the world and mankind; what it means to be human; why our present experience is so different from what we find in Genesis 2; how we come to know God and to be sure of his love.

This book is a commentary on the first four chapters of Genesis. I aim to provide pastors and students with an academically rigorous treatment of the biblical text that explores the connections of the parts of the Bible and the impact of the Bible on life today. My vision of academic rigor includes a literary-theological method informed by contemporary discourse analysis, in order to arrive at an integrated reading of each segment. In order to explore the connections of the Bible's parts, I will look at how the passages from Genesis have shaped

subsequent material—especially in the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament.

The most common way to use a commentary is to skip the introductory chapters and dip into its comments on individual passages. But my approach is governed by a methodology that stresses the passages' role in a coherent literary production, so I urge you not to skip the chapter on method or the integrated literary-theological expositions.

My vision of academic rigor also includes responsibly reading and weighing what others have written; hence the bibliography. However, if I were to transcribe all my marginal notes on everything I have read into footnotes here, you would find that unbearably tedious. In other words, I found myself pulled both to write something that reflects this academic rigor and to write something that people would read. For this reason I have presented my arguments, giving reasons for my positions and noting where needed representatives of competing positions.¹

I believe my most important contribution is the method that I describe and apply. This method involves us in paying attention to linguistic and literary details, as well as in arriving at an overall integrated reading of a passage within its larger context. It also grapples with the fact that these passages are intended to be Scripture, which means that they have a theological function in the life of both their original audience and their subsequent audiences, including us. I have therefore been explicitly theological in relating my expositions of the individual passages to themes in biblical and systematic theology and in tracing the impact of these passages on other texts in the Old Testament, the intertestamental period, and the New Testament. In the last two chapters I have also outlined how I would relate my conclusions about these chapters to questions of history, science, and worldview formation. I believe these passages in Genesis equip us to live faithfully in today's world, with a passionate devotion to God and a vigorous Christian mind.

There are many topics in these chapters about which people disagree. I believe that the methodology I have offered gives us a set of tools to evaluate competing views with sound critical thinking.

1. In order to make my discussion as accessible to the intended audience as I can, without sacrificing rigor, I have cited the underlying Hebrew and generally supplied as well a simplified transliteration based on *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 28. I have not thought it necessary to do the same with the Greek.

Scholarly commentaries on Genesis, or on parts of it, usually begin with a great deal of time and space on matters of special introduction—source and redaction criticism, authorship, date, canonicity, and so on. These matters are important, and I have postponed that discussion until after I have carried out the literary and theological discussions. Such criticism depends on discerning the seams between literary units of presumably disparate origins, but this discernment should be the product of careful study. I believe my discourse-oriented literary approach gives us tools for greater rigor in this topic, as well.

The book proceeds, therefore, as follows. First, in chapter 2 I will describe and illustrate the methodology; then in chapter 3 I will put Genesis 1–4 into its literary context. Then come the four exegetical chapters, taking each of the four pericopes in turn (chapters 4–7). In chapter 8 I take up the question of sources and unity. Chapters 9–11 focus on applying the text: chapter 9 deals with the communicative purpose of Genesis 1–4 in its original setting; chapter 10 addresses questions of history and science in Genesis 1–4; and chapter 11 looks at how we can appropriate Genesis 1–4 today, by focusing on the worldview these chapters inculcate.

In the exegetical chapters, my standard format is to begin with the pericope boundaries and structure and then to move on to the annotated translation. The translation is the English Standard Version (ESV), and the notes are primarily linguistic. Following that, I offer extra notes on points that need more discussion (some are linguistic, and some are more general). Then I move to the literary-theological exposition. The last section considers other reverberations, namely, echoes of the passage that have not already been treated.

When I cite a commentary, I ordinarily do so using the author's last name only. Other materials get a fuller reference in the footnote, and they all appear in the bibliography at the end.

The obvious question is, why stop at chapter 4? Why not go on through chapter 11? To begin with, we must admit that no part of Genesis makes any sense without the rest. For example, the special choice of Abraham's offspring (Gen. 12–50) requires that we understand the unity of mankind and its common accountability to its Creator—otherwise, the promise of universal blessing (Gen. 12:1–3) has no foundation. However, there are still natural subunits to the book, and thus we must decide whether the first subunit is Genesis

1–3 or Genesis 1–4; I have given my reasons for thinking that it is Genesis 1–4 in the chapter that examines Genesis 4.

I have found much benefit in the commentaries I have read, and among these the most prominent are those by Leon Kass, Bruce Waltke, Yehuda Kiel (in Hebrew), Victor Hamilton, Gordon Wenham, Claus Westermann, Franz Delitzsch, and S. R. Driver. In addition, there are several special studies on Genesis 1–3 or parts of it, such as Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*; Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question*; David Hagopian, *The Genesis Debate*; James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*; and Howard J. Van Till, Robert E. Snow, John H. Stek, Davis A. Young, *Portraits of Creation*. I have found that each of these has its merits, but I dare to offer my work to accompany theirs, in view of the features that I have described above.

My usual English Bible for citations is the English Standard Version (ESV of 2001; or ESV Update of 2006).² For the Apocrypha, I have used either the RSV or the NRSV (rarely the RV), occasionally modifying it to suit the original better. Likewise for other Greek writers (such as Herodotus, Plato, Philo, or Josephus), I have used the Loeb translation but modified it to be closer to the Greek.

I have been studying, teaching from, and writing on Genesis 1–4 for many years now. I have done more than simply rework older material for this book; I have taken the opportunity to examine everything afresh. I am grateful for the privilege of such study, and I pray that you, the reader, will use the best tools available to you to grapple with God's Word.

2. For my views on translation philosophy and why I prefer this version, see my appendix, "Without form you lose meaning," in Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 295–319.