

GRACE BEGINS

Genesis 1-11

So Great a Creator | Genesis 1:1-2

Study Guide 1 for sermon on 5/02/2021



Introduction

In the beginning of the Bible, is Genesis. It is an astounding and sometimes strange book of the Bible. It begins with God and creation and ends with Joseph in a coffin in Egypt! It is a book with careful structure and organization, and it sets the whole biblical story in motion. It tells of the beginning of God's story – creation, human disobedience, and divine redemption – while it also begins the story of God's choosing and making a covenant with a people through whom he would bless all peoples.



Overview

Genesis can be divided into two large sections. Chapters 1-11 are often called “primeval history” and chapters 12-50 are called “patriarchal history.” Chapters 1-11 tell the story of creation and the fall of man. These stories are of individuals who possess land but are losing it, and of the never-ending increase of evil and sin. Chapters 12-50 tell of God's gracious work of recreation or regeneration, as He sets redemption in motion. In Genesis 12-50, we find stories of people who do not have land but are on their way toward it.

For the next few months we will be studying Genesis 1-11. These first eleven chapters tell five stories that all have the same structure as outlined below. It's amazing that in all five stories there is an increasing avalanche of sin and severe punishment, yet there is always more grace.

	I.	II.	III.	IV.
	SIN	SPEECH	GRACE	PUNISHMENT
1. Fall	3:6	3:14-19	3:21	3:22-24
2. Cain	4:8	4:10-12	4:15	4:16
3. Sons of God	6:2	6:3	6:8, 18ff.	7:6-24
4. Flood	6:5, 11f	6:7, 13-21	6:8, 18ff.	7:6-24
5. Babel	11:4	11:6f	10:1-32	11:8

Why are we studying Genesis 1-11?

First, Genesis is foundational for understanding the rest of the Bible. In the garden we will hear the seed of a promise that finds its fulfillment in the cross of Christ. Second, Genesis has much to say about current cultural issues. Third, a study of Genesis increases our confidence in God's

Word in the midst of so many oppositions. Finally, Genesis increases our hope by showing us the beautiful and unchanging compassionate character of God.

Who wrote Genesis?

Moses is the author of Genesis. This is attested in both the Old Testament and New Testament (Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 31:24; Joshua 8:31; 2 Kings 14:6; Romans 10:5; 2 Cor. 3:15). Jesus confirms Mosaic authorship in John 5:45-47. Moses' writing was somewhat revised and added to by others, especially since Deuteronomy 34 tells of the death of Moses.

When did Moses write Genesis?

Moses wrote in the late 15th century B.C., at the time of or following Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt. The Egyptians opposed Israel's belief in one God and taught elaborate myths of love affairs among the gods and of warfare marking out the heavens and the earth. These myths were influential among the Israelites. Some of God's people had come to believe Egypt's mythologies. So Moses wrote Genesis to anchor God's people in what God had revealed of Himself, and to lead them in the way of redemption.

Structure of Genesis 1:1-2

- I. God (1a)
- II. Creation (1b)
- III. Chaos (2a)
- IV. God (2b)



Engage

1. Do you have any hesitations or concerns about studying Genesis 1-11? What are some big questions you would like to find answers to?
2. Genesis does not begin by explaining the origins of God. It accepts as a given that God simply exists beyond all created matter and time. In other words, God is *transcendent*. He exists in a way that our finite brains cannot comprehend. Why is it valuable for believers to know that God is transcendent? What is the danger of losing the transcendence of God?
3. How does the transcendence of God shape our worship? Can you find examples in the Old Testament of how God's transcendence in creation informed people's worship?
4. Genesis teaches us that creation happened in steps. What three problems does verse 2 identify with the first part of earth's creation?
5. Verse 2 says the Spirit of God was *hovering* over the surface of the waters. The same Hebrew word for *hovering* is used in Isaiah 31:5. How does that verse inform our understanding of what God's Spirit is doing over the chaos of creation? Does that have any implications for your own life?