



## **In the Beginning, God** **Grace Reigns: God's Gospel for All Peoples Series #1**

**Genesis 1**

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Let's pray together.

God, what we have sung is a prayer to You. We ask that You would reveal Your glory through the preaching of Your Word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are beginning a new series in Genesis and in Romans. We are going to be taking about three or four chapters of Genesis and preaching through them for a few months, and then we will cover the first three chapters of Romans. After that, we will go back to Genesis, then work our way back and forth between these two books.

This Old Testament book, Genesis, means "the beginnings," and Romans is one of the most foundational explanations of the gospel. Paul wrote this letter to explain the good news of Jesus Christ to the Romans. So these two books are both coming to us by the same God, and it is amazing how much the story and theology weaves together.

The title of this series is "Grace Reigns," which comes from Romans, and the subtitle is "God's Gospel for All Peoples." Back in Genesis, as God made a covenant promise with Abraham, He said, "Through you, all the nations of the world will be blessed" (Genesis 18:18). God's plan was never just for Abraham and his descendants, but, through Abraham, his descendants, and, ultimately, through the main descendant, Christ, all the nations of the world will be blessed. Romans fulfills that theme as well because Paul gave this gospel to the nations.

In Romans, Paul talks about how, through Adam, the first man, sin entered into the world, and death came by sin. In the same way, through Christ, many can be made righteous. Through chapters four and five, Paul traces the theme of Abraham being justified by faith. It was never by works of the law. We will see many of these themes coming together.

Today we are going to start in Genesis 1 and look at "In the Beginning, God." That's how our Bible opens. However, before turning to Genesis, we are going to spend half of our time

elsewhere. I want us to see that this story of creation is not in isolation. It is not the only place in the Bible where we learn about God's creation and His work as the Creator of all things. It's not just two chapters in the Bible we can simply dismiss as just a "good story." This is a theme that traces its way through the entirety of the Scriptures. Everything that exists was created by God.

### **God's Existence before the World Was Created**

Before looking at the passages that talk about God's creation, we are going to look at five places in the Bible that talk about God before the world began. I want us to build a theology of what the Bible says about the beginnings of this world.

First, in John 17:5, Jesus, praying to God, said, "*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*" Then, in verse 24, He prayed, "*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*"

In this passage and the ones we will look at next, there is a theme that emerges, teaching us that God has always existed. There was a time before anything else was created—before the foundation of the world—when God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit existed alone. They had a relationship with one another and this passage teaches that.

Also, before the foundation of the world, God chose us. He chose that He would redeem us, save us and call us to Himself and love us. Ephesians 1:4 says, "*... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*"

Other passages deal with this theme, including the following:

- 1 Peter 1:20: "*He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you...*"
- 2 Timothy 1:9: "*... [God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...*"
- Titus 1:2: "*... [I]n hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began...*"

So we can see the Bible explains what happened before creation. We know that God existed; the Father loved the Son; and the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

## God the Creator

In this world, there are and have always been different ideas, beliefs, thoughts and stories about how this world came into being. Different religions, faiths and cultures have come up with ideas. For example, there are ancient mythologies about the gods who were at war with one another and, through their fighting, this world came into existence. There have been many different kinds of beliefs.

Today there are many people in this world, especially scientists, who are seeking to figure out how it all started. They are coming up with better and better telescopes to look further and further away. They are hoping that the further away they can see, they ultimately will be able to look back into the past. Light travels to us, so they are looking back to find out how this all started.

Even as Christians, we approach the Bible in different ways. Christians come up with different beliefs and ideas. They differ on how and when God created the world. However, when we are confronted with passage after passage in the Bible, we cannot doubt that God is the One Who created everything that exists.

It is a step of faith though. Hebrews 11:3 says, *“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”* This is where we get the theology that God created this universe *ex nihilo*— “out of nothing.” It was not made of things that were visible or things that already existed. The universe was created by the Word of God.

In Psalm 8:3-4, David paused in worship and reflection, saying, *“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”*

As I prepared for this sermon, I saw many videos and presentations on the internet of how amazing this universe is and they will blow your mind. There was one I looked at on htwins.net, an interactive website dealing with the size of the universe. It begins with humans (showing a stick figure), and you can zoom in or zoom out, showing you things in this world that are compared to the size of a human. If you zoom in, you see a mouse, a marble and a sunflower seed. Then it gets smaller and smaller, and you see molecules, cells, atoms and electrons. It stops on a screen that says, “This is the smallest thing that can be seen with a microscope.” But it goes further into theories and guesses until it gets to the smallest thing they think exists. The smallest measurement is a string. It isn’t a thread, but it is some kind of scientific string. Basically, these are just theories of what they think are the smallest things that exist. It’s amazing

how intricate creation is and how small things are. A generation ago, we would not have known these things existed.

