

Biblical Theology: Session II

Review Previous Week:

- Review Discipleship Model
- Assignments — Questions, comments, feedback...
- REFERENCE DIAGRAM — The Bible is one book.

Follow the River

- Last session, we saw that Biblical Theology is simply putting your boat on the river and following the undercurrent of the text to the cross. Without biblical theology to guide us to the cross, we end up with an interpretation of the Old Testament which says “do better” “try harder”. This is moralism.
- So our church has recently spent time considering the topic of forgiveness and retaliation from 1 Samuel 24-26. David spared King Saul's life twice, even though Saul meant him harm and did him wrong.
- How would moralism teach this? [Discussion...BE LIKE DAVID?...]
- Alright. That was last week. Tonight we are going to look at Genesis 1-11 and see the trajectory of Scripture. Genesis 1 is the headwaters of the river. We'll put this section of Scripture under four headings: Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel. That's how it's laid out in your notes.

Creation:

- Open your Bibles to Genesis 1 (p1). The Bible opens with this massive and profoundly theological statement, **“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”** Succinct and clear. So the first thing we see as we put our boat on the water is this...there is a current. There is a trajectory. And the current tells us a number of things.
- First. There is a God. This is theology proper. The study of God. Moses, the man who wrote the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah, is teaching us that there is one God. Singular. *Elohim*. There is no mention of dueling gods, or this God being the greatest of all the gods. One God. The God. Alone. No other.
 - This may seem a minor point to us. We are a monotheistic culture. When religious surveys go out, they ask, “Do you believe in God?” I've never seem them say, “How many gods do you believe in? Or which God do you believe in?” We assume one God. In Moses' day, they didn't. Massive theological statement there.
 - Also, this teaches us something of the way theology should be done. It starts with “theology” proper, with God. Often we start theological debates in Genesis 3, rather than Genesis 1. I love the five points of Calvinism. But they aren't really a good summary of Calvin and they aren't a good starting point for doctrine



either. Calvin didn't start with "Total Depravity". He started the institutes where Moses did. With God. Start theology with God.

- Second. Moses is telling us that this God, who exists, can be known. If you like big words so you can impress your friends, this is epistemology. *How can we know what we know?* Moses assumes there is a God and that He can be known. Or, at the very least, God acts and how God acts can be known.
- Third. Moses tells us that God created everything that is. The heavens and the earth...is everything we see and know and experience, even those things which we don't. Matter, the physical world. The laws which govern the physical world. God made.
- There is enough here to take up the rest of our time together. But let's draw out some of the implications together. What are some of the implications of Genesis 1:1? [Class discussion]
 - There is a God; I am not Him. He is Creator; I am creation. I am subject to Him; He is not subject to me.
 - God Himself was *not* created; He is not dependent on anyone or anything.
 - God has a will, a purpose; He is a reasoning Being.
- The rest of chapter 1 seems to be an explanation of verse 1. We see the Lord creating the heavens and the earth in six days. Verse 2 says the earth was formless and void. In days 1-3 God seems to be giving things form. In days 4-6 God seems to be filling the void.
- I would like to point out something that sometimes get's overlooked. I mentioned this in a marriage sermon last weekend. (Congrats to Josh & Sam.) Scientists believe there are something like a billion, trillion stars in the observable universe. But Scientists have no idea. However many there are, God made them. And don't miss the fact that Moses sorta glances by this and zooms way, way in on one planet. Ours.
- Some might say this is because Moses didn't know anything and is a product of 14th century BC cosmology which assumed the earth was the center of the Universe. Could be. Or, it could be that Moses was showing us that creation is on a trajectory. That God had a purpose in creating. That purpose, whatever it is, takes place here...on this one planet.
- Notice how God creates, giving everything form and function and structure. And the last thing God made was a man and a woman, living in the world God made. Everything else God made was according to it's kind. But man and woman are made after what kind? After God's kind? In God's image, in His likeness. It seems these image bearers are to play a central role in God's purposes for the Universe.
- On day six, God created man. **Look at verse 27-28, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**
- So God makes image bearers. Human beings who would represent Him. Isn't it interesting that God gives them the task of kinda doing what He did in the first six days of creation? They are to fill the earth and subdue it.



