

# God's Message to Us in Genesis 1-11

*Halifax, NS*

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## **Introduction to the entire series**

Today we are starting a new sermon series called “God’s Message to Us in Every Book of the Bible.”

- In this series, I plan to preach through the entire Bible.
  - Typically, I will preach one sermon on each of the 66 books of the Bible, however, there will be some books (like Genesis) that I will do two sermons on.
- My goal is to look at God’s basic message for us today in each book.
  - The Bible is a very unique book—
    - The main reason for that is that it was written by holy men of God who were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
    - The Spirit of God enabled them to record the exact message that God has for His people.
      - That means that from this book, we have the very oracles of God so that we can know everything that He wants us to know as His people...
        - things about Him, things about us, things that He wants us to do, things that He has done for us...
  - One of the most amazing things about the Bible is that although the various books were written to communicate God’s message to the people who were then alive,
    - They were also written to communicate to all who lived after.
      - Romans 15:4 brings this out when it says: **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”**
    - This being so, my goal in this series is not so much to give you a history lesson about these books, but in particular to show you what each one of them says to us as God’s people today.
      - Just to give you an example, in Leviticus, there is a lot written about how to offer sacrifices.
      - But now that Jesus has come, we are no longer called to offer sacrifices in a temple—so when we get to Leviticus, we will look it applies to us today...
        - What is the message for us today as God’s people living in Atlantic Canada?

## **Introduction to Genesis 1-11**

Today, we are starting off with the first book in the Bible.

- I plan to go through the books in the order in which they are found.

Genesis is the first book in the Bible because it is about our origins.

- The name *Genesis* is from a Greek word that means *origin* or *beginning*.
  - The original Hebrew title was *Bereshith* which means *in the beginning*.
  - That is why it comes first.

- The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses about 3500 years ago—not quite 1500 years before Jesus came.
  - There are a few things that were probably written in later by another inspired prophet when the books were put together, such as the account of the death of Moses, but for the most part, they were written by Moses, as our Lord affirmed when He spoke of these writings.
  - We will not take the time in this series to try to answer those who claim that these books were written something like a thousand years later.
    - Their arguments are rooted in their unbelief that the scriptures have a divine origin.
    - As a result, they are constrained to find explanations for the prophecies that in their minds, the original authors could not have predicted.
      - But again, our focus in this series will be on God’s message to us.

There is so much in Genesis that we will only look at the first 11 chapters today.

- These eleven chapters are essential for us to truly know God.

### I. The Lord begins by telling us how He made us.

A. We should all already know *that* God made us, so the focus here is on *how* He did it.

1. Of course there are people who very much want to deny that God made us...
  - As we will see in a moment, we are all guilty of rejecting God as our God.
  - And one of the ways that this is manifested in our day is in the absurd notion that the heavens and earth made themselves.
    - That is so irrational and preposterous, that it doesn’t even need to be answered.
    - It can be helpful to answer some of the clever arguments that those advocating such a position present, but the whole idea itself is beyond reason.
2. But when it comes to knowing how God made everything... you can only know this if God tells you.
  - And that is what He does in the first two chapters of Genesis.
  - We receive this by faith—not blind faith—not that at all—but faith in the testimony that God, who is truth itself, has given us in His word.
    - As Hebrews 11:3 says, **“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”**
    - Faith is not just believing something, it is believing what God has said through His prophets—and in this case, through His prophet Moses.

B. What are some of the things that He shows us here?

1. First, we see how He simply calls things into being by His powerful word.
  - a. He speaks things—even things like light—into being by the word of His power—in Gen 1:3, He says, “Let there be light,” and the light appears...
    - And in the same way, He calls the earth to bring forth vegetation, and for the seas to bring forth creatures and the earth to bring forth living creatures according to their kind, and it happens.
    - He made it all by the word of His power.

