

STORYLINE SERIES

GENESIS Part 1

Before we begin let me recommend a few resources -

1. **YOU VERSION BIBLE APP** - Free download, allows you to select a reading plan, we are using the READING GOD'S STORY CHRONOLOGICAL READING PLAN. It also has an audio version if you need to listen as you go rather than sit down and read.
2. **JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE** - It's a kids bible, but there should be a copy in every home in this church. You can understand the bible if you read a story a week.
3. **JOURNAL** - Someone told me a couple of weeks ago about how when they take a trip they would always journal their experience and they said that their memories of those trips are the fullest. Well, this is a journey - you will see new things and experience new things. It will be invaluable to you to journal through this process. The poorest ink is better than the best memory - spear your thoughts on the point of a pen.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Not long ago, my family and I went on an expedition to the most photographed waterfall in Alabama - **Caney Creek falls**. There is a nice trail that takes you very close to the falls, but just before you go over the cliff down into the valley where the falls are located the trail ends. You have to walk maybe a quarter of a mile to get there.

Well this particular day the water was unusually high and some of the kids didn't have waterproof shoes, plus we were hiking with camera equipment that didn't need to get wet. So, we had to walk quiet a ways up the creek to find a place shallow enough to cross... but we made it, had a great day.. then it came time to return. Again, we had to walk back up the creek and find our crossing.

Once we crossed the creek we couldn't locate trailhead. Now generally, I have a pretty good sense of direction so I was certain that if we continued south we would eventually run into the trail. But as we walked the woods seemed to grow thicker and thicker and the sun was setting. We had no phone signal and our phone GPS didn't work.

It was then that the kids started to ask questions, "dad, are we lost?", "no! we aren't lost", I said. We walked on, and on... eventually I was about ready to give up and set up camp for the night. It was then that a message came over my phone... we had a glimmer of signal... one tiny bar... I immediately brought up GPS maps and according to the map the trail was only a matter of about 20 yards ahead.. we kept walking and found the trail.

NOW - there are two ways to look at a path.

1. As some **narrow**, predetermined, way that we had to walk.
2. As **freedom**, hope and clear direction for my future.

How do you think I looked at the path that day? It was nothing short of a celebration.

Jesus compared God's plan to such a narrow path.... As a matter of fact the book of Genesis was written in to a group of people lost in the wilderness.

CONTEXT: If I had to sum up Genesis (and the first 5 books of the bible) in one word I would use the word - "**Reprogramming**". Because you see, Genesis wasn't given on the first day of creation, but rather several millennia afterward. Picture 100's of thousands of people who had only known slavery, living in the desert of the Middle East, no guarantee of food, no guarantee of water, all they had ever known is the culture of Egypt with it plethora of gods and goddesses, it's idolatry and immorality.

Yet it was safe - ***sometimes men will opt for slavery with security over freedom and the unknown.*** There were rumors no doubt, oral traditions - but much of that was obscured or synchronized into the religions of Egypt.

But Moses - this Jew adopted into Pharaoh's household, then exiled into the wilderness for murder had visited the city of the pyramids claiming to represent the God of Jews. He has made demands of Pharaoh and he has brought down the wrath of God on all of Egypt. Now here they are in the desert - no doubt their head is spinning.

Who were they? Are they Egyptians? Are they Jews? If they are Jews, what does that mean? Still there is that yearning to go back to Egypt.

It is in this context that Genesis was written.

- It was to show the Jews that they were a vital part of a great unfolding narrative.
- It was to give them an identity.
- It was to correct misunderstandings about God and man.

It was to call them back to the path God had made for them.

APPLICATION: Some of you today are in a similar situation.

- Your **marriage** is in a wilderness.
- Your **parenting** is in a wilderness.
- Your **career** is in a wilderness.

You need identity, direction, and hope. You need to recognize that you are a single player in a story that's much bigger than you are and that's why this series is so important.

ILLUSTRATION: How many of you know the name **Biggs Darklighter**? Biggs Darklighter was the X-wing fighter who dies shielding Luke so he can blow up Death Star in Star Wars Episode IV. You probably didn't even know his name - you see the main character was Luke... it's all about Luke's story and Biggs was a supporting character in a much larger story.

One of the most important aspects of your life is the moment you realize it's not really about you. Life isn't about you, the Bible isn't about you. So if you read it as if it's mostly about you - you are going to find it boring. But here is what I want you to understand the key to understanding YOUR life is to see how it fits into a larger narrative. When you grasp that - things seem to fall into place.

SO OFTEN we approach the bible like:

- A **fortune cookie** - we open it grab a verse and superstitiously assume it somehow conveyed a message we needed for that day.
- Sometimes we approach it like the "**whack-a-mole**" game at Chuck-e-Cheese looking for rules to keep... but it seems like when we get one down another pops up.
- Other times we approach it like the "**Accept All**" button when you download a new app. We don't really read terms and conditions, but we figure that if there is anything super important the preacher will let us know.

The bible is 31,102 verses, 1663 commands, 40 authors, 3,237 Characters - 31 of whom are named Zechariah. But it's really one big unfolding story that you are a part of - it's all pointing toward the ULTIMATE rule and reign of the MESSIAH. Every genealogy, every law, every story is pointing toward JESUS.

GENESIS begins with the camera zoomed out as far as it can go, then it slowly zooms in until it's focused on one man Abram and his family.

