

An Overview of Genesis

This morning, we begin our series through the book of Genesis. The word “genesis” simply means “beginning.” Many of us would admit that beginnings are tremendously important. How you begin your day can say a lot about how you’re going to end your day. Or, think of it a little differently. Think about this auditorium. Some of you may know this. Others may not. When the workers were placing the foundation, the measurements were incorrect on two or three different walls. Thankfully, the construction management company caught it and ensured that this problem was fixed. But they said that if it hadn’t been fixed, we would have seen cracking within 5 years of it being built – which would put us at next year.

You see, the beginnings of things are extremely important, and as I have studied the book of Genesis, I have seen this more than I had seen before. The book of Genesis is the “beginning” of so many beliefs. The seeds of foundational truths that are going to be expanded upon in later books, both the Old and New Testament. And, I would say that if we don’t understand this foundational book well, we might experience “cracking” in our beliefs. But I don’t just want to be motivated to study this for fear that we might have wrong beliefs.

I want to have positive motivation. Many of you participate in discipleship groups, and if you do not, I hope you’d reconsider. Having said that, a passage that all groups are encouraged to memorize (as we study through Nehemiah) will come from Romans 15. Take a look at these words from the apostle Paul: **We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.** ² **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.** ³ **For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”** ⁴ **For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.** ⁵ **May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**¹

Why would we want to memorize these words? What do they have to do with Nehemiah? And, what do they have to do with studying Genesis? Paul, by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, says that all that has been written in the Old and New Testaments is written so that we would be encouraged and have confident hope in God. That makes sense to us, but notice how Paul connects this to bearing with the failings of one another. What does reading Genesis have to do with then being patient with one another and enduring with each other, and seeking to be unified with people in this church family in the 21st century? It has everything to do with it. When we see how God is patient towards people and has continued to draw people to himself, and worked in such glorious ways to show grace and kindness to sinners – and when we realize that God has included us in his plan – then we who have been rescued by God – want to show his patience and endurance with one another. When we look at the person going back to sin, we remember Lot. When we think about the wife who feels unseen, we are reminded of Hagar. When we think that our life feels meaningless, we recall God’s mercies to Joseph. On a broader scale, we look at all these situations and we see they are part of a grander story of God’s power to save a *people* for himself – not because of how amazing or faithful we are (we’re not) – but because he is faithful and loving.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 15:1–6.

So, we need the book of Genesis. It gives us foundations, and through Genesis, God the Spirit will compel us to learn how to love and be patient towards one another so that we shine the light and glory of Jesus to the world around us.

Now, this morning, I'm not actually going to preach from Genesis 1. Today's sermon is more of an overview of the entire book of Genesis. I want to highlight many themes and ideas of the book. I hope this helps us all to know the purpose and idea of the book. Then, next week we will jump into Genesis 1. As we go through this, we will discover that **Genesis reveals God's character, humanity's nature, and God's resolute purpose in rescuing rebels.**

So, there's no main text. I'm going to be flying through the entire book of Genesis. Think of this like being in an airplane at 36,000 feet. What does the terrain look like from there? The book can be divided into **three segments: Creation & Fall (chs. 1-3); Humanity's Continued Rebellion (chs. 4-11); God's Chosen People (chs. 12-50).**

Let's start with Creation & Fall. Here we get the basic building blocks for the entire book (and the foundation for the Bible itself).

1. Creation & Fall (chs. 1-3)

Genesis begins by saying, **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."** Here we have a statement of authority. Moses doesn't argue for God's existence. He assumes it. And in assuming God's existence, he states some very important facts about God. First, God is sovereign. Sovereign doesn't simply mean that he's a ruler among rulers or that he has some power over things. What we discover in the Bible, as we continue to learn about God's sovereignty is that he not only is ruler over all created things – seen and unseen – but he has complete power over everything and nothing happens without his ordinance! God is Sovereign. Second, God is self-sufficient. So, if you're taking notes tonight, write down point 1: Creation & Fall. Then write, **"God's character: Sovereign and Self-sufficient."**

One of the names of God in this chapter means "self-sufficient." He needs nothing outside of himself in order to be or to do. Everything that was made was made by him; therefore, he's the uncreated Creator! I also say "sovereign" because God can do whatever he pleases. He created all – and did it all from himself. In addition, Genesis moves on and says that the waters were over the face of the earth. In the ancient culture, waters represented chaos. Yet, he brought the chaos of the waters together into a beautiful earth. God is sovereign!

But there's more to God character that's revealed in creation. He is also **gracious**. He creates this beautiful world in a glorious universe. And the way that the author is writing is showing that this creation is God's cosmic temple in which to reveal his glory to his creation. Later in the Old Testament, we see the tabernacle and then the temple being built, and similar items that are found there are found here. We see cherubim in the tabernacle and temple. We see a tree of life. We see the need for God's presence. We also hear of an east gate in the tabernacle. Creation and the Garden of Eden are God's cosmic temple! And, in God's cosmic temple, God gives *life*. So, add **"life-giving"** to the characteristics of God. You could also say "gracious" or "merciful."