- b. When we consider the power and the wisdom of God in bringing forth all of these things out of His sheer imagination, it calls for us to worship Him!
    - Who is like the Lord?
    - Let us stand in awe and admiration of Him.
      - The more we learn about the complexity and the order of the whole creation, the more we ought to praise Him!
  - c. And, it ought to give us confidence that God does whatever He pleases today.
    - No one is able to stand in the way of the one who called the world into being.
    - That means that we can absolutely count on Him to do everything that He has said He will do—from casting Satan into the abyss to raising us from the dead and making us like Jesus Christ. Nothing is too hard for Him!
2. Second, He testifies to us of His goodness and kindness toward us.
- a. It is special to see how He created the whole world for us and called it **good**, but then created us and called it all **very good** (Gen 1:31)!
    - This order of things suggests that He made it all for us!
    - God did not need a world to live in, for He is a pure spirit, but He made a world for us!
      - And what a wonderful, beautiful place it was—especially before the fall!
      - We are told of the seas and the animals, and of all sorts of delicious things to eat, and of the moon and the stars giving us times and seasons.
        - He did it with us in mind.
  - b. This is our world!
    - When He recounts how He made us, He also tells us that He put everything under us—in Gen 1:26 He says of us:
      - **Gen 1:26: “Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”**
    - This world is for our use!
      - He tells us to subdue it—to bring it into use for ourselves...
      - We were empowered to make beautiful things for each other, to cook beautiful meals, to explore and learn and investigate—
        - to admire the animals and to make use of them.
    - We are even told that He planted the first garden for us... to show us how to subdue the earth—to get us started at it.
      - I wouldn’t be surprised if He even included some tools for Adam and Eve to help them get started with tending the garden!
    - How grateful we ought to be for all that He gave us!
  - c. And that’s another thing—He made us male and female...
    - In chapter 2, He tells of how it was not good for the man to be alone.
      - And then, in a dramatic way, God puts the man to sleep and takes out a rib and forms a woman.
        - Instead of making her directly, He makes her of the man—and then gives them the ability to multiply and bring forth children.

- How kind it was for Him to think of making us this way—that there are others who are bone of our bone and flesh of flesh to share the world with—to worship God with.
    - How lonely it would be if we were solitary!
      - And He gave us marriage, right from the start, with the institution that a man would leave his father and mother and cling to his wife as one flesh!
      - Our gracious Father thought of everything.
3. And one of the most important things, He shows us that He made us in His own image.
- This is strongly emphasised in Gen 1:26-27—notice how it is repeated:
    - First, the triune God states it as His intention to make us in His image:
      - Gen 1:26: **Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”**
    - And then, for emphasis, it states twice that He did indeed make us in His own image—almost like Moses is marvelling at this.
      - Look at verse 27: **“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”**
    - An *image* is something that looks like the thing that it images.
      - So this means that we look like God—not that we have a similar physical appearance, but, as we are shown in Ephesians and Colossians,
        - we are like Him in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.
          - God’s **knowledge** is infinite and ours is not; but we were made to know things in *truth* as He does... to think God’s thoughts after Him...to see a tree and know that it is a tree...
          - And we were made to be **moral** beings—living in love and in justice.
          - And **holiness** speaks of us being dedicated to God—as the Father is dedicated to the Son and the Holy Spirit and they to each other and to Him—we were made to glory in His glory.
        - We were made to be a replica of God in human form.
          - We are not infinite and eternal as He is, and we have bodies and bodily needs, but even in our bodies, we are to be generous like God, doing things in kindness for each other like making supper or building airplanes to fly each other around, or playing music for each other—and worshipping together—all as little images of God.
    - How we ought to yearn to be true reflection of God—
      - to shine gloriously as His image in human form—that way Jesus did (and still does for that matter).
4. And notice how He told us to be fruitful and multiply.
- As His image bearers, we were so beautiful that He wanted the whole earth to be filled with us—and I might mention that He is still going to make that happen.
    - He is going to fill the earth with those who are His perfect image—but we will get to that later.

5. And right from the start, you can see that we had communion with God...
  - He gave us language, and right from the beginning, He revealed Himself to us through words—that is one of the main reasons He gave us language.
    - It is a tremendous way by which we can know and understand Him.
    - We have thoughts with words.
  - In chapter 2, we see Him appointing the Sabbath for us as a weekly holy day in which we rejoice in Him—especially remembering Him as our Creator...
    - And we see Him appointing labour—that they were to keep the garden and to subdue the earth—the whole world was to put into service for man—not as one raping the land, but as one using it responsibly.
    - And we see Him making the woman and instituting marriage by which a man and woman are joined together as one flesh in a bond.
      - We see God meeting with them and instructing them and them worshipping and obeying Him.
  - What a marvellous thing that our Maker should have communion with us like this.
    - It should be our greatest joy to learn of Him and to worship Him and receive from His hand.

