



People of all ages from all times have asked these important questions:

Is there a God? Who is he?

How was the world created?

Why was I born?

What is the purpose of life?

Why is life so hard?

Why is our world so messed up?

Does God care about us?

Genesis seeks to answer every one of those questions. If you understand the book of Genesis, you'll understand the entire Bible. Every major theological idea is first formed in Genesis. Some believe it's the most important book of the Bible. It's also greatly misunderstood.

What is Genesis? We must first and foremost understand Genesis in its historical and literary context. Genesis was written by Moses sometime after the Exodus event. Genesis is narrative literature which means it's one long epic story. Chapters 1–11 are considered the prologue to the book; it's considered pre-history. Genesis is not a science textbook. Genesis answers the Who, the What, and the Why questions of creation, but not the How.

Creation

The Story begins with the main character of the Grand Story.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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 (Genesis 1:1–2).

Why did Israel need this account of creation? Israel miraculously left Egypt through the Exodus event. After several hundred years of slavery, the people of God are emotionally, spiritually, and physically exhausted. Egypt was a place saturated in pagan mythology. The Israelites are now headed for Canaan, another place filled with pagan mythology. This account of creation aims to debunk the common creation myths of their day.

God transforms chaos into creation

It is no surprise that God is the subject of the first sentence of the Bible. The Story begins and ends with God. The name of "God" used in these opening verses is "*Elohim*." It's the plural name for God. God is one, but chooses to reveal himself in three persons—God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit were all involved

with the creation of the universe. We see, for example, the Holy Spirit hovering over the darkness and the waters.

Genesis begins with God because the Bible is a book about him. "In the beginning God." He was the first mover. God has no beginning; he's eternal; he's always existed. No one and nothing created God; he is. What is the first activity of God? He creates something from nothing (*ex nihilo*). The word in Hebrew is "*bara*." It's only used three times in Genesis 1 and is only used for God's activity in the entire Bible. Only God can create something from nothing.

And because God created all things, this assumes that all things are under his control. He is sovereign. The chaos is described as dark and evil. At this point in time the earth was empty and formless. It was a dark and dreadful place.

What we see in the creation account is how God creates everything by his powerful word. He transforms chaos into creation. He brings about form and order. Creation is presented both poetically and artistically:

Day One: Light and darkness are divided (3–5). Light is named "day" and darkness "night" (5).

Day Two & Three: The sky, waters, and land are separated, they are named and vegetation begins to grow (6–13). Each day God steps back and writes in his journal, this is good. God then fills the earth (14–31).

Day Four: The sun, moon, and stars are created and appear (14–19). Did you know there are over one hundred billion galaxies in the known universe?

Day Five & Six: God creates life in the sea, the sky, and on the land (20–31).

The creative work of God is stunning. Just look at an aardvark or a tiger fish, incredible! God isn't boring! Again he calls it all good. God then pulls out all the stops.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26–27).

God creates humankind in His image

Day Six—Creation concludes with God's core passion—human beings created in his image. God sees all his creation and says

this is very good! What does it mean to be created in the image of God? I want to take some time here because it's so important. The word "image" also means "likeness." An image is something that represents something else. Man is **like** God, he is **not** God. Man is like God in several ways:
Morally—we have the capacity to know right and wrong.

Spiritually—we are spiritual beings (soul/spirit). We have the spiritual capacity to relate to God.

Mentally—We can think and have reason.

Relationally—God lives in community (Trinity). We too were created for one another.

Man is the only thing created to reflect his image and his likeness. Man's purpose then is to not only represent God but to also rule for him. Being created in the image of God means that we rule the earth as God would rule. We care for and steward all God has created. Being made in God's image is to be made "male and female." Men and women are made equally in God's image. Both men and women reflect God's character in their lives. Men and women are equally important to God and equally valuable to him. We are equal, but with very different roles. Remember, this kind of thinking was radical in the ancient world of Moses' day! Most believed only the king was made in the image of God, not people. Women had no dignity back then, but God gives them great worth.

Finally, God rests on the Seventh Day. God ceased to create and enjoyed his handiwork. God distinguishes his rest by making the seventh day holy. Holy is a word that means "set apart." We call this the Sabbath. Israel was to set apart one day in seven to worship and serve the Lord, to cease from work.

