

**CREATION, FALL, JUDGMENT, AND REDEMPTION**  
**(SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2014)**

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**SCRIPTURE: 10 WORDS; HEBREWS 11:1-7**

**INTRODUCTION**

Today I am starting a series on Genesis 1-11. It has been about six years since we last looked directly at these chapters. The purpose of my messages this morning is to give an introduction and overview of these chapters.

Genesis 1-11 can be divided into two sections that both follow a similar pattern - creation, fall, judgment, and redemption. The first section begins obviously with Genesis 1 and the account of creation and ends with Genesis 6:8 with the grace of God extended to Noah. The pattern then repeats with the account of the flood, the story of sin and scattering found in Genesis 10 and 11, and concludes at the end of Genesis 11 with the introduction to Abraham.

And what do we so clearly see about God in these two sections? In both sections we witness that God is absolutely sovereign. Far from just creating and let the nature run on its own, we see that God is directly involved in all affairs. He created with direct interest and concern. He also brings judgment. We see in Genesis 1-11 very powerfully God's notice of the actions of men and women and fierce judgment He brings. We also see that God is merciful. Under no direct compulsion or requirement, it is God who shows mercy and brings salvation to those whom He chooses. Finally we also see that God's purposes will be fulfilled even in the face of great sin and rebellion by man. Genesis 1-11 shows that nothing will stop God's eternal plans.

The entire book of Genesis covers approximately 2369 years of history from creation to the death of Joseph. The first 11 chapters alone cover approximately 2083 years of history from creation to the death of Abraham's father, Terah. A little over 1/2 of the history of the OT is recorded in just 11 chapters and more time is covered in these 11 chapters than in human history since the time of Christ.

The history recorded in Genesis is beautifully written. God has not just given us a bunch of facts or bits of historical data, but He has given to us a beautiful story - God's story. Consider the themes I introduced - creation, fall, judgment, and redemption. Nearly every story that man creates follows this basic pattern. It has been reflected nearly countless times in man's attempt to understand God's world. The book of Genesis gives the first great template.

One might be tempted to think that since only 11 chapters of Genesis cover over 2000 years, that we really don't know anything about the past. But that is far from the truth. While God has not given us all the details, we have been given, thankfully, the most important things for our understanding. And so rather than speculate on what we have not been given, we must instead focus as much as possible on every word that we have been given, knowing that God has not given us any detail that is unimportant. Put it this way. We have in these first 11 chapters of Genesis far more information about our past than many of us probably know about our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers.

As we give attention to the details found in Genesis 1-11 we will certainly encounter the idea that these chapters are not true history but essentially myth that somehow is shaped to meet the circumstances of God's people. But consider that in the NT, 100 quotations or references are made to Genesis 1-11. Henry Morris observed that "each of these chapters is at least alluded to by each NT author. On at least 6 different occasions, Jesus Christ quoted from or referred to something or someone in one of these chapters, including specific reference to each of the first 7 chapters."<sup>1</sup> Do we need a university professor to affirm the words of Jesus before we believe them?

We read earlier from the first part of Hebrews 11. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony." It is this life of faith that you are also called to live. God is sovereign, holy, just, and faithful. You are called to respond in humility, faith, obedience, and service.

I would like us to consider Genesis 1-11 in terms of the themes of God's sovereignty, His perfect judgment, His mercy, and the fulfillment of His eternal will.

### 1. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

What do we mean when we say that God is sovereign? We are speaking of the complete freedom that God has to do what He determines. We also refer to His ownership over all that He has made. Further in his sovereign power He establishes order and boundaries. He has the utter freedom to give and forbid.

What is the wonderful pattern that we find throughout Genesis 1? God speaks and matter and life spring into existence. You might remember the words of the philosopher Descartes, "I think, therefore I am." A much better statement is God thinks, therefore I am.

An interesting way to study the Bible is to look at the start and end of each chapter. I recognize that the chapter divisions are not inspired, but sometimes they do reflect a good beginning and ending point.

Look at the end of chapter 1.

**Genesis 1:31** Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

God's sovereignty should never be interrupted to mean that God is harsh, overbearing, and lacks joy. This is the lie that Satan promoted to Adam and Eve. God's Sovereignty is the true basis for our freedom and joy. How did Jesus teach us to pray? "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

We see God's sovereignty also in the pattern of the week. Where does the concept of a week come from? There is nothing astronomically significant about a week. It comes from God's creation - His choice to create the universe in six days and rest from His work of creation on the seventh day. God is the sovereign one who determines the patterns of man's life.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 21.

