

The Journey Begins

Chaos, order, chaos, restoration

Welcome to the first step in a year-long journey. We are challenging one another to read through the Bible Chronologically. **Each Sunday the teaching** will come from the previous week's reading. You can get a chronological bible in the lobby of either of our campuses. **If you can't afford one** just let us know and I will pick up the tab.

I want to challenge you to join us. It takes about **15 minutes** a day and the Bibles we have break it up for each day. But the way to get **the most life impact** of this is to **read it**, hear it **taught on Sunday**, and then attend one of our Bridge Groups where you get to **reflect with others** who are also taking this journey. And you might just **make some new friends** and deepen some existing friendships.

I guess the secret is out. We are going to start this literally, "**in the beginning.**" We have this **amazing world** that John told us about. It's **not by accident** that it is the way it is. And you've heard the **very first words of the Bible** that describe all this amazing creation and very different terms than John used. **It's told in the form of a story.** *Here's how the story begins.*

What we are not going to do is **separate this story from the context in which it was told.** Like I said last week, the Bible is a story, **not a science textbook.** These people who wrote it **were not interested in where matter came from** and **what is light really** and what is darkness really. **What they were interested in was a very powerful concept** in their culture that was also very different. It is called **monotheism**, one **God who spoke** the world into existence. They were living in a **polytheistic, many god's world.** These gods were **capricious, unreliable and needed to have their egos stroked** or your crops **wouldn't grow** and your wife **wouldn't get pregnant.** **Some of them demanded human sacrifice.**

Enter that world, these words...**In the beginning God** (Yahweh, the great "I Am") **created the heavens and the earth.** ² **The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.** *Genesis 1:1-2*

To take it out of context, to interpret what it means to us, is dangerous and arrogant. What I mean is this: We put our **modern view of science as the ultimate truth up against this story** and we try to fit them together. These people didn't think that way. Our questions would have never come into their minds. **What they wanted to know is how did this amazingly designed place come about. Who did it and not so much how, but why?**

It's arrogant because it assumes that these people were ignorant and couldn't understand anything. It assumes that no one could ever speak of truth and God until we came along, western post enlightenment people. We are so much further evolved and able to intelligently speak of truth.

Here's how John H. Walton, his friends call him John-Boy put it. Sorry, that was a dated reference to a show called The Waltons. Don't call him John-Boy. He wrote the Genesis reference in the commentary series The NIV Application Commentary.

"We too easily accept the dictum that the only absolute is science. This presupposition causes us to think that the Bible's authority would be jeopardized if its revelations fails to address origins in terms that reflect our worldview. This modern arrogance that insists that revelations must be packaged in our terms to be true betrays us, because even scientific thinking is in constant flux." Pg 89

This is a true story, but it isn't in scientific terms which doesn't change the fact that it is true and that it has authority as God's Word.

It's like this, if you came into a play late, having missed the first 10 minutes, and you asked the person next to you, "how did it begin?" What kind of response would you expect, other than being shushed. The person would tell you the movement of the different key characters and what any significant statements made. That person wouldn't tell you how the sets were constructed, how the cast was formed and what is the background of the playwright. You would be told the truth.

That is what is happening in the Genesis account of creation. They were much more interested in how God spoke, and his words brought everything...From Chaos to order.

There is no order, boundaries, or names for anything and place where it fits.

In creating light and darkness what is being said is that God created time. The light and darkness were given boundaries and a pattern. And that pattern had a larger purpose for all the rest of creation. And that order, as you saw from John, is done in a way that sustains life.

All these images, darkness, water that has no boundaries, just goes wherever, and emptiness are ways of describing chaos in their world.

That's what was important for the people in that culture. There is one God who created everything by simply speaking the command and chaos took shape into something that worked toward a greater purpose.

You know what chaos feels like, don't you? It's disturbing, frightening. When someone comes in, puts something together that works in your life, some boundaries, it gives you a sense of well-being. I think that kind of God needs to

be heard in our culture today. Because the chaos of today needs someone to give it order, boundaries, name stuff. **Because as we follow the story, chaos returns in a different form.**

As I mentioned earlier, this order has an end in mind... **This order has a purpose.**

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

The purpose is to reflect God's goodness. His goodness needed an object or a recipient of his goodness. This was us who were the pinnacle of creation because God breathed his breath into them and made them in some way, like himself. He created people to be in an intimate love relationship where he blesses them and gives them good things and they praise and honor him with complete trust.

God breathed life into them...this is intimacy and a deep connection. It's stronger than the connection between a child and her mother.

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. John 10:10 NLT This is why he did all of this.

And not only was it ordered and purposeful but... **Creation is the perfect design.**

This place has everything they will need. Adam and Eve have an intimate relationship with God who breathed life into them.

