

The Doctrine of Familial Relationships and the Plan of God

Preface: Throughout Scripture, we have, on the one hand, an emphasis upon familial relationships; yet, on the other, we seem to have the denigration of same. In this doctrine, we will examine this yin and yang of familial relationships.

Topics:

Charts:

1. Bloodlines are extremely important to the Word of God. Like all believers, I used to skip over these sections or read them without giving them any thought. The idea of exegeting something like I Chron. 1–9 (the genealogy tables) seemed ridiculous to me at one time; however, since I exegeted these chapters, I find myself referring back to these chapters again and again to examine the familial relationships which God's Word sees as extremely important.
2. Early on in Scripture, we see a contrast of two bloodlines:
 - a. In Gen. 4:17–22, we have the line of Cain. In Gen. 5, we have the line of Adam through Seth all the way to Noah.
 - b. In portions of Gen. 6, we have the family of Noah in stark contrast to the rest of humanity. We do not have long lines examined—simply a contrast presented.
 - c. In Gen. 10, we have the lines of Japheth, Ham and Shem given, in that order. Often, the *saved* line is given last.
 - d. In Gen. 11:10–26, we follow out one particular line of Shem down to Abram and his brothers.
 - e. Abraham sires a son, Ishmael, by Sarai's personal servant, the Egyptian Hagar, which causes quite a stir in Abram's household (even though the siring of the child was at the behest of Sarai). Gen. 16.
 - f. Isaac is later born to Abraham and to Sarah (both renamed by God) in Gen. 21.
 - g. Nahor, Abram's brother, has his line followed out in Gen. 22:20–24. Abraham's line by Keturah, his wife after the death of Sarah, is followed out in Gen. 25:1–4. Ishmael's descendants are covered in Gen. 25:12–18. True to form, Isaac's sons are examined in the subsequent verses in Gen. 25.
 - h. The redeemed line of Abraham is followed out from Gen. 21–50 (each generation is examined carefully).
 - i. Abraham's son, Isaac, bore twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob's family is covered in Gen. 29:32–30:24 and 35:16–18. Esau's descendants are uncharacteristically covered second in Gen. 36 (although we don't cover all of Jacob's line until later).
 - j. Throughout the Law, we are bereft of these two lines, as, historically, the Law covers a relatively short period of time (a generation or two). Furthermore, it is likely that most of the records in slavery were lost, destroyed or not recorded in the first place. However, there is every indication that all Israelites knew the tribe from which they ascended, as they were grouped repeatedly by tribe.
3. Exceptions:
 - a. Although the descendants of Jacob are named in Gen. 46, the primary purpose of that chapter is to name all of those who moved to Egypt (the abbreviated line is named in Ex. 1:1–6).
 - b. The line of David is given as an appendix to the book of Ruth (Ruth 4:17–22). This appendix was not as much a bloodline as a rationale for the inclusion of the book of Ruth in Scripture.
 - c. Samuel's lineage is given in I Sam. 1:1.
 - d. The first nine chapters of Chronicles list the genealogy of the 12 tribes of Israel—they are not the saved and unsaved lines.
4. The importance of the family line:
 - a. Israel was originally made up of a family of believers (Jacob's sons, daughters and their families). Although it is not specifically stated in Scripture, we may reasonably assume that all or most of them were believers. Their faith in Jehovah God is maintained through several hundred years of slavery.

- b. Those Israelites walking out of Egypt into the desert were saved. This was a remarkable feat on God's part: all of Israel was saved and so all of Israel was delivered.
 - c. Moses specifically conveyed to Israel the importance of teaching God's truth from generation to generation—and this was done in the context of families (Deut. 4:10 6:20–25 11:18–22).
 - d. The contrast of the family lines illustrates the contrast between the saved and the unsaved throughout history.
 - e. The contrast of the saved and unsaved family lines also underscores the importance of spiritual training within the family (despite the many spiritual illustrations given by ritual in Israel, the teaching of God's Word was an integral part of raising one's family).
5. Exceptions:
- a. A family line is no substitution for personal regeneration. No one is ever saved because they were born into this family or that. Every person must personally believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation.
 - b. Along the same lines: there are going to be some families of mature believers who sire a child who is negative toward all things spiritual (just as there are families of unbelievers who have that odd son who believes in Christ Jesus).
6. The human line of our Lord goes down through generation after generation of believers (Matt. 1 and Luke 3).
7. Illustrations outside the Biblical record:
- a. Generally speaking, when two growing believers raise a family, they teach their children the Word of God and the importance of spiritual regeneration.
 - b. One of the greatest illustrations of the importance of familial lines is among the people of Color in the United States. For the most part, African-Americans were originally brought over to the United States from Africa as slaves. They were taught the gospel and they passed on their faith in Christ Jesus from generation to generation. Although I have never done any polling on the matter, I would wager you a hangover¹ that the percentage of Blacks who are believers is significantly higher than the percentage of Caucasians; further, I would bet that the percentage of spiritually growing Black believers is also greater than the percentage of spiritually growing Caucasoids.
 - c. Even though most institutions of education were founded by men of faith, our school systems have become so corrupt that many families have resorted to teaching their children at home or in private schools. For many of these parents, the teaching of God's Word is an integral part of the education of their children (which it should be).
8. The most serious mistake is to depend upon a family relationship rather than one's own spiritual integrity. We have the two sons of Eli who were descended from the original High Priest, Aaron—they were both reprobates and unbelievers and God would remove them from His house.

¹ Okay, I stole that from Peter Capstick's *Death in the Long Grass*.