## II. But the Lord also gives us the account of our rebellion as a human race.

- We were all in it together because we were all to be born of Adam and Eve.
- A. The history of our rebellion is a sad one...
1. God gave us a test of our allegiance.
    - The garden that God planted for us was full of interesting and wonderful and delightful things—food is good now, just think what it was like before the fall?
      - In 2:16-17, we were given all the trees to eat, all things to enjoy in this wonderful garden—with the exception of just one tree.
    - By forbidding one tree, that was just as good to eat as the other trees, God was testing our allegiance to Him.
      - Would we live with Him as our God?
      - Would we live under His rule and authority?
      - Would we recognise Him as God Almighty and serve Him accordingly?
  2. And in chapter 3, we have the tempter come—**the great dragon...that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan**, as he is identified in Revelation 12:9.
    - In 3:1-3, he comes to the woman to inquire why she cannot eat from a tree that has nothing wrong with it.
      - Satan presents this as quite unreasonable.
    - God had told them plainly that they would die if they ate it, but in verse 4 it says: **“Then the serpent said to the woman, <sup>5</sup> ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”**
      - Instead having to live according to God’s ideas of right and wrong, you can be like God—you can decide what is good and what is evil for yourself.

3. It was a call to reject God as the ruler over all—as their Lord and their God.
  - This was the most horrendous form of treason ever—for it was a call to overthrow the rule of our very Creator who is infinite in wisdom and abounding in goodness and truth.
    - Treason is a great crime when it is an earthly monarch, but how much more when it is God to whom all glory in heaven and earth belongs!
      - God to whom we owe our very existence and the existence of all things.
      - God, whose image we are.
      - God who is abounding in kindness and love and wisdom and truth.

B. In Genesis 3, the LORD also recounts to us the consequences of our rebellion...

1. In 3:7 and following, you have the man and the woman trying to hide from God with fig leaves and from their meeting with him in the cool of the evening.
  - What was to be a sweet time of communion with Him was now a time for hiding away.... we should meet with Him daily instead of hiding...
  - God drives them out of the garden—they are not fit to live in paradise...
    - In verse 16, He tells the woman of pain and sorrow in childbearing—not only in the delivery of babies, but in the whole process of raising children and in relating to her husband.
    - In verse 17, He tells the man of a curse on the earth that will bring much hardship to him—everything from crop failure to storms that destroy and sickness—he will have to toil just to stay alive...
      - In verse 19, He even says: **“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.**
  - The ground we were given dominion over now takes dominion of us.
    - We return to dust and ashes—the ultimate humiliation—because of our sin.
2. To this very day, we live with these consequences.
  - One of the most common objections you hear about God today is that He made a world that is full of such suffering.
    - But the divine testimony of Genesis is that He did not make a world of suffering and misery—He made it very pleasant and very good.
  - The suffering and misery is His holy and just response to our rebellion.
    - It actually brings glory instead of shame to Him—it is an act of justice.
    - He told us that if we rejected Him as our God, we would surely die and that is why we suffer and die.
      - Having rejected Him, we now have misery and death.

**III. But right here in Genesis, the Lord gives us the first promise of redemption!**

- A. He explains to us His intention to rescue some of us from our sin and misery.
- Before He had even finished driving Adam and Eve from the garden, He was already reaching out to them in mercy!
1. Interestingly, He first speaks of this redemptive mercy to the gloating serpent.
    - The serpent has just led them to join with him in his rebellion against God.
      - They have joined his coup as it were and are in league with him...