This not only had everything they needed but was so perfectly designed that it could continue for eternity. Adam and Eve could have lived there forever. There was no deterioration and death. And there was no shame. It says they were naked and felt no shame. All of that comes later. For now, it is perfection, both beautiful and functional. The perfect design.

This perfect design is based upon God's purpose to bless those who were created in his image. Everything else rests upon this relationship. That holds it all together.

The only way to ruin this design is to drive a wedge between God and people. This is the fundamental relationship that it is all based upon. The whole thing is based upon that connection between creator and creation at its highest level. We were to think, feel, and act in complete harmony with the creator. Our image fitting with His.

Let's read a little **further in chapter 3** where this happens in this perfectly designed creation. **The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" The serpent wants to plant the seed of doubt in this perfect intimate relationship between God and Adam.**

² "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³ "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴ "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." **Keep in mind they are in the perfectly designed place that is for them. Why do they need to know what is evil because the only thing they know is God's goodness.** ⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and **they suddenly felt shame** at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. **So they hid** from the Lord God among the trees. Do you really think God couldn't find them? ⁹ Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." *Genesis 3:1-13 NLT*

Then the story turns...**Why would they ruin this perfection.** It's simple and it's the same as it always has been from this day forward. **They started believing...God is not good, and he is withholding good things from me.**

Let's backtrack for a minute. **God brought order out of chaos and the purpose was to bless people and to be in an intimate love relationship.** How do you get from that to not trusting God? **It's called pride.**

It's worth ruining this perfect thing that you are perfectly designed to be the caretakers of it. Who would ever want that? How dare God keep that from me, the opportunity to know evil and the suffering and death it brings. Clearly, he must be holding out of me...Therefore, he is not good (that is confirmed) or to be trusted.

I remember a guy telling me years ago, if I guy told him in business that he was cheating on his wife or was willing to, he knew that person ultimately could not be trusted. Watch your wallet and watch your back. If the woman who he promised in a church full of people, to love and remain faithful can't trust him, then I can't trust him either.

But God didn't do anything wrong, but everything to demonstrate that he was completely good and would do Adam and Eve no harm.

What am I describing here? This is sin, which cuts people off from God.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to a group of Roman Christians, put this all together in a nice, neat package. He tells us what this story of sin and being cut off from God means. When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... ¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for

everyone. ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous. Romans 5:12 & 17-19

From this point on, each person who comes into the world is born into separation from the one who created them. They no longer have the connection with God that makes them live forever and able to enjoy him completely.

This makes disobedience, selfish behavior, any specific sin, very natural. That is what the bible calls our "flesh" that propensity to do what is selfish and wrong which was born in this separation from God. You and I are born with a "flesh" problem. Not our physical bodies, but our bent toward wrong. Our little "s" sin is a product of being born into big "S" sin which is this disconnection from the source of all good.

But because the world is broken, not just me, it provides the means to fast track what my flesh wants. This is how much of scripture describes "the world". Again, not creation which was good, but that part of this broken system that encourages my flesh to go get what it craves no matter the cost to me or to others.

So, there we have it. The pattern in the title of this sermon, "Chaos, order (creation), back to chaos (the fall), and on to restoration. That is the part that Jesus played in this larger story. He did this by his death on the cross. He announced that any who come to him will restore the intended relationship with their creator through him.

If that isn't enough... Within this still broken world, with their flesh still calling out to them, they can now live differently. They can live a different reality. They will live a different story. Their story isn't chaos, it is restoration that begins now and will come to fulfillment when the whole story is wrapped up by Jesus' return and things are completely like the garden of Eden, perfection.

This is what Jesus came to announce in his earthly ministry and to begin in his death and resurrection. This is what Jesus spoke about almost exclusively in the first 2 years of his ministry. This is **The Kingdom of God** sometimes called **The Kingdom of Heaven**. **The Kingdom of God is the restoration of God's loving rule over all things.**

This is where that prayer Jesus prayed starts coming true, "on earth as it is in heaven." His loving authority over everything starts to be seen here amid chaos. It has been described as **flashes**. It's that one thing that does not look like the rest. It's troubling because it runs counter to the flow of culture.

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:5 NLT

Write it down and watch for it to happen. If you aren't looking for those signs of the kingdom where God is making all things new, then you will miss it. It's for those who are looking for it.

Join those who are being made new! Take this Journey through the Bible challenge. Start reading with us as we follow the story from beginning to end. Here's a simple pattern to use as you are reading and praying.

1. What is God saying to you today?

What stood out, caught your notice, or stirred your emotions either as a gentle correction or the excitement of encouragement. That's God's voice.

1. What do you need to do to be obedient to what He is saying?

Do something about it. What aligns your life to what God is saying. He doesn't just give information. He wants to make you new.

1. Whose help do you need?

You are designed to be made new within a community. Reflect with someone about what you think you are hearing. The ideal place to do that is in a bridge group.