

Contents

Acknowledgments | ix

Introduction | xi

Part One: From Creation to Christ

- 1 The Beginning of All Things | 3
- 2 In the Garden of the Lord | 6
- 3 The Fall of Man | 9
- 4 The Flood of Judgment | 13
- 5 God's Covenant with Abram | 17
- 6 The Sacrifice of Isaac | 21
- 7 Slavery and the Promise of Rescue | 24
- 8 The Passover and Exodus | 28
- 9 The Ten Commandments | 31
- 10 Blessings, Curses, and Forgiveness | 35
- 11 The Covenant with David | 38
- 12 The Temple of God | 41
- 13 A Baby and a Branch | 44
- 14 The Suffering Servant of the Lord | 48
- 15 The New Covenant | 52

Part Two: From the Manger to the (Empty) Tomb

- 16 The Birth of the King | 59
- 17 The Water and the Wilderness | 62
- 18 The Ministry of Jesus | 65
- 19 A Blessing and a Prayer | 69

CONTENTS

20 The Night Meeting | 73
21 The Bread of Life | 77
22 The Arrival of the King | 81
23 A New Command | 84
24 The Father, The Spirit, and the Son | 88
25 The High Priestly Prayer | 92
26 The Table of the Lord | 96
27 In the Garden of Anguish | 100
28 The Court of Injustice | 104
29 The Cross | 108
30 The Empty Tomb | 112

Interlude | 116

Part Three: From Christ's Ascension to Christ's Return

31 The Commission | 123
32 The Ascension of the King | 127
33 The Sending of the Spirit | 131
34 Righteous by Faith | 135
35 More Than Conquerors | 139
36 Living Sacrifices | 143
37 The Foolishness of God | 147
38 By Faith or by Works? | 151
39 Walk by the Spirit | 155
40 The Riches of Grace | 159
41 To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain | 163
42 A Pilgrim Faith | 167
43 The Throne and the Lamb | 171
44 The Thousand Years | 175
45 The End of All Things | 179

The Beginning of All Things

Genesis 1:1—2:3

THE BIBLE BEGINS WITH the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, existing in perfect love and fellowship and together bringing the whole cosmos into existence. God the Father speaks, “Let there be.” God the Son, himself the Word and Wisdom of the Father, goes forth as the one through whom all things are made, the mediator of the Father’s creative work.¹ God the Spirit hovers over the face of the waters, preparing to animate and give life to the world.

God’s creation begins “without form and void.”² It’s uncrafted and empty, but it won’t stay that way. In the first three days, God forms his creation into realms and habitations, giving structure and order to his universe and his world. In days four through six, he fills those realms, setting up rulers who will occupy those habitations and exercise dominion in them.

The supreme creative act, however, takes place when God makes humanity in his own image and likeness. God is the ultimate King who exercises authority over all things, and when he creates man and woman in his image, he commissions them to reflect his kingship by ruling over, cultivating, and filling his world in submission to his word. Humans aren’t given permission to function as authoritarian monarchs or autonomous dictators. We’re made in God’s image to exercise kingship in covenant with the King of kings as we worship, trust, and obey the one true Lord.

1. See Prov 8:22–31; John 1:1–3; Col 1:15–17.

2. Gen 1:2.

PART ONE: FROM CREATION TO CHRIST

When God rests on the seventh day, he does so as the sovereign King whose reign knows no boundary. Everything that he created exists because of him, under him, and for him. God rests on the Sabbath day, enthroned in glory over his creation. He has crafted a world where he can dwell in holiness and love with his creation, where he can bless his people with the glory of his presence. In other words, this introduction to the book of Genesis tells us that God the King has lovingly constructed his world as a palace—a temple—where Creator and creature can live together in covenant joy.

Genesis 1:1—2:3 is the first act of God’s story—his drama of redemption—and it establishes themes that will be built upon and expanded throughout the whole Bible. Let’s consider four.

God’s Sovereign Holiness

The creation narratives of other ancient cultures often depicted the world emerging from a cosmic war between multiple gods vying with one another for supremacy. But the Genesis account emphasizes that God alone creates all things by the power of his word. He doesn’t entertain competitors or rivals, and nothing exists alongside him that can impinge upon his claim to be the holy and sovereign Lord. God created the universe *ex nihilo* (from nothing), demonstrating that he’s the King over all things, gloriously set apart from all creation as the Creator. Contrary to the modern notion that the observable, physical world is all that exists, the Bible is clear that there is indeed a God who stands outside of the natural world as the compassionate giver of life.

Creation’s Purpose

Everything in the Genesis account leads up to God’s Sabbath enthronement and enjoyment of his creation. All that was made in the six days of creation is consecrated, devoted, and placed in submission to God. The heavens and earth, the sun and stars, the plants and animals, and you and I were created for the glory of the Lord—to magnify his beauty, delight in his character, and find our greatest joy in worshiping him through all of life.

THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS

Humanity in God's image

Man and woman were made in God's image to exist in covenant with their Lord. This means that every human being possesses a profound dignity as one who belongs to and was made for God, and this understanding of humanity is one of the central reasons why we're called to love, honor, and respect all people out of love for God. But this also means that we're made to enjoy God in covenant as we worship and submit to him. To live in the image of God is to magnify the glory of the Lord by imitating and obeying God in faith and worship. As the rest of the Bible's story makes clear, humanity has rebelled against God and has created lesser gods to worship and obey, but the fact remains that we are worshiping creatures. We're creatures who have an undeniable religious impulse, who are always worshiping something or someone, because our Creator made us for himself. Only when Jesus arrives as the truly faithful image of God to fulfill the obligations of our covenant can sinners be restored to fellowship with God and progressively renewed in his image.³

God with us

It's clear from our passage that God is no disinterested Creator. Rather, as a God who crafts the world to be his temple—his dwelling place—and who makes human beings to know him in covenant fellowship, God demonstrates that his desire from the beginning has been to welcome his creatures into the joyous life of the triune Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not even the treason of sin could inhibit God's purpose to dwell with his people, for Jesus Christ, our great Immanuel, was sent to be God with us so that we might spend an eternity with him, delighting in the glory of the Lord.

So begins the story of the world, the story of God's purposes in the world, the story of us all.

Holy God, your works are wondrous, your ways are wise, and your character is glorious. Help us to recognize your holiness, submit to your sovereign kingship, and live into the purpose for which we were made. In Christ Jesus, you deal with our rebellion and invite us back into the joy of your presence. As we trust his work for us, grow us into your image, that we may reflect your glorious beauty in faithful obedience and enjoy the blessings of life in covenant with you.

3. Col 1:15; 3:9-10.