



“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,” (Psalm 19:1-4).

What is King David telling us? Creation shouts to us the glory of God! Creation is saying, “Hey, look at me! I proclaim the glory of God. Whether you look through a microscope or a telescope you see the glory of God. Louie Giglio said, “The universe is a giant billboard advertising God.” Not only is the universe beautiful through a telescope, it is mind-blowing large. Back in 128 BC some Greek astronomer tried to count the stars. He counted 1,026 stars. 400 years ago Johan Kepler with his crude telescope counted 1,005 stars.

Fast forward to 10 years ago. The Hubble telescope counted a few more. More than 100,000? Yes. More than 100 million? Yes. More than 100 trillion? Yes. What’s after trillion? More than 100 quadrillion? Yes. More than 100 pentillion? Yes. Actually 76 sextillion stars. That’s a 76 with 21 zeros.

Del Tackett from Focus on the Family’s Truth Project gives us a picture of the universe. He says, “Imagine all the universe, everything in our visible reality is contained in a box. From a Christian’s perspective, everything created is in the box.” So really Psalm 19 is about the contents of the box. The box is all there is. Outside the box the creator fills the box with his creation.

I know my high school and college science text books taught that we can only look at the box. “Don’t assume a box maker,” these scientists would preach, “There is no intelligent designer. God is not a possibility.” But Albert Einstein himself questioned these scientists. He asked, “How could you have nothing and then have something?” There had to be a designer behind all this order and beauty. How can there be music, mathematics, and art through evolution and natural selection?

Charles Darwin was recorded to have questioned his own theory of evolution which so many assume as fact today. Darwin said late in his life, “I look into the human eye and it makes me cold.” How could something so sophisticated and delicate as the human eye evolve in a survival of the fittest box?

Paul says, **“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and basic principles of this world rather than on Christ”** (Col. 2:8).

Genesis literally means “Beginnings.” Genesis 1:1 says, The Story begins here.

Beginnings: Creation

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

Created in Hebrew is “*Bara*,” which means to create something out of nothing. What an incredible word. It is only used in scripture to describe the work of God. Only God can create. Only God can call something into existence that had no prior existence. You and I can form things or make things, but we cannot create things out of nothing. The building blocks of things—the protons, neutrons and electrons that form molecules that link together—form heaven and earth.

The Bible tells us that God has always existed and will always exist outside the box. Genesis doesn’t prove the existence of God, it assumes it. This book was written by Moses to teach the Israelites so as they wandered in the wilderness and bumped into cultures that worship the box, they wouldn’t be swayed by the sun god, the moon god, environment god, the fertility god, etc.

God—*Eloheim*—a plural noun with a singular meaning. Deut. 6 says, **“Hear O’ Israel, the Creator God full of majesty and power is one.”** John had to be thinking about Genesis 1:1 when he recorded these amazing first words of his gospel—My Lord, My friend, the one who loved me, was with His Father, was *Eloheim* and outside the box from the beginning. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning”** (John 1:1-2).

Not only God the Father and God the Son, but also God the Spirit.

“And now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (v. 2).

The three-in-one creating the universe and the world as we know it. God spoke and it happened. From the smallest atom to the biggest galaxy. Light, sky, land and plants, sun, moon, stars, birds and fish, animals, in 6 ½ days God looked at what he had created and said, “This is good.”

Beginnings: Mankind

As glorious as the three-in-one creating a universe is, whether you are viewing it through a microscope or a telescope, the story to this point is a 3rd person narrative. It happened like this. Now he moves from 3rd person to 1st person plural.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (verses 26–27).

What does likeness and image mean? Adam was made with moral attributes that resembled God. Adam was made with the ability to think and feel, to build, to play, to work, to have the capacity to do right, to worship, to love, to experience joy, to grasp purpose. All these attributes of God passed on to his crown of creation.

“... the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (v. 7).

Formed—the idea is a careful intelligent designer formed man out of already existing materials such as hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, to form DNA and the cells that hold it, and when put together produces flesh, bone, blood, ligaments, muscles, nerves and organs. Adam, the word for man, is a play on words. It comes from the Hebrew word *ha adamah*, which means “the dirt.” God formed Adam from the dirt. He breathed into him the breath of life. This is a beautiful picture. The one made in his likeness received God's breath. It's face to face, intimate, like a kiss. God didn't breathe life into the other animals. But for man he did. Such potential for glory and such potential for disaster.

“Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed” (Gen. 2:8).

Eden in Hebrew means “delight.” Most scholars believe Eden was located where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet in modern Iraq. Picture the most lush acreage, a botanical garden, a truly perfect environment created as a place for God and Adam and Eve to experience community, where every need was met in a paradise to be shared with God forever.

But when God gave Adam and Eve a perfect home in the garden, he also gave them something else: Freedom. Rather than force them into a relationship with him, he gave them the freedom to choose whether they wanted to be with him or go it alone. He set two trees in the middle of the garden. One was the tree of life, which bore fruit that when eaten would sustain life forever. The other was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said eat from any other tree, but don't eat the fruit from the tree of good and evil. You eat from this one you die!

Beginnings: Sin

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden?”’” (Gen. 3:1).

We see Satan's temptation unfold dramatically with devastating consequences. The first thing Satan does is attack God's Word, sowing seeds of mistrust. “Why would God restrict you from this one tree? God can't be that serious about this.” Eve allows herself to be tempted away from the truth that God's Word can be trusted.

The conversation continues between Satan and Eve. If you read it closely you will see that Eve begins to diminish God's truth. She expresses the truth she doesn't like. She expresses that God is limiting her, not giving her freedom. She revises the history of what God actually said, adding or diminishing it to justify what she wanted. Then when the time was perfect the crafty serpent said,

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman” (v. 4).