To fill the earth, like He did in days 4-6. And to have dominion over the earth, giving a kind of form to it, like He did in days 1-3.

- There is something about these image bearers that is meant to represent God, His kingly, benevolent rule. They are meant to fill the earth, to carry His image everywhere, to shine His characteristics over the whole earth. And there's also this understanding that they cannot do this alone. The man cannot be fruitful alone, nor can the woman. They are complementary. They are to do this together, they are dependent beings.
- Then we come to the beginning of chapter 2. God's work is completed. On the seventh day, God ceased, "rested". This is curious. Why does an omnipotent God rest? To catch His breath? Remember, we're on a river, carrying us somewhere. There is a trajectory. Something about of God's creation will ultimately culminate in rest.
- You trace out the sabbath, you'll see how the Lord builds this pattern into the weekly life of His people. Every week a reminder of the final rest that awaits us in glory. The NT authors pick up on this theme, of course, showing that Jesus is the final and ultimate source of sabbath rest. We are trusting the Lord who has completed the work and we rest in Him, enjoying the fruits of His labor and work.
- Chapter 2 feels a little like a recap of what we've already read, right? Why the redundancy? It seems that Moses wants Israel to know their history and purpose. God enters into a covenant with Adam. He'll be like a king, a priest over God's creation. He is to bring the idyllic, harmonious, peaceful garden of Eden, the dwelling place of God, to the whole earth, where God would rule.
- And so we see the command of God in **2:15-17**. The man is free to eat from any tree but one. If Adam eats of the tree, what will happen? [He will die.] Now, this is not meant to tease Adam and Eve. It is not meant to show that God is holding out on them (as the enemy will try and get Eve to believe). The tree is there to remind Adam and Eve that they are not God. God is God. The tree is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because God alone has the right to determine right from wrong, good from evil.
- Chapter 2 ends with the man and the woman naked and not ashamed. One flesh, united in heart and soul and purpose. Everything is good. It is the world as God made it. The perfect plan of God for gender, marriage, work, government, relationship with God, and relationship with one another it's all laid out here in Genesis 1 & 2.
- And then we come to chapter 3, the Fall.

Fall

- **[Read Genesis 3:1-5]** The serpent lies. We learn from later in the Bible that the serpent is who? [Satan, Revelation 12:9] He leads Eve to question the word of God, the goodness of God. He tells her that she will not "surely die" as God said. He tells her that she will become like God. Well, she is already like God, remember? She is an image bearer, made after his likeness. But the serpent wants her to become a rival god.
- The first man and first woman chose to set themselves up as equal with God. They want to be God to make their own rules, to determine what is right and wrong on their own. They disobey God and incur His just wrath.



And immediately after disobeying God, creation begins to unravel. 2:25 they were unashamed; 3:7, they are ashamed. Death has begun.

- How does God deal with these rebels? They fall under a curse. But, already we see God's plan to—remember this phrase from last week—bring glory to Himself by saving His people through judgment. Adam and Eve are not killed on the spot.
- Verse 9 says God called out to the man, “**Where are you?**” Now you know that when God asks questions, He is not trying to gather information. He knows where Adam is hiding. He is asking the question for Adam's sake. Come out with it son. What have you done? Did you eat of the tree which I commanded you not to eat? And what does Adam do? He blames Eve. (Well, kinda. Actually He blames God. The woman You gave me.)
- The first man did not own his own sin, he blamed God, he blamed his wife. The Lord turns to Eve. She blames the serpent. The devil made me do it. He lied to me. I didn't know...I was deceived.
- **[Genesis 3:14-15]** Built into the curse on the serpent is two levels of hatred. There will be enmity between the woman (probably a reference to humanity in general, but possibly a reference to women in particular). There will be enmity between humankind and the devil. The other level of enmity is between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. From this point on, humanity will be in one of two camps: the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. Literally, the “seed” of the woman, or the “seed” of the serpent.
- Notice how God says to the serpent, “**he** (the Offspring of the woman, singular) **shall bruise your head**”, not a people or a line of descendants. One Person. Out of the woman's seed will arise one Man who will crush the head of Satan and thereby rid creation of this Deceiver that initiated this whole debacle.
- The first three chapters of the Bible and the last three chapters of the Bible could be one book. Adam, the son of God, failed to accomplish God's purposes for Creation. He broke the covenant. He did not keep the garden. What's the serpent doing there?. He did not keep God's word; He ate the forbidden fruit. He brought death into the world God made. You see the effects of sin on Eve's ability to be fruitful and multiply. You see the effects of sin on Adam's ability to work the garden and keep it.
- And yet, Adam and Eve are still alive. Even in God's pronouncement of judgment “**you shall surely die**” there is a glimmer of hope. The hope appears in a couple ways. First, in the Lord's curse upon the serpent in verse 15, which we'll come back to in a moment. But also in verse 21.
- The Lord is just, He doesn't overlook Adam and Eve's sin, but He is also merciful. “**And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**” It seems the Lord drew first blood. The Lord clothed Adam and Eve in animal skins. There's a tiny little hint of the way in which a third party would be involved in giving His life and this sacrifice swallowing up—covering/clothing—God's sinful people.
- The other hope is in verse 15 as I said. In the curse of the serpent, the Lord promised the Offspring will come. The Son of God, the Seed of the Woman, the true Image Bearer of God, the Apostle Paul called Him the “**image of the invisible God**”, Jesus Christ, will come and crush the serpent's head.



