

Exodus and Creation

- I. Creation Theology
 - a. Biblical people tend to be more fascinated with redemptive theology (how God restores us) than creation theology (how God set up the universe in the first place).
 - b. It is easy to read Genesis' creation accounts as background to the more important redemptive events in Exodus/Sinai.
 - i. This favoritism of redemption is like the difference between building the stage and the performance enacted upon it.
- II. Bible readers would be on more solid ground reading Exodus with Genesis as a foundation
 - a. Genesis makes clear that God was engaged in the lives of individuals and nations long before Israel came into being.
 - i. God was at work in the world and Israel had a place in this creative work.
 - ii. God was at work in Abraham's family before Israel came to be a nation.
 - b. It is important to realize that God's actions in the world are present even before people understood them.
 - c. Humans experience God's creative acts prior to or alongside his redemptive acts.
 - i. Creation appears to be prior to redemption; however the Priestly Account of creation (Gen. 1) makes the creation process appear redemptive in its nature.
 1. In that account God sets into order what he has created.
 - ii. God's work of creation takes place universally—even in Egypt.
 - iii. The placement of Genesis prior to Exodus shows that God's intention in redemption is not finally centered on Israel.
 1. God's redemptive deeds on behalf of Israel must be understood to have a universal intention.
- III. Redemption and Reclamation of Creation
 - a. Exodus 15.1-18 (the Song of Moses) resembles ancient near Eastern creation myths.
 - b. Cosmic issues play a role in the conflict between God and Pharaoh.
 - i. The Pharaoh seeks to subvert divine intention
 - ii. Plagues are natural upheavals.
 - iii. The Old Testament, in many places, identifies the chaos monster with the Pharaoh. Egypt embodies the

forces of chaos—anti-creation—threatening to undo God's creation.

- c. After God rescues Israel from bondage, it is released for world-wide service.
 - d. The exodus rescue does not return people to Eden.
 - i. The original creation is not static or immobile.
 - ii. If people are to subdue the earth as they were assigned in the primordial history in Genesis, evidentially the creation is not finished.
 - iii. The original creation envisions development of the created order. God's creation is a dynamic, moving reality.
 - iv. Creation did not only happen at the beginning of the world, but happens continuously. This lends flexibility.
 - v. God's redemptive acts reclaim all that makes for life. Redemption is in the service of creation.
 - 1. The objective of God's work in redemption is to free people to be what they were created to be.
 - 2. Redemption is deliverance to the world.
 - 3. Redemption restores the life-giving potential of all aspects of the created order.
 - a. In the Exodus wilderness texts the people find they can live in creation and God will provide through the created order.
 - e. Creation and Redemption are not to be equated.
 - i. Redemption is the means, creation is the end.
 - ii. Redemption is the divine act in and through the forces which threaten life
 - iii. The intent of redemption is a new creation.
 - f. Redemption does not establish creation as God's finished work
 - i. Redemption permits creation to become again
 - ii. Redemption does not cancel out the becoming nature of creation.
 - iii. The gifts of God in the wilderness, by which God enables new life and growth for Israel and the non-human order, are initial stages of God's history in continuing creative giving.
 - iv. The law at Sinai fits into this.
- IV. Creation, Abrahamic Covenant, Sinaitic Covenant
- a. Genesis 12,1-3 (Abraham's Covenant) is a great turning point.
 - b. Election of Abraham is related to all families on earth.

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- ii. Election of Abraham is related to all families on earth.
- iii. Promise to Abraham is not just to Abraham's family, but to the whole world.
- iv. The covenant with Abraham will have deep creational effect on others.
- v. The usual thinking on two covenants is to see them as different—one conditional; the other, unconditional.
- vi. Abe's covenant is a crucial foundation for the Sinai covenant. (See Ex. 32.13)
- vii. In the wake of the Golden Calf incident and the Lord's decision to destroy the people, Moses intercedes on the grounds of the Abrahamic covenant.
- viii. The unconditional covenant remains in place.
- ix. Sinai hardly establishes the relationship between God and Israel. Rather, it is a vocational covenant with those who are already God's people.
 - 1. Sinai establishes a closer specification of what is entailed in that relationship.
 - 2. It outlines Abraham's descendants' responsibilities to bring created order into closer conformity with God's intention.
 - a. The terms of the Sinai covenant are characterized by righteousness, mercy, and the fear of God.

V. Law and Reclamation of Creation

- a. Hebrew Law has its clearest roots in Israel's Creation faith.
- b. Basic to this is a symbiotic relationship between cosmic and social orders.
 - i. An offense in the social realm has natural consequences
 - ii. Law is a divine means by which divine ordering of chaos is actualized in the social sphere.
 - iii. In obedience to the Law, people concretely fulfill God's intention for creation.
 - iv. Original creation has law built in (see Genesis 1.26-28; 2. 14-16; 9.1-6, 18, 19, 25, and 26.5)
 - v. The Law given at Sinai is not a new reality but a fuller particularization on how the community can take on its God-given creational responsibility.
 - 1. Sinai is a re-giving of creational law.