I want you to notice that all throughout chapter 2 God's personal name, Yahweh, is used. God gets up close and personal with his creation, with you and me. Again, the ancient world had no concept of a personal God. The gods were capricious and angry.

God created marriage to reflect His image

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said,

**"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;**

she shall be called 'woman,'

for she was taken out of man."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Genesis 2:18–25).

God planted a garden and placed Adam there to work and care for the land. Initially work was designed to be meaningful and fulfilling. Work became work after the Fall. But there was something not good about God's world. Adam was alone.

God showed Adam his need by having him name each pair of animals. You get the idea that he suddenly realized each animal had a companion except himself. I picture him saying, "That won't work, not that either."

God provided for Adam's need by creating Eve. It says that God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and he pulled out his brains and made the woman. That's the way my wife's version reads! God brought Eve to Adam and he busted out in poetry! Then God describes the three responsibilities of marriage that is created in his image—leave, cleave and become one flesh. "They were both naked and were not ashamed."

Why did God create humanity? Why bother with us at all? The main point of the creation account is almost too good to be true, the Creator of the Universe wants to be with you. Let that sink in. All the beauties of creation, the Grand Canyon, the Virgin Islands, and a sunset, are all secondary to you.

This truth should give us all great self-esteem. It shouldn't matter what people say about us if our identity is rooted in who we are as his children created in his image. God's supreme passion is to be with us at all costs. God created us for himself. He created you so that he could love you. We then live our lives to love him back. But then it all went terribly wrong.

The Fall

What is wrong with the world? What is wrong with us? We find the answers in chapter 3. God gave Adam and Eve only one boundary for their good and protection.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve had absolute freedom in the Garden to enjoy everything God created. Their single prohibition was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were created with the freedom and power to choose. Why? Because God does not force love. The "tree of life" and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" presented a powerful choice. Our choices can lead to blessing or curse.

Satan enters the Garden disguised as a serpent

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'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1–5).

Look at how Satan tempts Eve. Satan tempts Eve by first questioning God's goodness and care. "Did God actually say...?" Satan distracts Eve's attention. He focuses Eve's attention on that single tree in the center of the garden. He says nothing about the fact that they were free to eat from all the other trees of the garden.

Eve deceives herself and rationalizes God's word. "God didn't say anything about touching the tree. Satan continues to attack God's Word. You won't die! That's ridiculous! In fact, you'll be more like God! You'll be in control. God is holding you back. If he really loved you then he'd let you eat from the tree."

Adam and Eve fall for Satan's lies

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. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Gen. 3:6–7).

Eve says, the fruit is good, pleasing and desirable. Sin always looks good initially! Sin usually feels great too! Sin can actually be incredibly fun, but it's always short lived, isn't it? God doesn't let his children sin successfully. Eating a piece of fruit was not the sin; disobeying God's Word and distrusting God's character was the issue. Adam and Eve also failed at their God-given roles. Adam's job was to guard and tend the garden. What was the serpent even doing in the Garden? Why didn't Adam speak up and protect his wife from the serpent? Eve also failed at her divine role as a "helper." Instead she passed the fruit to her husband.

The result of their actions have dire consequences for all. God's curse lies on the entire created order because of human sin:

Because we are alienated from God we are psychologically alienated within ourselves (shame and fear).

Because we are alienated from God we are socially alienated from one another (Adam and Eve put on clothing and blame each other).

Because we are alienated from God we are also physically alienated from nature (we now experience sorrow, pain, toil and death). Even the ground itself is cursed.

Because Adam and Eve chose a different vision for their lives rather than accepting God's vision, sin became part of their

spiritual DNA. Adam and Eve's disobedience became part of our DNA as well. Theologians call this Original Sin.

Man's choice resulted in separation from God, and it broke his heart. "All human problems are ultimately symptoms, and our separation from God is the cause" (Keller). The rest of the story, the entire Bible, tells us of God's relentless pursuit of his children and the extent he will go to get us back.

God also responds graciously to sin in the Garden. God sought out Adam and Eve and entered the Garden immediately after the fall. God clothed Adam and Eve. They were not able to fully cover their shame, but God could. He did for them what they could not do for themselves—he made garments of skins.

