

"Origins"
Genesis 1:1-3:24
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Our text today opened with the words, "In the beginning God created..." There have been volumes written about just those five words. Think about the things you've heard discussing the very existence of God, or the origin of the universe like the "big bang" theory, or the ever popular debate between evolution and creationism and what we should be teaching in our schools. Well, we're not going to go into any of that. Your local bookstores have more available on those subjects than you probably care to absorb, but it's there if you want it.

I flat out want to state what we believe so you know from the start where we're coming from. We believe there is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son who became flesh and dwelt among us called Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit. Ultra simplified the Triune God is like we'd explain to children in concept. Here is an egg. It's composed of three parts: egg shell, egg white, an egg yolk. Each is distinct but it forms one whole egg. We accept by faith that

- 1) the Bible is the authentic Word of God and He reveals Himself in His Word;**
- 2) that creation itself attests to His existence, His power and His provision;**
- 3) there is a void in our lives, something only God can fill, and until God's Spirit quickens us and bring us to new life found only in Jesus, that void remains. It says in Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has set eternity in the hearts of men." There is an inborn longing for fellowship with the Creator.**

There are many beginnings described in God's Word. Genesis 1:1 refers to the beginning of the material universe. The gospel of John goes back much farther into eternity when there was not yet this material creation. John says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." That refers to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. In Genesis we see that Living Word take action as we read repeatedly, "And God said . . . let there be light and dark; separation of the sky and waters and land; let the sun/moon/stars shine; let plant life and fish, fowl and animal life come into being." In every aspect of creation we can see that God is a God of order. All things that exist are in groups that are interrelated. In the beginning there was nothing to cause destruction, nothing to mar God's creation. Creation moved on its perfect way. All was blessed by God.

On day six God created man “in His image.” Now it was not a physical image, for God is Spirit (John 4:24) and a spirit has not flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). No one knows the full meaning of “being created in His image,” but I think it refers to the trinity of our nature. We have a body, soul and spirit. A tree has a body, but no soul/spirit; an animal has body and soul; but man has spirit in addition to the soul and body. We have an immortal likeness to God who breathed His Spirit into man. Spiritually we are eternal beings that will live forever whether in Heaven or in Hell, but we were created to live with God forever. After sin broke that fellowship, we must now regain it by the new birth, being “born again” that Jesus spoke of in John 3.

Well, God created man, then He communicated with man. In Genesis 1:28 it says “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” This is what is known as the basis of the (Eden-ic) Edenic Covenant. Throughout Scripture we see that our God is a covenant making God. In your lesson packet we gave you a map of the ancient world. On the back of that map is a synopsis of the various Bible Covenants.

We need to remember that chapter and verse divisions in Scripture were not there in the original Scriptures and were added later. Really Genesis 2:1-3 completes the account of God’s creation process in chapter 1.

On the seventh day God rested from all His work. He blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Holy, we remember, means set apart. (I’m only going to make a side comment here – you can read some of those many books I spoke about if you’re concerned whether this was a 24 hour day or not in God’s creativity. We do notice that it says “evening then morning.” Why phrased that way? The evening is the end of the day’s work, and the morning is the end of the night’s work. We know Scripture tells us that with Him a thousand years is as a day. Also, the Day of the Lord is an extended time of judgment. So time as we know it is not a restriction of 24 hours to God, but we do know that our God is fully able to have done it just exactly as it appears to say in Genesis.)

I want to touch on the subject of the Sabbath Rest because many people can be confused about it. True Sabbath rest is a principle – God rested from His work. He had done it all. It was good. The Jewish Sabbath was a picture of this principle, just as the Law was a representation of the gospel in pictures. God had done it all. He’d delivered them, chosen them. It was good. They should observe a seventh day of rest. When we read about a Sabbath Rest in Hebrews 4:3 it says, “Now we who have believed enter that rest, . . .” When we accept the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on our behalf, all our sins are atoned for and we no longer have to work for our salvation in any way. Again, God has done it all. It is good. We can rest.

Before we leave Genesis 1, what practical application is there for our lives? I see three areas:

1. The power of God that created us and the world that we know is with us today. Whatever that circumstance in your life, whatever family or business situation awaits you when you leave here, the Lord's power is still active and moving on behalf of His children who seek Him in faith and ask His help in prayer. Nothing is impossible with God.

2. God is still communicating with us and desiring that it be a two-way conversation. In fact, He says in Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." What a fantastic privilege to go directly to the Lord of the Universe in prayer and know that it's never an interruption for Him.