- And in verse 15, the Lord says to this gloating serpent: **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”**
    - This is called the proto-evangelium—the first promise of the gospel.
  - When God says that He will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, He is declaring His intention to turn some people against the serpent.
    - God is going to rescue the woman and her seed from the serpent’s rebellion—He is going to put enmity between them and Satan—He will divide them from the serpent and restore them back to Himself.
2. And marvellously, the focus falls upon one individual seed of the woman—a Son who will be born to her...
- Notice how it refers to the Seed of the woman as an individual male when it says, **He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.**
    - Admittedly, this is a shadowy oracle,
      - But it shows that God is reclaiming people and that they will be led by One who will destroy the serpent.
        - To crush his head is to kill him...
        - Yet this Son will also receive a blow from the serpent to His heel—a great wound, but not one that terminates Him.
      - What a terrible humiliation it was to Satan to be told that a son born to the woman would defeat him—for Satan is a fallen angel and superior to her.
    - Yes, this is a shadowy oracle, but we know the rest of the story.
      - We know that the Son born to the woman is none other than the Son of God who came from heaven to become human flesh.
      - We know that He was bruised on the cross for our sins—that He bore God’s wrath there to Satan’s delight—until God accepted His sacrifice to atone for the sin of us all.
      - We know that God has promised to Him that all things, including Satan, will be brought under His feet.
  - We who know the rest of the story look back at this wonderful promise...
    - A promise that gave shadowy hope to Adam and Eve—and we are reminded and made to delight in the marvellous grace of our loving Lord!
      - We are given rich joy and hope with praise to our God.
    - We see how God graciously clothed them, even as He was driving them out of the garden...
      - We see how even though they are to die in this world, God still tells the woman that she will bring forth children, albeit with sorrow;
      - And Adam that he will make a living—albeit with much toil and sweat.
    - They go out of the garden with a ray of hope...
      - That God has plans to put down this rebellion of Satan that they have joined by the mighty hand of a son born to them!
        - And that they will bring forth this Son along with other children that will turn against Satan—as we believe Adam and Eve did, for God made these promises directly to them.

B. And what we see up through chapter 11 is God's amazing preservation of these people for God in a world that is otherwise lost in rebellion.

1. Right away, the Lord tells us in chapter 4 of two sons born to the woman...Cain and Abel.

- Cain remains in union with Satan and the rebellion, but Abel is one who has enmity for the serpent and turns to God in faith.
- In Genesis 4:4-5, we are told: **Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**
- Hebrews 11:4 explains the difference: **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**
  - Abel had faith—he was looking to God's promise to defeat Satan by the Son that was to be born to the woman.
  - He believed the promise and it was his desire to be with this Son that was to come—to be freed from sin and rebellion—and by faith he was.
- And if you read on, you see that Cain murdered Abel because Abel was righteous before God.
  - God graciously pled with Cain, but Cain would hear none of it—he did not want to be righteous and he resented Abel for being righteous.
  - That is why he killed him—it was his way of killing Christ.
    - He wanted to live his own way, not under the rule of God.
    - Like most people, he did not want judgment, but neither did he want God to be his God.

2. For the next 1500 years, the LORD reveals two things:

- The wickedness of the wicked...
  - His powerful preservation of a people for Himself...
- a. Let's look first at the wickedness of the wicked.
- 1) He leaves them unrestrained so that their wickedness can develop freely.
    - For one thing, everyone at this time lives for 900 to 1000 years.
    - There is obviously not a lot of sickness, and there seems to be a great deal of prosperity.
      - Sorrow, hardship, sickness, and the threat of death have a tremendous way of restraining wickedness but they were rare.
    - What's more, God had not instituted capital punishment.
      - His punishment of Cain was simply to leave him alive with his conscience as one cut off from God in the earth.
      - It is a mercy of God to have punishment for crime because it restrains the wicked.
        - But sometimes God removes such restraint to show us what we are really like—and that is just what He did in the ancient world so we ought to learn from it.