When you zoom out on the screen, it shows you how big things are. You start with man and then you see other animals, like a giraffe, a winged albatross and a dinosaur. You keep zooming out and see the St. Louise arch and the state of West Virginia (I don't know why they picked West Virginia, but they did). Then you see the United States, the moon, the earth, the sun and our solar system. It shows you the distance light travels in a day, as well as the size of our galaxy and a light year. As you zoom out further and further, I think there is some educated theorizing happening, such as the cluster of galaxies, the observable universe and whatever else is out there. By the time you are finished, you are blown away at how big this world is.

The effect this has is similar to what David said: "When I look at Your heavens, I respond in worship. The work of Your fingers: the moon and stars You have set in place" (Psalm 8:3). Then we begin to feel very small because earth from that far away isn't even visible; it is the size of a pixel or even smaller. And we are just one of 7.2 billion humans that are alive (not even counting the billions who were alive before us). We are very, very small compared to our great God. Like David, we say, "Who are we that You are mindful of us?" (Psalm 8:4). But His Word tells us that He is mindful of us. He loves us and cares for us.

Are there other things in creation that are beautiful or amazing to you? How about the immune system? Some of you are much better scientists than I am. That may not say much, but some of you may have observed or learned some things that are amazing about the way this world works. As I go through several more verses, I am going to ask you to participate with me, sharing things in creation that are amazing and beautiful, declaring the glory of God.

First, let's look at a few more verses that deal with God the Creator:

- Ephesians 3:8-9: *"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things..."*
- Proverbs 3:19: *"The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens."* There are a variety of books in the Bible and all of them say the same thing: God has made everything that existed.
- Job 38:4: *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding."*
- Isaiah 44:24: *"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: 'I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself..."* God is saying, "I made everything." Scripture constantly points to the heavens, the skies and the things out there,

saying, “God made all of those things.” In these passages, God says, “I formed you from the womb.”

- Acts 17:24-25: *“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”* He doesn’t need us. He made everything that existed and gives us our very life and breath.
- Colossians 1:16: *“For by [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”*
- John 1:3: *“All things were made through [the Son of God], and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* Everything that exists in the category of things made, He made it. He made it all.
- Revelation 4:10-11b: *“They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’”*

Now, I want us to respond the way they did in this scene in Revelation. First, I want us to silently pause and worship God individually. Before we look at Genesis, let’s worship Him after hearing all these passages talking about the greatness of our God and His creative work. He is worthy because He made everything. Let’s pause right now to worship, praise and thank Him for that.

Now, I want us to praise Him for some of the things He has made. Psalm 19:1 says, *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”* The heavens are declaring, proclaiming and teaching the glory of God. Some of you may have something in mind that God has done in creation that is beautiful, amazing and praiseworthy. What are some amazing things in this universe for which we can praise God?

Here are some answers from the congregation:

- We could not see color if God did not create light. We get this mundane idea of what light is. But think about what light is. There was darkness and then there was light. That has so much meaning in our lives and it is so deep. As the sun sets and the colors change, you realize, “That is God! We didn’t make that color.” Nothing was made that wasn’t made by Him.
- A caterpillar becomes a butterfly.
- Looking into a microscope at a drop of water, seeing things that are alive that we cannot see with the naked eye. In the same way, a telescope reveals to us things that we could not see with the naked eye. There were times in history when they did not have those instruments, but the things we see through these instruments have always existed. God has made such a beautiful world and, for a long time, we

didn't even know it was this beautiful. I'm sure there are still many, many things no one knows God has made that declare His glory.

- The rainbow.
- I had the joy of seeing all three of my girls being born. It was amazing trying to get my head around how things come together in creation.

Your assignment for the week is to think about these things and find amazement with the things in this universe that God has made. As we do that, let us not worship the creation but the Creator of these things.

When you are around young children (and I have three young boys), they are amazed at things that might not amaze me. As children, they are first seeing and experiencing things and have a childlike amazement with this world. Then as we grow up and get used to those things, we don't think about how unbelievable this world is. The human body alone is unbelievable. Think about the way God has designed the body to function, work, fight off sickness, heal itself. All these things about our bodies are amazing. Then just look around. We can't help but worship!

Psalm 33:6-7 says, *"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses."* The response to this is in verses eight and nine. As we think about this, many of us have grown up believing God is our Creator. Maybe there are some here who don't, but many of us have grown up believing and knowing that. Whether we are confronted with this truth for the first time or whether we are just being reminded of it today, this is the way we are to respond to this truth: *"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."*

Before we jump into Genesis, let's look at one more passage. This is a Romans passage that talks about creation and what God has made, saying it is through the things God has made that everyone on this earth is getting this message from God. In the things that have been made, everyone is hearing from God that there is a God and He is powerful.