In this glorious world, God gives life to **human beings**. With them being created on the final day of creation, God is revealing to us the importance of human beings. They are **created in his image – uniquely displaying his glory unlike other creatures or things within creation**. He creates them male and female in order to worship him. What else do you do in a temple? They are also to be **vice regents**

in this creation. In other words, they rule under his rule. Which, by the way, means they are to have a relationship with God. So, Adam and Eve **fellowship with God** in the garden.

As they live out their calling, they are worshipping in being creative and bringing order. They get to do this in a sinless environment. Now, write Man's characteristics: Vice Regents & Worshipers. But notice, "Vice Regents." They aren't supreme. They are under the authority of God. And as a result, humans are **dependent** on God for everything. God gives them his life-giving breath, and they are dependent on him for life. Yet, in this life God has given, he's given them the privilege to **give life** as well. They are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. So, Humans are vice-regents who are dependent and are intended to be life-giving – mirroring God's image as they worship him and grow in a relationship with him.

Yet, we know this doesn't happen. Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan and all creation **falls** because the pinnacle of creation (humanity) falls into sin. So, as Paul says in Romans, creation is subjected to futility. Right here, we have one more characteristic we see of God: God is a **just God**. He punishes sin. Yet, in the midst of his punishment, he still shows his desire to show mercy and to bring order from chaos. In Genesis 3:15: **I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**"²

There is going to be one to come from the woman who will **crush the serpent's head** – while being wounded himself. And, what's interesting is that Adam seems to **believe** this promise of God. He names Eve, the "mother of all living." How can he say that? Death has spread to all humanity. Adam trusts God's promise of someone to come! From Eve's seed with come the rescuer. So, we see hints to Adam's faith, and how faith isn't just necessary for Adam. To turn back to the Lord and depend on him is necessary for all humanity.

So, here we have the creation as a Cosmic Temple. God bringing order from chaos and bringing life. He's sovereign in it all and entirely self-sufficient. He creates human beings who are to be worshippers of him, ruling under his rule, being dependent on him while also mirroring his glory in bringing life into this world, as they grow in their relationship with this God. But, as of chapter 3, humans have destroyed everything. Yet God reveals his life-giving grace again. He already has brought order from chaos before. He's going to do it again through the seed of the woman.

Genesis now shows us genealogies. Why? Because there's someone to come to bring rescue. We enter into the second section of Genesis. Chapters 4-11 reveal

2. Humanity's Continued Rebellion (chs. 4-11)

This is the second point. Write it down. The genealogies move from Cain and Abel (because Cain murdered Abel). Who's going to be the seed of the woman? Well, the genealogies reveal Adam and Eve have another son, Seth – and the emphasis is placed on him and his lineage. But Cain's lineage continues and serves as a contrast. Cain's lineage moves to a man named Lamech, who celebrated his wickedness. In reviewing Lamech and this lineage, we see a humanity that is not faithful as vice-regents. They build – but for their glory. They're not dependent on the Lord. And, instead of being life-giving, they're murderous.

This doesn't mean Seth's line is morally perfect, but you're left with the clear impression that the serpent-crusher is coming from this lineage. What's also intriguing is that in Seth's line we arrive at a

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:15.

Lamech as well. This Lamech is the father of Noah **and he trusts in the Lord** and his promises. By Noah's day, the Scriptures say that all the intentions of the heart of man was only evil continually. Clearly even Seth's line wasn't following the Lord faithfully. We have *one* man, *one* offspring who is said to follow the Lord. Is he the serpent crusher? Before we answer that, just think about the indictment stated against all humanity. All the intentions were only evil continually. Before you say, "Wow, I'm glad we're not that bad," know that after the flood, that same statement is made. This is why I believe in the doctrine of total depravity. Every human being is born a sinner – meaning, no sinner, no human, naturally seeks to honor God and lift his name high in all we do and say. We are born with the desire to think of ourselves and humans primarily. Even if we think about God, we more-so just want him as a co-pilot, not as the Sovereign, Self-Sufficient, Just, Gracious Creator. Our thoughts are prideful in various ways, shapes and forms. That said, this statement here is to emphasize that despite all of God's mercies, humanity rebels.

Yet, Noah trusts. When God tells him to build an ark, when he's seen no rain before, he builds it. God sets aside animals and Noah's family, for flourishing in the world to come after the flood. And, in the story of the flood we have a new mini-creation account. The people's sins have brought forth death, and we're told again that the waters cover the earth (like in Genesis 1). And then the Spirit moves the waters and Noah and his family are safe. Yet, in what follows, we discover that even Noah himself is sinful. And his son, Ham, sins against his father soon after the flood. Noah is not the serpent-crusher. So, it's unsurprising we get back to genealogy again.