God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden. Why would God do this? The temptation to eat from the tree of life would be too strong. If they did eat from it, they would live forever, but not in the way God intended. God did not want Adam and Eve to live forever in their sinful condition, so he kicks them out of the Garden and puts a mighty Cherubim with a flaming sword in front of it. God promises a new Adam, a chosen "seed."

**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" (Gen. 3:15).**

Through the "offspring" or the "seed" of the woman a future person would be born who would bruise the head of Satan. The seed here refers to Christ who would crush Satan's head through his death and resurrection. God will now pursue his children outside the garden.

The Flood

The world was growing increasingly more wicked. Cain ruthlessly murders his brother Abel. That was just the beginning of the world's descent into great evil.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them" (Gen. 6:5–7).

Theologians call this the doctrine of depravity. It suggests that people naturally chose evil over good. Man's wickedness grieved God's heart. Sin is not just doing something wrong. Sin mars God's vision for your life and breaks God's heart. The Bible and Christianity takes evil, human violence and suffering far more seriously and realistically than any other worldview. Sin isn't just an issue of bad behavior or getting the right people off the earth and the right people on the ark; it's much deeper than that. How will God respond to evil?

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God (Gen. 6:8–9).

Noah was a righteous man who found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah walked with God. This is one of few places in all the Bible where God chooses a person who is a “likely candidate.” More often God chooses unlikely people to do his work. In two weeks we’ll see that with Abraham. Noah’s life reminds us there are two ways to live: Walk with God or walk without God. The entire world was walking without God, yet there was one man who responded to God’s grace, followed him, and loved him. Noah is a new Adam whom God will use to make a fresh start.

Noah is commanded to build an Ark

Noah was a man of faith. It had never rained on the earth and it wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark. It must have taken years and years for Noah to cut down the trees, haul them, fit the joints and the planks and build the Ark. He also must have spent a fortune building the ark. How long would it take to gather the animals? He was doing all this I can only imagine how ridiculous he looked to his friends.

Noah enters the Ark

Noah’s family of eight people and two of every animal enters the Ark. A tsunami of rain and a flood of water, like the world has never seen since or ever will, comes crashing upon the Ark. Creation is undone for 40 days and 40 nights. The waters destroyed everyone and everything. Yet, those same waters of judgment were also acts of grace. The waters that destroyed the earth also raised the Ark. The flood is God’s first attempt to get his children back.

God remembers Noah and establishes a covenant with him

God makes a promise to Noah that his family will be spared. Never again will God destroy the earth. It’s the first covenant we see in the Bible. God’s covenant is detailed in Genesis 9. God sent a wind to dry up the waters in Genesis 8.

Noah finally leaves the Ark

Then God said to Noah, “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.”

So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the

birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another (Gen. 8:15–19).

The flood erased the wicked human race, but it did not erase the sin nature from Noah and his family. Noah drinks too much wine, gets drunk and passes out. Noah’s son disgraces him by looking at his dad naked. What does this tell us? Sin also entered the Ark. The flood did not solve this dual problem of human wickedness and God’s broken heart over that wickedness. The point is clear—the solution to the sin problem would not be found in us.

What’s the point of Genesis 1–11? The Creator God redeems regardless of rebellion. Another way to put it is this—regardless of anything we have done, God still wants to be with us. God wants to be with you. At great cost to God, God has done everything possible to get you back. Some of you have lived your life with the idea that God is some angry dictator who sits in the heavens and watches you, waiting for you to make a mistake so he can zap you. Or, you feel he is distant and doesn’t care or has forgotten you. But, from the very beginning of time, God has shown us this is not the case.

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So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another (Gen. 8:20–21).

Noah’s first act after leaving the Ark was to sacrifice a burnt offering. But God knew that no animal or human offering could fix the pain and sin of the world. For God to restore the vision that human beings are his supreme passion will require the shedding of blood. So God sent his Son Jesus from heaven to solve the problem. God’s justice and grace meet in Noah’s burnt offering. Many years later his justice and grace would collide at the cross with Jesus. You can start over new today, no matter what you’ve done. God still wants to be with you. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus, what we celebrate at communion, is a reminder of the price God paid to be with you!

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

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