Let us look at other boundaries that God determined in His perfect sovereignty and freedom.

**Gen. 2:16** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Another pattern that man in his supposed wisdom seeks to question and redefine is also found in Genesis 2.

**Gen. 2:22** Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

As we continue in Genesis 3, we must also recognize that God is sovereign in allowing the temptation of Adam and Eve. This is where we start getting into difficult theology, but we see clearly God's free choice in this matter. And here is an important point. You don't have to fully understand a doctrine of Scripture to have confidence of its truth. This is not an excuse for laziness or for not being concerned. But thankfully we do not establish the truth of God's Word. It does not depend on us. Rather we seek to humbly recognize and understand what God has revealed, especially when it goes against man's supposed thoughts and feelings.

As we continue in Genesis 3 we see God's sovereignty displayed in driving out Adam and Eve from the garden and establishing a most awesome security force to guard the garden.

**Gen. 3:24** So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Let me share a number of other passages from chapters 4-11.

God determines how we are to worship and what worship is pleasing to Him.

**Gen. 4:4** Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

God brings judgment but also protection for Cain. Cain does not get away with murder.

**Gen. 4:15** And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

Genesis 5 is the first of the important genealogies. Through it we are able to construct a basic timeline of the history of the period before the flood. In this genealogy we also see that God is sovereign in giving life and taking away life.

In Genesis 6, God determines that He will nearly all of life on the earth to an end. There will be a new creation that comes through an incredible judgment.

Another very important application that comes from the sovereignty of God is that there is a true basis for order. We see at the end of Genesis 8 and repeated in Genesis 9 God's faithfulness. He is sovereign. God can do all that He desires. This does not mean chaos or confusion. Rather we have stability and order because God is sovereign and faithful.

Following the flood in Genesis 9:6-7, God gives the rules concerning life and reissues the command that men and women be fruitful and multiply.

Further we see in Genesis 9 that God is sovereign in allowing the curse of Noah upon Ham and specifically Canaan to be fulfilled.

And then in Genesis 11 we see two more aspects of God's sovereignty. The horde of humanity in its rebellion tried building a tower that would reach into the heavens. But God has to come down from heaven as it were to see this puny building project. Second, in the calling of Abraham we see God sovereignly determine that He would redeem and save an idol worshipper and use him in a most significant way to show and advance God's work of redemption.

## 2. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Judgment is not simply punishment, but God's perfect ability to evaluate and determine what must be done, the course of justice in every situation. God's judgment is based on His holiness, truth, and sovereign power. God examines and then issues a perfect ruling.

Where is the first example of God's judgment in Scripture? It is not in Genesis 3 but in Genesis 1. The judgment of God is first expressed not in terms of man but in terms of what God made in creation.

What is the repeated pattern we find in Genesis 1? God saw that it was good. God's creation is the first thing judged and it is found to be very good as we see from the end of Genesis 1.

Another aspect of God's judgment before sin was the determination that Adam needed a wife.

**Gen. 2:18** And the LORD God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*"

It is then especially in Genesis 3 where we think of God bringing judgment.

**Gen. 3:8** And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **9** Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?"

All of life we live in terms of God as the sovereign creator and the one who brings judgment. His judgment is scary for sinners to consider but also necessary.

In Genesis 4, we see that God acted as the judge of Cain. God is not just involved in the big aspects of life as it were. Concern is shown at the individual level.

In Genesis 6-8 we find the record of the second greatest judgment the earth has experienced. Why the second? I will explain that later.

We are quite familiar with the account of the flood, but it is truly awesome to consider the judgment that God brought upon His rebellious creation. We believe that God brought a universal flood which killed all of humanity save for 8 people and wiped out all the land animals and birds except those that were saved on the ark. It is very possible that billions of people died in the wind, waves, and waters of the flood.

In Genesis 9 we read that God promised that He would limit the extent of His judgment in terms of never bringing again a flood that would destroy nearly all of creation.

Finally under the theme of judgment we see God responding to the rebellion enshrined in the Tower of Babel. He divides the languages which results in the scattering of the people.

### **3. GOD IS MERCIFUL**

The mercy of God is found in God not giving to sinners what they fully deserve and then giving them grace, which they do not at all deserve. This is the great theme of redemption that we find all throughout Genesis.

Mercy is first demonstrated in chapter 3. As we look at the judgments that God brought we must say that each of these judgments could have been even more severe. They are frightening, but they do not express the fullness of God's wrath.

Another important and I think theologically significant action we see in Genesis 3 is found in verse 21.