- Whereas Adam brought humanity under a curse at a tree; Jesus will suffer the curse and conquer on a tree. Whereas Adam gave into sin and brought death into the world; Jesus became sin and destroyed death from the world. All humanity is dead in Adam and made alive in Christ. Whereas in Adam all sinned; in Christ all are made righteous. Adam's disobedience brought condemnation; Jesus' obedience brought justification.
- Because of Adam, the way to Eden was bared by cherubim and sword. Because of Jesus, the way to Heaven is open by death and resurrection. It's interesting. In the Temple & Tabernacle the thing which separated the Holy of Holies, the place of God's presence, from God's people was a curtain, a veil, upon which was embroidered a cherubim. When Jesus died on the cross, Matthew 27 tells us the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The cherubim removed, the veil torn, the way to God's presence made possible through the death of Jesus.
- The last two chapters of the Bible and the first two chapters of the Bible are so similar. There's rivers and trees. The new Jerusalem which descends from heaven is measured as a perfect cube. There's only one other thing I know of in Scripture that is a perfect cube...the Holy of Holies. It's almost like the dwelling place of God has returned. Eden is restored.
- In chapter 4, the woman has offspring. Eve seems to have some anticipation that this would be the offspring to crush the serpent's head. And not coincidentally, she has two offspring—one, the seed of the serpent and the other, the seed of the woman.
- What Moses seems to be doing in chapter 4 is showing us how sin has affected—to the worst degree—not only man's relationship to God, but man's relationship to man. The first man born to a woman commits humanity's first murder. How disappointing it must have been for Momma Eve on so many levels.
- When the Lord curses Cain for killing Able, He uses the same exact language (in Hebrew) as when He cursed the serpent in chapter 3. "Cursed are you". The New Testament author John says Cain was "**of the evil one**" (1Jn 3:12). It turns out Cain is the seed of the serpent. And the mercy of God is apparent even here. Cain is judged and worried that he will be killed for what he has done to his brother, but God marks him, to protect him. Salvation through judgment.
- Genesis 5 is a genealogy of Adam through his son Seth. There's loads of stuff there we don't have time for.

Flood

- By the time we get to **Genesis 6:5** sin has become so rampant on the earth, the Bible says, "**The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**" Skip to verse 11. "**Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.**" Do you hear Creation like language here? The Lord saw the earth he had made and it was *not* good. Adam's creation mandate to fill the earth and subdue it had failed. And here we see the earth is filled, but not with the glory of the Lord and his image bearers, but with wickedness and violence.