Romans 1:19-20 says:

*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

The message that there is a God and He is powerful is a message that goes out to the whole world and the Psalms say this message goes out to all languages. The message that doesn't

go out to the whole world is that He is restoring that world to Himself. This is the message of salvation.

The Psalmist says that the law of God is perfect. The heavens declare God's glory, but God's Word is what converts the soul. So this message of salvation needs to come from our lips. But the message that there is a God and He is powerful is a message that is clearly seen in the things that have been made.

### **God's Creation & Our Response**

Let's now go to Genesis 1. I'm not going to spend a lot of time explaining and talking about each day or details like that as we read through Genesis 1. I want us to hear it as a whole and as a story—a story that is true and is teaching us that God is eternally powerful, and that He alone is God. This is what Romans told us. The creation tells us about His divine nature and eternal power, so I want us to praise God for His eternal power and divine nature.

As we read through Genesis 1, a theme that comes up over and over again is that "God said and it was so. God said and it came into being. God said and it was so. God said and it was created." Listen to that as you hear this story of creation. When everything God said happened, it proved His power. It showed His rule and that He alone is God.

Then I want us to listen for His goodness and grace in Genesis 1. As God continually looked at what He made, He said, "It is good." God saw that it was good. It was very good. I will come back at the end and talk about His grace in creation.

Genesis 1 says:

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

*<sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

*<sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

<sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.

<sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

<sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,



*in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.*

*<sup>28</sup> 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."<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

This account of creation was originally given by God through Moses. God gave this to His people as He established them for Himself. He called them out of Egypt and they became His nation. And He gave them this law and these commands, and He taught them about Himself.

One of the first things He did at the beginning was show them that there is only one God. This was contrary to what a lot of the other religions were teaching at that time. He taught them that there is one God Who made everything. He alone has always existed and everything that exists now was made by Him. He is sovereign and He alone is to be worshiped. It shows here in creation that He is eternally powerful because everything that He said happened. He just created. He made these things out of nothing. As He said these things, it was so, over and over again. And it was good. Everything that God made was good. It was right.

That leads us to another question about creation. We sit here and think about the beauty, the magnificence and the greatness of creation. We think about the beauty of the snow (if you feel that way). We think of the beauty of rain and how God cares for the earth; how He uses rain to bring forth plants. We think of the beauty of mountains, valleys, the Grand Canyon and waterfalls. We think of the beauty of oceans and beaches. We think of the stars, the skies and the galaxies.

But we also think about the tornados, the hurricanes, the tsunamis and the earthquakes. We think about the famines and the droughts. We think about our bodies that heal themselves and fight off sickness, yet at the same, we think about many people we know who are sick, dying or have recently died. We think about the beauty and the greatness of creation, yet, at the same time, we see a creation that is very fallen, very cursed and very messed up. This is what causes a

lot of people to have these kinds of questions. You look at a world like this and think, “Where did all of this come from? Where did all of this start? Is there a God? If there is, why all this?”

For these questions, I want us to look at another passage that talks about creation. It is in Romans 8. Everything God made was very good. Humans are still made in the image of God. The heavens are still declaring God’s glory. As we look at this world, we are still reminded of the greatness and the creativity of our God. Yet, as we look at this world, we can’t help but see the curse. We can’t help but see the Fall. I think it is helpful for us to start this series by being reminded of where creation fits into the big story of salvation. In the big story, God’s history of this world, God created everything good. Yet, what we’ll see in Genesis 3 is that sin entered into this world through one man’s sin and death came by sin. So the whole world, all of creation, is experiencing the curse.

The Fall occurred and this world was plunged into it. But there is redemption through Jesus Christ, Who came into this world. He is God Who became man for us. He is making things new again. He has accomplished and has purchased salvation by dying for our sins on the cross and by rising from the dead. There is coming a day when we will see and experience the restoration of all things. That is what Romans 8 is talking about. It gives us hope as we look forward.

Romans 8:18 says, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*” So we look at this fallen creation and see both beauty and suffering, and Paul has pointed us toward another time that is coming.

Beginning with verse 19 and continuing through verse 23, Paul said:

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Paul was saying that this creation, as it exists in its fallen condition, is groaning. It is longing to be restored. It is longing for the day when God makes all things new and when He makes a new heaven and a new earth. That is what we are looking forward to.

As we hear this truth, our response, like the Psalmist said in Psalm 33, is to stand in awe. You may have come today not believing in God the Creator. Or you may say, “Yes, I know there is

a God Who has created all things, but I'm not sure where I stand with Him.” As you hear these truths, I hope you will understand that the God Who made all things, the Creator, is also the Savior. Through one man, Adam, sin entered this world. Likewise, through one man, Jesus, you can be made righteous.

So here is the story of creation: God made everything. Where it fits in history is that we exist right now in a cursed world that is being redeemed. One day it will be fully restored. We must bow our knee and worship the God Who is the Creator of all things.

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