- 2) The LORD testifies to us how the wicked turn out in this 1500 year period.
- We are told of Lamech becoming a polygamist and of him killing a man who wounded him—he boasts of his murder...
    - He is acting as if he is God.
    - We are told of great violence and immorality, and even of what appears to be demons cohabitating with women involved in sorcery.
  - And in Genesis 6:5, the LORD has recorded for us His assessment of man after 1500 years:
    - **Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**
    - Look at how strong this testimony is—every intent was only evil continually!
  - From this, we ought to learn of the corruption that is in us all and of what it turns into if we are left to go our own way without restraint.
    - In Romans 3:10-20, Paul affirms that this is what is in us all apart from Christ: **As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. <sup>12</sup> They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”<sup>13</sup> “Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “The poison of asps is under their lips; <sup>14</sup> whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” <sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> destruction and misery are in their ways; <sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they have not known. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear of God before their eyes.” <sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**
    - My brothers and sisters, we should be greatly humbled by this and see how much we need Jesus to save us.
- 3) And then there is the testimony that God gives us of His wrath against sin.
- In Gen 6:13, we are told what God said to Noah about this: **And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”**
  - And in these chapters we are told of the great and terrible flood.
    - There were likely billions of people by this time—as they prospered and multiplied—
    - It was a terribly violent destruction with the ground opening up fountains below and the heavens pouring out rain.
  - By this great flood, God revealed His wrath to us against sin.
    - It is a testimony given to us to be remembered.
    - Because the final judgment was yet a great way off, God showed us at this ancient time how displeased He really is with our sin.

- We should take His warnings of judgment seriously and not only make sure that we are in Christ, but also that we warn others to flee from the wrath to come.
  - Judgment is what we truly deserve.
  - We need to come to grips with this and the flood helps us do that.
- b. But now let's look at God's powerful preservation of a people for Himself!
- 1) Even in this wicked time when sin was unrestrained, the Lord shows us in a most marvellous way that He is able to preserve a people for Himself!
    - It appears that there is only one couple in each generation that is godly—for there is only one that is named from Seth until Noah.
    - And to be sure, Noah, who pled with others, was unable to turn them to the promised Son of righteousness, for none got on the ark with him.
  - 2) I want you to think about this—imagine living in a world that was likely as populated as ours and that was free of much of the sickness and death...
    - in other words where people were getting on quite well and suffering few consequences for their sin...
      - And imagine if yours was the ONLY family in the world that was following the Lord.
        - Your family is the only one that believes!
    - This shows us that it is not of us to follow God but it is by His powerful call and grace that we come to Him.
      - It is not about our ability to hold on to Him, it is about His ability to turn us to Himself and to keep us by His power—we are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation that is ready to be revealed.
  - 3) So it was with Noah.
    - Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD...
      - He was kept by the power of God through faith.
    - God even testifies after all the people except for Noah and his family have been destroyed that man is still wicked...
      - And that the only reason He will not destroy them is because of the sacrifice that Noah offers—pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus.
        - In Gen 8:21, it says: **And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."**
    - Do you see?
      - The wickedness is still there, but as Noah by faith offered his sacrifice, and God accepts it...
        - The sacrifice reminds Him of His Son who is to come and die for His peoples' sins.
        - That is the only basis by which even Noah was accepted.

3. And so in chapter 9, the LORD makes a covenant with Noah and the whole creation that He will not destroy the earth with another flood.
  - **Gen 9:8-11: Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: <sup>9</sup> “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”**
    - And God gives the rainbow as a sign of the covenant.
  - a. And then we see Him carrying out this promise of preservation...
    - In chapter 9, He institutes capital punishment where men are given authority to execute those who murder to punish and restrain violence...
      - We also see a renewed call to multiply and the fill the earth.
    - And in chapter 10, we see God enabling man to do that—they multiply,
      - And in chapter 11, there is the tower of Babel where God restrains wickedness man instead of leaving them to on in their rebellion...
        - They were trying to build a stairway to heaven—Babal means “gateway to God.” Here was salvation by self-effort...
        - And God turned *Babal* into *Babel*—which means *confusion*—by sending confusion of languages to restrain them.
  - b. And ever since, He has continued to restrain the pride of men in the earth and to preserve His people.
    - If He did not continue to scatter us and send confusion, there would be no restraint to our pride and wickedness—
      - but He breaks up our parties so that we will seek Him.
    - And as we will see next week with Abraham, He continues to powerfully call us and preserve those that He has appointed to salvation by grace.
  - c. We are just as wicked as anyone else, and we deserve violent judgment such as God sent in the flood.
    - But if you come to Him—if you come to the Son that He has now sent to destroy Satan and to restore us to God—
      - You will be saved.
      - Thanks be to His gracious name!