- Quick note on the “**sons of God**” and the Nephilim, since I suspect someone you are curious. I’m afraid I am not going to be of much help. We have a few options. (1) The sons of God are men of the line of Seth who are intermarrying with ungodly lines. (2) They are mighty warriors and illustrates the violence referred to in verse 11. Or (3) they are angelic beings, taking human form, taking human wives. The third option is the weirdest option, and I think it’s probably the right one. Because of what the other biblical authors do with the phrase “sons of God” (Job 1; 2Peter 2; Jude).
- Some folks take Moses to say the Nephilim were half-men/half-angel offspring of the sons of God and human women. Some folks take Moses to be saying the opposite of that in verse 4. I favor the second because the way the text is written...and because the first interpretation comes largely from non-canonical texts from the 3rd century BC. But, you’re not gonna pin me down one way or the other. While it’s interesting to talk about, it’s not anything we should divide over. And it’s not in any way the main point of the text.
- The point is, wickedness and violence had covered the earth. The heart of man was on evil continually, and God’s wrath was stirred up against mankind. The Lord said He will blot out man from the face of the land. And then **verse 8**, “**But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.**” Favor is grace. God brings glory to Himself in saving His people through judgment. Before we find that Noah is a righteous man in verse 9, we find that God showing grace to him in verse 8. It is a phrase that will Moses will use of Abraham in Genesis 18.
- I touched on this last week, so I won’t belabor it. The flood is a story judgement. An undoing of the Creation account. And as the Lord did with Adam and Cain, He does with Noah. He saves His people through judgment. He encapsulates His chosen people inside a protective ark, the judgment of God rain on the ark, and His people are safely brought through. Likewise, the Lord unites His chosen people in His Son, God’s judgment falls on His Son, and the Lord brings them safely through.
- Genesis 8 opens on somewhat of a new Eden. 8:17 sounds a lot like Genesis 1. At the end of chapter 8 Noah offers a sacrifice and the Lord is pleased and promises never again to flood the earth. It’s almost like Noah is acting like a priest on behalf of creation, offering a sacrifice to turn away God’s wrath. In chapter 9:1, you read, “**And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’**” Where have we heard that before? You’re reading this and should be thinking, maybe Noah is the Offspring of the Woman who will crush the serpents head. New earth, new Eden. He is the new and better Adam.
- As you read on in chapter 9, you encounter this strange situation where Noah plants a vineyard and drinks from the vine. He gets drunk, lays naked, his son Ham does not cover him, his other sons do. Noah curses Ham and blesses his other two sons. Any of that sound familiar?
- New creation, new Adam, new commission. Taking fruit, sinning, nakedness, shame, covering of nakedness, blessing, curses? It’s Genesis 3 all over again. New Fall.
- Lesson? Do better, try harder? Don’t get drunk? If you find your Dad naked, get a blanket? No! Even if God created a whole new earth, wiped out almost every human on the planet, started over with one family, gave



- them blessings and promises and favor, would they crush the head of the serpent and reverse the effects of sin? Nope. They'd descend into dishonor and sin. New Fall. Noah is not a better Adam; he is the same as Adam.
- Chapter 10, another genealogy and then Babel and then another genealogy. If you were living in the 14th century BC and you received this book from Moses, you'd have noticed the descendants of Ham—the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Assyrians. All the bad guys of your world. Seed of the serpent.
 - You'd be tempted to think the genealogies aren't important. But remember the mandate given to Adam and then again to Noah was to fill the earth with image bearers, to multiply people who are created in the likeness of God. To bring glory to God. And instead, what do we see? We see them seeking to bring glory to themselves. Case in point: Babel...chapter 11...

Babel

- All the people of the earth come together and build a tower. What's wrong with that, right? Well read **verse 4**. **“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, [why?] lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’”** So it's as if they're rejecting God's purpose and replacing it with their own. Adam and Eve, you still here?
- They construct this huge tower to the heavens. And notice, verse 5, the Lord came down. Man is trying his darnedest to get to heaven, presumably to be his own God. And the Lord has to come down, judges them, confuses their language, and they disperse all over the face of the earth.
- How does this little stream point us to Jesus? I think you see it, don't you? Man is trying to make his way to heaven—that is the essence of religion, right? What does the Lord do? He wraps Himself in human flesh, comes down from heaven, shows mercy to fallen man. In His death and resurrection, He becomes the means by which man does actually reach the heavens. He reverses Babel, uniting Jew and gentile into one new man. The Book of Revelation describes heaven with people from every tribe and tongue and *language* gathered into one voice, a singular praise to the Lamb who was slain.
- No matter what problems unravel in Genesis 1-11, the New Testament authors show us how Jesus solves them all. Follow the river to the cross.

Session II Assignments:

- Genesis 12-22; Exodus 1-40
- Goldsworthy, CH12-14