Then Satan lowered the boom on Eve.

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (v. 5).

Satan is saying, “Eve, do you know why God gave you this command?” Because he wants you on a short leash. He doesn't want you to be free. He doesn't want you to have the abundant life. He doesn't want you to reach your potential. God has an ulterior motive, a hidden agenda, an evil agenda. He wants to deny you pleasure. He wants to keep you down.”

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (v. 6).

From a human perspective it's so small. A crunch and a chew. But the result shook the universe. John Milton, in *Paradise Lost* wrote, “Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat... through all her works, gave signs of woe that all was lost.” The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:14, **“Adam was not deceived. Eve was deceived.”** Eve was deceived; Adam was rebellious.

Here is the shocker: Adam was right there with her. When Satan addressed Eve, he used the plural which implies Adam's presence. Adam passively watched everything. Eve was deceived, Adam took the fruit from her willfully. Eve followed the serpent, Adam followed Eve, and no one followed God. Not just a piece of fruit. It is disobedience to God's word and distrust of God's character.

“The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it’” (v. 12).

What is the first thing the sinful man does? He throws his wife under the bus. So long marital bliss. Adam lived another 930 years. Hopefully they got things kind of worked out by their 900th anniversary! We see a passive Adam, a rebellious Adam, a blaming Adam.

Not only did Adam blame Eve, he also blamed God. “God, you put this shrew at my side. You’re guilty God. A better God would have given me a better wife.” I read this quote. “To error is human; to blame it on others and on God is more human.” They hid in fear, they covered up with fig leaves because of guilt and shame. They compared, they envied, they blamed. Paradise lost.

But the Creator God redeems regardless of rebellion. At this point in The Story, God describes the curse on the serpent, on the woman and on the man. But from God’s judgment comes forth a new plan. God loves us so much that despite our rebellion, God gives us something we don’t deserve. He gives us the only thing that could ever restore Paradise Lost. He gives us grace.

Beginnings: Grace

To the serpent (Satan) he said, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (v. 15).

Right here as pain, suffering and death are born before the eyes of Adam and Eve, God says one of Eve’s offspring will crush your head, Satan. But here is grace: *“For just as through the disobedience of one man (ADAM) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous”* (Rom. 5:19).

“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever’” (verses 21–22).

God would not allow them to live forever in a sinful state. So God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden forever. Why? The perfect place of joy and innocence and fellowship with God had become a place of rebellion, fear and hiding. To restore the Garden to perfection, Adam and Eve had to leave. They were unfit to live in the middle of perfection, not without a Savior to first cleanse their sin.

We can imagine what was going on in God’s mind and heart at this point. He watched Adam’s first born son murder his younger brother. The sin virus spread like an epidemic to Adam’s descendants. Look at what God was feeling as we read on.

Beginnings: Judgment

“The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” (Gen. 6:5–6).

Evil grieves God. His heart was broken. So what is a righteous God compelled to do when sin has infected his creation? Exercise judgment.

“So the LORD said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move across the ground, and the birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.’ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (verses 7–9).

Do you know what set Noah apart from the rest of the human race? It wasn’t that he wasn’t a sinner. He was. It was that he walked with God. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah had great faith. He believed the Lord. When you believe the Lord you receive a righteousness not from yourself but from God himself. *“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”* (Rom. 3:22).

Noah’s faith made him stand apart. At God’s command, Noah builds an Ark, a huge boat, 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet tall. It took 100 years to build. It wasn’t until the 19th century that a wooden ship was built larger than the Ark—The Cutty Sark. The Ark housed a pair of every living animal that God brought to the Ark along with enough food for the flood.

“The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD” (Gen. 7:16).

And the flood came, and every living creature that wasn’t aboard the Ark perished as God poured out his judgment on sin. Creation in Genesis 1 was de-created in Genesis 7. As gripping and graphic as this story is about flood and judgment, the focus of this story is, Who is this God who chooses to save people like Noah and his family?

Beginnings: God’s Promise

“But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded” (Gen. 8:1).

The first thing that Noah did when he stepped off the Ark was build an altar. Amidst all the rotting carcasses of unclean animals around him, Noah sacrificed clean animals from the Ark and as an act of worship. And God was no longer grieved.

God said to Noah, "I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11).

You and I are alive today because Noah trusted God. You and I are alive today because God redeems regardless of rebellion.

"And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth'" (verses 12-13).

We will read much more about covenants as we proceed through The Story. God's covenants are promises made by God. They are forever. They are never earned. They are always by grace.

God's covenant with Noah was that he would never destroy the earth by flood again. And he gave Noah a sign, a beautiful rainbow as a sign of his covenant promise. As faithful as Noah was, he still had the sinner virus. The last recorded event of Noah's life is at the end of chapter 9. Moses saw fit for us to know that one day Noah drank so much wine from his vineyard that he became drunk and lay passed out in his tent naked. Two of his sons respectfully took a blanket and covered their dad while he was sleeping it off. ***"For just as through the disobedience of the***

one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

Just as God gave Noah a beautiful rainbow to look at amidst all the death around him, God gave us the most beautiful and profound promise in giving us his son Jesus Christ, the New Covenant, the only righteous one who gave up his life, his blood, his skin to cover our guilt and shame, to suffer and die in our place for our sins. Jesus Christ gave us the gift of salvation we can receive on faith, and then he lifts us out of the flood waters and places us safely in the Ark so God's wrath and judgment don't drown us.

Truly Jesus Christ is God's greatest covenant. With all the death around us due to rebellion God gave us Jesus, the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. And today we are privileged to share in the sign of his covenant. It's not a beautiful rainbow, it's better. It's God's beautiful salvation-bow. It's the cup and the bread for us to look at often to remind us of God's promise to save us through Christ.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.