3. God did not have to rest on the seventh day because He was tired and exhausted. Everything was done. Remember we're to rest from depending upon our own strength and talents, our willful ways, and be yoked with Him as it says in Matthew 11:28-30. We have the rest He gives us in salvation and we find His rest by abiding fully in Him.

Well, from overview of chapter one we go to zoom lens of chapter 2 and look a little more closely at the finer points of God's creation of man and woman. Some things we discover:

1. Man a natural being – he was formed of dust and God, Himself, breathed life into him. (A sort of mouth to mouth picture comes to mind)

2. He is a spiritual being – he is capable of receiving what God gives, capable of responding to what God says.

3. He's a rational being – he understands the desires of God and undertakes a coworker's role with God.

4. He's a social being – he is needing companionship and enjoying fellowship with the Lord.

5. Adam was also created a moral being. He had the privilege of responsibility being chosen to care for God's handiwork, chosen to obey God's directives, chosen to observe God's limits. (And notice that the restriction placed on him was far less than the abundance he was given. 2:16 "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 of

it, you will surely die.") So with privilege and responsibility comes pressure of choosing rightly.

God saw that there was no suitable helper for Adam, and so he put Adam to sleep, took a rib and formed a woman. (Modern surgery techniques were inspired by the act of putting Adam to sleep.) We know that the institution of marriage was God's idea. In it we see the idea of severance, permanency, unity and intimacy. It is a whole other lecture in itself to talk about "How to have a good marriage." But you might enjoy this thought:

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it,
Whenever you're right, shut up.

So we might remind ourselves of two lessons from chapter two. First, that which God grants and gives is so much more than what is restricted. Second, this restriction brings the element of free will into the garden. God did not intend for Adam and Eve – or you and I – to be robots. His intention is that we choose fellowship with Him, eternal life (remember the Tree of Life was not on the prohibited list), and leadership in dominion of the entire creation.

Now chapter 3 brings us to the subject of the fall to sin and the subject of depravity. We need to keep in mind that the definition of depravity is not that man is as bad as he can be, but that he is as bad off as he can be. Totally and completely under the influence of Satan. In 1788 Edward Gibbon published six large volumes titled The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. God condensed into six verses (Genesis 3:1-6) the Decline and Fall of the Human Empire.

You've been over the story in your groups, so let's look at some things about Satan: 1)He's aware God forbid them to eat of the Tree of Knowledge and 2)He makes it sound as if that were an unreasonable demand . . . planting seeds of doubt about God . . . maybe He really didn't have their best interest at heart. How could a good God of love keep anything from His friends? So he lied. "You won't surely die and besides, you'll have knowledge that will make you like God."

And Eve? She bought it. It looked good, it sounded good. So she ate it and gave some to Adam who ate also. You know what happened: they hid their bodies as they realized they were naked; they hid from God because they were afraid; and they hid from responsibility . . . Adam blamed God and Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Aren't we just like our original parents yet today? Sin changes everything. It always does. Do wrong and we want to hide in shame, we fear God's punishment and blaming others is always the name of the game. Maybe it's not a person. The popular thing to do now is to blame it on being the product of our environment.

I was reading Max Lucado's book this summer titled A Gentle Thunder. In it he tells a story I think you'll like. (pp.105-107)

Two sons of the king brought their father a question. "Is a gentleman born or made?"

What do you think? he replied.

"I think a gentleman is born a gentleman," replied one son.

"I disagree," replied the other. "A man becomes a gentleman by training and discipline."

The king looked at his sons and issued a challenge. "Prove your case by presenting me an example. I give each of you a week to return with proof of your opinions."

And so the two sons departed in different directions. The son who believed a gentleman was made, not born, found his proof in a tavern. He'd ordered a cup of tea and was amazed when he saw that the waiter was a cat. This cat had been trained to stand on his hind legs and carry the tray in his forepaws. He wore a tiny uniform and hat and was proof that a creature could overcome his nature with training and discipline.

The first son had his example. If a cat can be changed, couldn't a man? So the prince purchased the animal and took him to the court.

The other son was not so fortunate. He'd searched the kingdom but was unable to find any support for his theory. He returned home empty-handed. What's worse, word had leaked about his brother's discovery. News of the walking cat made him doubt his convictions. But then, just hours before the two were to appear before the king, he saw something in a store window that made him smile.

He made his purchase but told no one.