More genealogy follows, and then comes the tower of Babel. All people had a unified language – and what are they wanting to do? Build a tower to Heaven. Like Adam, they want to ascend to the heights of deity – make a name for themselves. Are they submissive rulers under God's rule? No. Are they worshipping God? No. Are they dependent on the Lord? No. Yet, God still shows mercy in punishment. He disperses them and changes their languages. Mighty nations come about, but there's a nomadic people that God reaches into to reveal his glory. The type of people you wouldn't consider glorious. And then we reach into the third section:

3. **God's Chosen People (chs. 12-50).**

God again is bringing order from chaos. God chooses a pagan man named Abram. God declares promises to Abram. Abram leaves his family and follows God. God eventually changes Abram's name to Abraham, and God promises that through him all the nations of the world will be blessed. God's promise to Adam and Eve will be fulfilled through Abraham. And, **Abraham believes**. Then comes the most explicit statement about the importance of faith. Abraham ". . . **believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.**"³ **Abraham** trusts the promises of a Messiah, and even when God does give him a son, Isaac, Abraham will go to the point of sacrificing his own son – even though it doesn't make sense. The letter to the Hebrews explains to us that by faith, Abraham did this because he believed God could bring his son to life! Yet, we read in Genesis that God restrains Abraham. And we know that this story is a picture pointing forward to the serpent-crusher who will not be spared death and will be brought from the dead.

The blessing of God goes to Isaac, and then to Isaac's son, Jacob. And then Jacob is tested by the Lord in various ways until we get to a point where it seems Jacob doesn't simply follow his father's God, but his God. He doesn't let go until God blesses him. Eventually, God changes Jacob's name to Israel. He has many sons – and through the jealousy of his sons towards the one, Joseph, Joseph is sold into slavery in Egypt. As the story unfolds, we get God's perspective. When we get to the end of the story, Joseph

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 15:6.

confesses God's sovereignty, grace and self-sufficiency, even God's judgment. Joseph is not in the place of God. He forgives and confesses that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. They all need God. Again, God has brought order from chaos. Then, Joseph calls his brothers and father, and their families to come to Egypt for temporary rescue. Is Joseph the serpent-crusher? No. He dies and remains dead. But we look forward to One who will go down to Egypt and return to Israel. So, Joseph is another pointer to the seed of the woman.

What's interesting in Genesis (and the OT in general) is that the word "east" shows up multiple times. And, as soon as Adam and Eve are kicked out of the garden, they head east. You consistently get this idea that people are moving away from Eden – from God's presence as they head east. When you move out of Genesis and read of the building of the tabernacle, you discover that the door is facing the east. What does that mean? Well, I think this is a significant sign pointing to the serpent-crusher, whose name is Jesus. So, I want to come to an end of this message to state certain ways Genesis points to Jesus – and in doing so, I hope your faith and joy are strengthened. The door facing east means God is bringing people *back* to himself. And, ultimately, this points to Jesus who will be:

- 1) **God in the flesh, who will be able to reconcile humans to God. The One who is the seed of Eve who is going to bring people back to God.**
- 2) **The One to come who will rule under God's rule.**
- 3) **The One who himself would be born with the Spirit hovering over the waters of a woman's womb.**
- 4) **The One who came in the flesh and was dependent (not rebellious) on the Father and the Spirit.**
- 5) **The One who could actually give life because he is the Life.**
- 6) **The One who is also the Sovereign, Self-sufficient, Judge.**
- 7) **The One who endured the floods of God's wrath in the place of sinners, and became for us an ark of protection, so that we could come out experiencing God's life and mercy.**
- 8) **The One who brings us to God, not by telling us to build a tower, but by trusting that he will take us home someday as we humble ourselves before him.**
- 9) **The One who has promised to set all who trust in him free and to count them as righteous through faith in him – the promised seed.**

Who is this One? His name is Jesus. Do you know him? If not, would you turn to him today? Like Adam, Noah, Abram and others, would you turn from trusting yourself and trust in Jesus alone as your rescuer and the One who reconciles you to God? Do you want God? If so, that's God's work in you. Turn to him for grace and forgiveness. God's justice has been satisfied in Jesus! There's nothing you can do.

For all of us who trust Jesus, we have experienced the life Adam spoke of regarding Eve. And, in receiving this life – eternal life – we are restored to be able to worship God, grow in a relationship with him and mirror him now and for all eternity. And, someday, in the future New Heaven and New Earth – it will be a perfect cosmic temple where the gate will not be closed, but always open. We will rule and reign with the Lord as a *kingdom of priests to our God*. Then, in that day, we will see how God has beautifully brought about complete and unending order from chaos! What a glorious day that will be.

Do you see how Genesis serves as the book of beginnings? Do you see how it shows us the character of God and the nature of humans, and how God is resolute in rescuing rebels? If so, may we all also be strengthened to show this mercy and grace to one another in the church so we shine brightly to the world that our God saves!