**Gen. 3:21** Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

The mercy of God we further find in Genesis 4. God gave to Adam and Eve children.

**Gen. 4:1** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."

Genesis 4 also teaches us that God in His mercy can be approached in worship.

**Genesis 4:4** Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

We have already looked at verse 15. Cain did not get away with murder even though he was not put to death. God could have struck Cain down. God chose to punish Cain in another way. His attempts to

farm would be found fruitless. A fugitive and vagabond he would be on the earth. The LORD also then guarded Cain from others killing him, issuing a warning of sevenfold vengeance.

Genesis 4 ends with a twofold aspect of God's mercy and redemption. God appointed another seed for Adam and Eve in place of Abel. Chapter 4 then ends with a wonderful phrase showing God's work of salvation – Then *men* began to call on the name of the Lord.

Genesis 5 further demonstrates God's work of salvation in the genealogy of Adam to Noah. This is the seed of the woman which would war against the seed of the serpent.

As we turn to Genesis 6 we are struck by the fact that in the midst of a wicked world, God determined to extend to Noah His undeserved grace.

**Genesis 6:8** But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

**Gen. 8:1** Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.

Noah was so named in expectation that he would bring rest. In Gen. 8:20-21 we read that Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God of every clean animal and bird. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. The root of the word soothing is the same root that used in Noah's name. Noah has been given rest and offers a soothing sacrifice, 601 years after he was so named.

**Gen. 8:21** 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.

**Gen. 9:1** So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

**Gen. 9:9** "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

The last part of of chapter 11 contains the genealogy of Shem, from the birth of his son Arphaxad to the call of Abram. This is the line of redemption that God would use to bring the ultimate redemption in Jesus Christ. The time difference between these two events is 365 years, which maybe symbolic in showing that with Abram's call, God was again beginning something new.<sup>2</sup> Consider the difference in our nation and the world between the year 1649 and 2014. There was quite a bit of time in this intervening period for the world to again grow in population and in complexity before God called Abram out from his father's family and land.

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<sup>2</sup> Both Gordon Wenham and Robert Alter point this out in their commentaries.

It is interesting to consider God's call of Abraham and the foolish quest of those who built the Tower of Babel. All the things that man had sinfully tried to seize at Babel – land, name, priestly influence – God declared He would give in his mercy to Abraham.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. GOD'S PURPOSES WILL BE FULFILLED**

Here I simply want to reflect on the fact that although there is the reality of sin, Satan, rebellion, murder, death, deception, perversion, power, God's purposes are carried out. God rested after His creation. There is still rest for God's people.

James Jordan has pointed out that history is not simply cyclical but spiral.<sup>4</sup> There is always advancement. The purposes of God have always been advanced even through the rebellion and sin of men, women, and children.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

I think a very powerful lesson that these chapters teach us is how small we are in light of the eternal God and His purposes. This doesn't mean life is meaningless. Far from it. Life is meaningful not because of what we determine but because of God's purposes. The only hope for men and women is therefore to be in right relationship with the sovereign Creator. That is the only life worth living. Only a fool thinks he can build a name for himself. Countless men, women, and nations have tried the approach of the Tower of Babel. For a time it seems that they have a name, but in the end their names and work will be forgotten. And so what matters most is your relationship to the sovereign, holy, just, and merciful God.

Is there clear evidence that you have been granted saving faith? Have you been humbled and brought low before this sovereign God such that you have cried out for His saving mercy? You recognize that you are nothing but that God is gracious and near to those who call upon Him. For those who have been born into Christian families and raised in this church, you have been given incredible blessings – blessings that you probably will not fully appreciate until later. It is essential that also for you there is clear evidence that you have been converted and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ.

The four themes I have highlighted are all brought together very powerfully in the cross.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the greatest perversion of earthly justice and yet we know that this was God's sovereign plan. Jesus did not just die as a victim of the world's injustice but willingly gave His life as no man had the power to take it from Him.

And in the crucifixion we see the greatest earthly judgment. That is why I said the flood during the day of Noah should be considered the second greatest judgment known on this earth.

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<sup>3</sup> James Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, 178.

<sup>4</sup> James Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, 177-178.

Only a great judgment which Christ bore could represent the justice of God for the sins of all of God's people. This is why our Lord had to be the eternal Son of God and fully man.

And what greater demonstration of mercy is then seen in the cross?

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

The cross and the resurrection of our Lord are also the fullness of proof that God's plans will be accomplished. Who could ever frustrate the eternal plans of a God who saves in this way?

## **Prayer**

## **Hymn 365**

### **BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 12:1-3**

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.