The two sons entered the court of the king, each one carrying a box. The first son announced that he could prove a man could overcome any obstacle and become a gentleman. As the king watched, the son presented the cat, dressed in miniature court dress, who gave the king a tray of chocolates.

The king was stunned, his son was proud, and the court broke into applause. What excellent proof! Who could deny the evidence of a walking cat? Everyone pitied the second son. But he was not discouraged. With a bow to the king, he opened the box he had brought, releasing several mice into the court. Instantly the cat scampered after the mice.

The cat's true nature had been revealed, and the point had been made. A walking cat was still a cat. You can change his clothes. You can teach him tricks. You can give him a hat and train him to walk. And for a while he will appear to be changed. But present him with one thing he can't resist, and you'll be faced with an undeniable truth – a walking cat is still a cat.

The same is true with people. We can change our clothes. We can change our habits. We can change our vocabulary, our reading level, even our attitude. But according to the Bible, there is one thing we cannot change – our sinful state.

Society would agree with the first son. It says change the outside and the inside will follow. Give a person an education, training, the right habits, and the right disciplines and the person will be changed. Oh, we try. Boy, do we try. We buy clothes. We seek degrees, awards, achievements.

We tell it to our kids. Make something of your life.

We tell it to our employees. Act yourself into a better way of living.

We tell it to the discouraged. Try, try again.

We even tell it to our church members. Come to church, and you'll have a better attitude.

But peel away the layers, take away the costumes, remove the makeup, and underneath you see our true nature – a selfish, prideful, sinful heart. Just bring out the mice and see what we will do.

No one describes it better than Paul (in the Message). Listen to his confession:

I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it. I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? (Romans 7:18-24)

Paul is saying that no matter what I do, how hard I try, how much I strive, I still sin against God. Put clothes on me, teach me to walk on my hind legs, take me into the presence of the king himself, but let a few mice cross my trail and BOOM! The real me comes out . . .

I lose my temper, I forget my purpose, I demand my way, I lie, I lust, I turn, I fall

...

The fall in the Garden of Eden has affected us all. God cursed the serpent and gave the promise of a redeemer that we know is God's Son, Jesus Christ. For Eve the pain of childbirth would be increased and even though she might wish to rule over her husband, he would rule over her. That struggle goes on in many marriages today. Who will take the leadership? Inevitably the woman tries and often succeeds. But it is God's plan that the man is to be the leader.

As for Adam, notice the discipline was not because he ate from the tree, but because he listened to his wife's counter-counsel when he'd had direct word from God. Where the work of tending the garden was once a part of partnership with God, now Adam would till the soil outside the Garden with the sweat of his brow midst thorns and thistles. And the harsh reality . . . Yes, Satan lied. He is the Father of Lies. You will

return to the dust of the ground. Adam lived to be 930, but the process of physical dying had begun.

If there's one thing that stands out in this chapter, it's the fact that temptation leads to sin. Adam and Eve sinned and we understand and admit that we too are sinners. Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven. We face temptations and maybe to close our lesson we should draw some quick applications to help us when we find ourselves in Eve's position:

1. Temptation is inevitable – So, don't be alarmed . . . expect it! (James 1:13 says "let no one say **when** he is tempted . . .") A watchful attitude prepares us for this invading lion who would seek to devour us.

2. Temptation doesn't come from God – So, don't be blind . . . detect it! It's the subtle things, the compromises that so often come. Know what is God's will and what isn't. We learn that in the Word.

3. Temptation is individual – So, don't be clever . . . reject it! There's a name for those who flirt with temptation – victim! Know yourself, your weaknesses. Being tempted is not sin, taking action on it is. James 4:7 Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. Hide the Word of God in your heart; it's your best defense. (Remember how Jesus withstood temptation by quoting Scripture?) And pray without ceasing.

God disciplined Adam and Eve, but He did not reject them. In place of the leaves they'd sown together to hide their nakedness, God made garments of skin. We read into that action that the sacrifice of an animal was necessary to provide that skin. Innocent blood must be spilled to provide a covering.

To keep them from eating again of the Tree of Life in their sinful state, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and an angelic guard placed in front of the tree. They had experienced spiritual death, which is separation from God. Now they would come to a right spiritual relationship with God as we still come today, by faith in Him. By confessing our sins, and offering blood sacrifice to cover their sins until the precious blood of the Lord Jesus would be offered once-for-all as the full payment for all sin to those who will come to Him as Savior and Lord. The Tree of Life was barred . . . Man had to be rerouted through another way , another tree, Calvary's tree.

Let's pray.