Keep in mind we are going to go through these books rapidly, showing you the key concepts as we go. So some of you will find this very frustrating at first because I won't camp out on issues that you consider very important - but hopefully this perspective will allow you to see connections within each book and the bible as whole you've never seen before.

TEXT: Genesis 1:1–5 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning, **God** created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the **Spirit** of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ And God **said**, "Let there be light," and there was light.

So we recognize that as time began, God was already in existence. God had NO beginning. He existed in Himself.

This was different from the Egyptian understanding - the Egyptians believed that the gods came up out of a primordial hill and became very lonely, so he mated with his own shadow to produce other gods springing forth from spit and vomit... no joke.

Dr. Michael D. Williams states, *“We moderns often come to Genesis 1 assuming that this text is presenting an argument against the naturalistic, evolutionary story of origins. There is indeed a polemic here, but the polemical intent of Genesis 1 is not aimed at **modern science but rather ancient pagan mythologies**. Moses intent is to break the back of pagan gods.*

The God of Genesis - was eternal, he was pure, he was self existing, he was all powerful.

He created out of nothing. Moses uses the word, *“bara”* which is rarely used elsewhere. Which means to originate or to create out of nothing The theological term is Ex Nehilo.

He was Trinitarian in nature - we see all three persons of the Godhead in the first 3 verses of the Bible.

- In the beginning God (That is the Father)
- The Spirit hovering over the surface of the deep
- The Word - which John tells us in Christ.

And we see that he is good - over and over he makes things and they are declared, “good”.

⁴ And God saw that the light was good.

There is a **sevenfold** declaration that creation is good, even very good. There is not the slightest hint that anything was created as evil, bad or sinful.

It was the picture of God’s handiwork, displaying his order, symmetry, harmony and beauty rather than chaos.

We see in the first three chapters a progression of God **creating, then shaping**. So God creates a formless and void universe and then he begins to bring order into it. The earth is dark and empty, but God shapes and forms and brings forth life.

Then we see Man created as the crowing work of God’s creation - created as it were in the **IMAGE of God**. That is we are to bear His Image

So as a mirror bears the image of a man and reflects it back to him. Man is to bear the image of God and reflect God’s glory to all creation.

All of creation should be able to look at us and say, “Oh, that is what God is like”.

Adam alone couldn’t reflect the nature of God because God was Trinitarian. So God did something amazing - he brought Woman out of the man, and the two of them together brought forth a child.

So there you see in the first household something of the reflection of the Trinity - Unity of purpose - Diversity of Personality. We see structure and authority. Each member of the household complements one another just as in the Trinity.

Man, Woman, naked and unashamed walking with God in the cool of the day and God declares his creation - VERY GOOD.

Notice that work was given to man prior to the fall. They were to work the Garden, like God they were to bring order out of Chaos.

By the way, that's what we are to do with our lives -

- Are you a Teacher? You bring order out of chaotic minds.
- Are you an Engineer? You bring order out of chaotic numbers.
- Are you a Soldier? You bring order out of chaotic nations.

NOTICE: The first great commission is given - "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it".

So the idea was - outside of Eden things weren't as glorious as they were in the garden. Adam and Eve's job was to extend Eden over the whole planet. They would need help so they were to procreate.

But then there was this tree in the midst of the Garden. It was called, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". Now the entire law of God could be summed up in one command - don't eat the fruit of that tree.

MAJOR QUESTION - Why did God plant the tree in the garden?

Well I would suggest that it is a clue as to God's purpose in all creation.

- Did God know Adam would eat of the fruit?
- Did God know that as a result the entire race would be tainted?
- Did God know that it would require Jesus to die on a cross?
- Did God know that some would believe and many would reject his salvation?
- Did God know that as a result Heaven would be filled with ransomed people from every tribe and tongue?
- Did God know that Hell would be fill with those who reject the grace of God?

The answer to all those questions is clearly - yes! God in His infinite wisdom deemed it best to plant the tree - so that his full nature might be revealed.

You see - if man never sinned there would be aspects of God we would never see.

We would never see his mercy, grace, we wouldn't understand the depths of his love... neither would be see the true extent of his holiness, wrath, judgement.

ILLUSTRATION: At the end of the bible, in the book of revelation we see the Holy City pictured like a *many faceted jewel* with every facet aglow with His majesty and glory.

Here at the beginning we see the stage set for the revelation of God's glory as time progresses.

BTW, do you know where we see the fullest, clearest picture of who God is? **On the cross** - look at the cross and you see God's love, God's wrath, God's hatred of sin, God's mercy toward sinners.

So we begin with a **CITY** - Eden, most of the bible will revolve around the city of Jerusalem, it will conclude with a city New Jerusalem coming out of Heaven.

We begin with a **TREE** - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the middle we see another tree - a cross of wood, and at the end we see the river of life is lined with trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

We begin with a **MEAL** - it is a meal that we will see next week sets this story into play, in the middle we see a meal, the Lord's table where God's people reflect on his sacrifice, and at the end we see a meal - the marriage supper of the Lamb, where God's people from all time sit at peace with the creator.

CONCLUSION: I wonder how many of you feel like me in the midst of Bankhead forrest? A friend of mine said this week - you know I distinctly remember my dad when he was 40, and he really seemed to know what he was doing... why don't I? Do you need some clarity? Some direction? Do you need to know your role in this grand narrative? Join us as we read through God's word - the path is much closer than you think.

Our hope this morning is like the primordial earth - for some your soul is formless and void - but there is hope... the Spirit of God hovers over you.